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## First thoughts on the 25 January 2015 election in Greece

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### Citation

Tsagkroni, V. (2020). *First thoughts on the 25 January 2015 election in Greece. GPSG Pamphlet* (Vol. 4). Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/87885>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

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GREEK  
POLITICS

Political Studies  
Association

SPECIALIST  
GROUP



# First thoughts on the 25 January 2015 election in Greece

Edited by  
Roman Gerodimos

GPSG Pamphlet No 4

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Cover photo: The Zappeion Hall, by Panoramas on [Flickr](#)

Inside photos: Jenny Tolou  
Eveline Konstantinidis – Ziegler  
Spyros Papaspyropoulos ([Flickr](#))  
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Published with the support of the Politics & Media Research Group, Bournemouth University

Selection and editorial matter © Roman Gerodimos for the Greek Politics Specialist Group 2015

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Published on 2 February 2015 by the Greek Politics Specialist Group (GPSG)

[www.gpsg.org.uk](http://www.gpsg.org.uk)

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## Editorial | Roman Gerodimos

Continuing a tradition that started in 2012, a couple of weeks ago the Greek Politics Specialist Group (GPSG) invited short commentaries from its members, affiliates and the broader academic community, as a first 'rapid' reaction to the election results. The scale of the response was humbling and posed an editorial dilemma, namely whether the pamphlet should be limited to a small number of indicative perspectives, perhaps favouring more established voices, or whether it should capture the full range of viewpoints.

As two of the founding principles and core aims of the GPSG are to act as a forum for the free exchange of ideas and also to give voice to younger and emerging scholars, it was decided that *all* contributions that met our editorial standards of factual accuracy and timely submission would be included.

While that decision posed a challenge in terms of editing and producing the pamphlet within an extremely short timeframe – this publication is being made available exactly one week after the confirmation of results – this has been an immensely rewarding task. The sheer volume and collective insight of the contributions provides us *both* with a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the current state of Greek politics, *and* with an historical artefact – a narrative account of how some political and social scientists interpreted this election *at this point in time*. Even if each of us is an 'unreliable narrator' of events in Greece, a few key themes and threads emerge from this collection, which are worth noting:

- (i) the success of Syriza's message of hope versus a less successful campaign by New Democracy focusing on the threat of instability
- (ii) the realignment but continuing volatility of the Greek party system with the confirmation of Syriza as a pillar of a new (quasi) two-party system, the collapse of PASOK, the fragmentation of the political centre and the shortening of the electoral cycle
- (iii) the logic behind the Syriza / Independent Greeks coalition and the tensions that may possibly arise from their ideological differences
- (iv) the increasingly imminent tension between Syriza's radical agenda of ending austerity and the Troika's stated positions
- (v) the continuing salience of populism, especially at the far right of the political spectrum
- (vi) the potential impact of Syriza's victory on other political parties, actors and debates across the European Union and beyond.










On behalf of the GPSG, I would like to thank all the contributors for taking part in this collective project, as well as Patty, Ana and Anthony for their help with the editing and design. Special thanks to Dr Darren Lilleker and the Politics & Media Research Group (P&MRG) at Bournemouth University, and to the Political Studies Association, for supporting this publication. We are grateful to Nikos Vatopoulos and indebted to the artists who kindly allowed us to use their photos for this pamphlet. We hope that this publication will lead to a fruitful dialogue and welcome further contributions through our various outlets, publications and events.

\* \* \*

*Dr Roman Gerodimos is founder and convenor of the Greek Politics Specialist Group, Principal Lecturer in Global Current Affairs at Bournemouth University, and a faculty member at the Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change.*

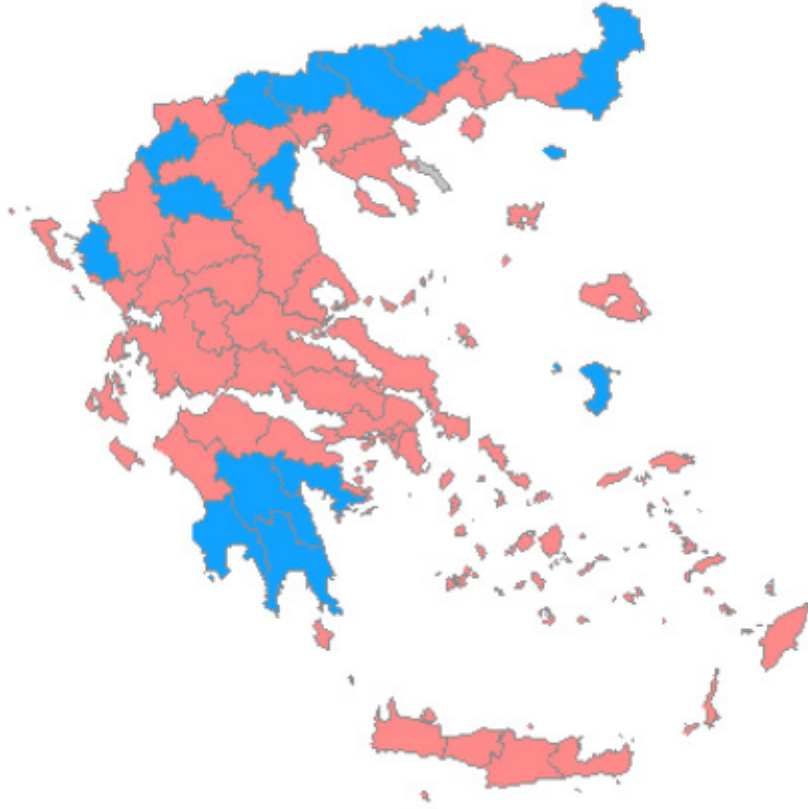
*His own take on the Greek election is available on the blog of the Political Studies Association (<http://www.psa.ac.uk/insight-plus/blog/moment-truth-greece-and-eurozone>) and on his website (<http://www.roman-gerodimos.com/>).*

## Greek parliamentary elections, 25 January 2015

Results Nationwide							
Parliamentary 2015				Diff. Parl. 6/2012	Parliamentary 6/2012		
Party	%	Seats	Votes	Units	%	Seats	Votes
	36.34	149	2,246,064	+9.45	26.89	71	1,655,066
	27.81	76	1,718,815	-1.85	29.66	129	1,825,633
	6.28	17	388,447	-0.64	6.92	18	425,982
	6.05	17	373,916	-	-	-	-
	5.47	15	338,138	+0.97	4.50	12	277,180
	4.75	13	293,406	-2.76	7.51	20	462,456
	4.68	13	289,482	-7.60	12.28	33	755,836
	2.46	0	152,265	-	-	-	-
	1.79	0	110,827	+1.51	0.28	0	17,191
ΛΟΙΠΑ	4.37	0	269,914	-	-	-	-

Source: <http://ekloges2015.dolnet.gr/?lang=en>

## Greek parliamentary elections, 25 January 2015



Source: [http:// http://ekloges.ypes.gr](http://ekloges.ypes.gr)

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# Part I

## Setting the Scene, Assessing the Impact

# 1 | Georgios Karyotis

## Greeks 'Breaking Bad': A Revolt on Austerity and the Future of the Eurozone

The times, in Greece and Europe, they are a-changin'. After five years of harsh austerity measures that conditioned Greece's rescue by the so-called 'Troika' of lenders (International Monetary Fund, European Commission, European Central Bank), a new government is coming to office, promising to roll back the austerity programme. Syriza, the radical-left coalition, with 36.34% of the vote, up from 4.5% in the 2009 general elections, triumphed but came just short of being able to form a majority government. An unholy partnership with the right-wing 'Independent Greeks' party (4.75% of the vote), ensures the formation of a stable coalition government, on a shared anti-austerity platform, despite the two parties' disagreements in other areas, notably on immigration policy.

The success of the anti-austerity camp represents the first major challenge to austerity politics across Europe. It is likely to boost support for left-wing parties, such as Podemos in Spain and the Five Star Movement in Italy, as well as some right-wing parties, including UKIP in Britain and the National Front in France, who will also seek to capitalise on the unfolding political shifts. Markets have responded with predictable nervousness to the result, with the Euro briefly recording an 11-year low against the Dollar; the political reactions across Europe varied from enthusiasm to outright panic about the future of the Eurozone as a whole.

Syriza's victory can be attributed to both economic and political factors. It is driven by a conviction that fiscal contraction in an already stagnant economy leads to a worsening of outcomes, adding a burden to the real economy and fuelling a vicious cycle of negative growth. Indeed, since 2008, there has been a dramatic increase in both poverty and inequality in Greece, especially across gender, age and class lines. Unemployment has risen from 7.7% to over 25%, and the Greek economy has, in real terms, contracted by one quarter, indicating a recession that is globally unprecedented in peacetime. The country's current level of sovereign debt at 175% of its GDP remains unsustainable, according to Syriza, and the Troika's plan for repayment is based upon wildly optimistic and unrealistic expectations, given the depth of Greece's recession and other implementation obstacles.

Syriza calls for a renegotiation of the rescue package and for a partial write-off of the Greek sovereign debt, to allow the economy to restart and the state to be reformed. The international lenders reject any discussion of the latter and are somewhat ambiguous about the former. Clearly, something needs to give.

What both sides agree on is the urgent need to initiate negotiations, overcome mutual distrust and reach mutually beneficial agreements. Missteps and miscalculations from either could result in an accident that could see Greece defaulting on its debt and exiting the single currency.

The cost of this happening for the people of Greece is incalculable. For the Eurozone, a range of new financial mechanisms and institutions introduced in recent years means that it is now better prepared to manage a possible 'Grexit' compared to 2010 or 2012, but the risk of contagion remains high. Market speculators would smell blood and target other 'rehabilitated' economies such as Portugal, Italy, Spain or Ireland, with unpredictable consequences. With the stakes as high as that, the most likely scenario is that pragmatism and realism will prevail. Both sides will have to make some concessions -even symbolic- to avert a further escalation of the crisis.

Here is the trick, though. To prevent losing political capital, the new Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras and Syriza cannot be seen to be making a complete U-turn on their anti-austerity pledges. Similarly, to avoid setting a bad precedent and undermining their leadership, the Troika – or rather Germany – cannot be seen to be succumbing to a Greek blackmail. When there is a will, there is a way for both conditions to be satisfied.

Another key take-away from the Greek election is that the dogma that ‘There Is No Alternative’ (TINA), while exceptionally persuasive, has its limits. The election in Greece came down to a framing contest between ‘fear’ of looming dangers versus ‘hope’ for a better future. Despite the uncertainties and risks that a Syriza government brings, an electorate suffering from austerity fatigue was ready to take a step to the unknown. Its hope is that this will not mean a return of populism, false prophets and missed opportunities for substantial change in Greece and Europe, as they both look forward to a long period of retrenchment before they can confidently move beyond the crisis.

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*He is co-editor (with Roman Gerodimos) of a forthcoming book on The Politics of Extreme Austerity: Greece in the Eurozone Crisis (Palgrave Macmillan), <http://www.palgrave.com/page/detail/the-politics-of-extreme-austerity-greece-in-the-eurozone-crisis-/?K=9781137369222>*

## 2 | Theofanis Exadaktylos

### A historic radical victory or much of the same?

There was a feeling of exhilaration on Sunday night in Athens. Syriza was the first party to achieve what was unthinkable a few years ago: the era of alternation into power of only two parties had been challenged and ended. Since 1974, PASOK and New Democracy had created a political web that was hard to penetrate. The financial crisis, austerity and the power vacuum created by the absence of PASOK acted as catalysts for a new party to win over the voters and ascend to government.

Beyond this landmark victory however, there are four themes that are worth paying attention to, even at this early stage, and can provide a lot of room for debate.

#### **The Greek party system**

The Greek party system has been now fully reconfigured. The collapse of the previous state of play in the aftermath of the Greek bailout agreements and the elections of 2012 has come to a conclusion. Perhaps there is still some leftover crumbling to be made, but the picture has completely changed. At the same time, the polarisation created in the short electoral campaign period has brought forward the consolidation of Syriza as this new pole of the radical left, while effectively substituting the old centre-left.

The Greek-style left/right cleavage has been fully replaced by a pro-memorandum/anti-memorandum cleavage, whereas the in-Europe/out-of-Europe division has been silenced. This new cleavage does not recognize the ideological political differences between the left and the right and has led to the creation of a coalition government between a radical-left and a right-wing party. This replacement in my opinion is the outcome of austerity fatigue. A term well-embedded in the minds of Greeks since the beginning of the crisis, austerity has been quite harsh on specific segments of the population who do not see light at the end of the tunnel.

Yet, at the same time austerity has become a scapegoat term. It almost feels like a nation has been reborn and transformed into a blameless nation, as if the clientelistic populist system that had been created was not fed from the grass roots. This sounds controversial, but on second reading, part of the electorate that voted Syriza in may have been motivated by a sense of cleansing from old sins, or a sense of testing out a party that has no government experience and appears clean of the old stigmas. This may be a way for the Greek electorate to renounce its own responsibility for its choices of political elites.

#### **The Golden Dawn Effect**

The polarisation created between Syriza and New Democracy in these elections debilitated support for smaller democratic alternatives and that may have been determining in bringing Golden Dawn third in this race, maintaining its electoral *acquis* and losing only one MP in this process. We are still shying away from the fact that some of those supporting Golden Dawn may have voted for the Independent Greeks or even Syriza in an effort to keep New Democracy out of office.

The Greek political stage still ignores signals that they are there to stay and cause trouble to the extent that they can. They were imprisoned, yet they still managed to get their messages across.

They were cordoned off the media, in terms of representation in political talk shows, yet they still managed to rally almost the same number of supporters as in 2012. They were ignored by the other parties in the previous parliament, yet their leading figures received more votes than some of the ministers in the new government. Therefore, the Golden Dawn effect has been consolidated. If Syriza fails to deliver, much like their predecessors, how likely is Golden Dawn to become the next (obviously smaller) pole of attraction for voters? In the worst case scenario a further collapse of New Democracy may have a Jobbik effect for Golden Dawn.

## **Political culture and the wind of change**

The absence of debonair by the outgoing prime minister was an infelicitous moment in contemporary Greek political history. The fact that Antonis Samaras did not welcome Alexis Tsipras at the entrance of the prime-ministerial office created a sense of scorn and defiance of Syriza's electoral victory. Yet, Syriza has come into office heralding a different political culture and new political attitudes compared to its predecessors.

A different type of cabinet, the absence of a tie on the shirt of the new Prime Minister; the fact that both him and his party's ministers were sworn in by political oath following their positions on the true separation of Church and State, and the inclusion of non-elected ministers representing different tendencies within the party were small actions that point towards cultural changes. Will there be a true wind of change or are these actions a matter of a political communication strategy to impress voters? For a progressive radical government, the inclusion of only a handful of women is as noticeable as the big number of men with grey hair, and it reveals that some things don't change.

Change appears more like a breeze rather than a wind, since there are plenty of contradicting messages that create a sense of disorientation as to whether the country is indeed moving forward or heading back to the previous status quo that collapsed through the financial crisis. Some of the statements of the new ministers reflect perhaps a return or even deepening of the clientelistic populist state, whereas some reflect the momentum towards creating a new social contract from scratch.

Listening to the statement of the new finance minister on a new culture of 'frugal life' and learning to live within means, sounds like the introduction of a different kind of austerity—perhaps an austerity for all, rather than for the masses only, but one that does not necessarily create wealth.

## **A new kind of domino effect?**

And then there is Europe: the reception of the new government in Greece has been cautiously warm. It does not look likely that a Venezuela will be created in the heart of Europe, shaking up the Union and its policies. The effect will be there, no doubt, but it will be on a smaller scale than what the media are projecting it to be. The publicity that was shed by the international media created a sense of mystery for the new leader and the party that should not be overlooked. The reporting from Greece has created a sense of potential success for similar parties across Europe. Yet, these parties do not come from the same point of origin as Syriza or from the same political circumstances that brought Syriza to the forefront of Greek politics.

The European Union has given some space to the new government and opened a small window for the potential compromises it is prepared to make. But the real pressure is likely to come from the domestic context, should Syriza come back more empty-handed than it expects. Indeed, the new government will honestly attempt to renegotiate the agreements with Europe and the IMF, but the outcome is hard to judge. It is entitled to time credit, but that credit has very little margins.

Failure to deliver that promise will in fact shake up Syriza's economic strategy, which in turn will lead to disappointment by the electorate and perhaps a collapse of the hope in the two coalition partners.

The sense of exhilaration in Athens is justified: new government, new faces, new ways of doing things and renewed hopes for a better future. The cooperation with a right-wing party may have not gone down so well for the radical character Syriza wanted to present, but some promises can still be fulfilled. The Left has a chance to prove itself to the public. Yet, that chance may be unique and the public will place the new government under more scrutiny than ever before, given that voters are impatient and are still trying to balance out their political identities.

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*Dr Theofanis Exadaktylos is Lecturer in European Politics, University of Surrey, and a member of the Advisory Committee of the GPSG*

# 3 | Daphne Halikiopoulou and Sofia Vasilopoulou

Syriza won the Greek elections on a radical left platform, but keeping the middle class on side may be key to retaining power

Greece has a new government: a radical left-radical right coalition between the Coalition of the Radical Left (Syriza) and the Independent Greeks (ANEL). The 25 January elections were the most critical in decades, not only for Greece but also for Europe. Greece is the first country among the European 'debtors' to elect a government with a clear anti-austerity mandate. There are expectations of a potential domino effect: already Podemos has promised to emulate Syriza's victory in the upcoming 2015 Spanish national elections.

Syriza, previously marginalised in the party system, managed to attract just over 36.3% of the Greek vote, which translated to 149 seats – two seats short of forming a majority government. The centre-right New Democracy, which was in power since 2012 and has been associated with austerity and harsh economic measures, came second with just over 27.8% of the vote. Essentially the result was a landslide for Syriza, which managed to attract a broad voting base.

As the results indicate, it was not only the far left that benefitted from the election. The ultra-nationalist extreme right-wing Golden Dawn came third with just under 6.3% of the vote, translating into 17 seats. While it has lost support marginally since the 2012 elections, the result indicates that the party now has consistent support. This is despite the fact that its leading members are currently imprisoned facing indictment and the party did little campaigning.

The River, a centrist party putting forward a socially liberal agenda, came fourth with only around 0.2% less than the Golden Dawn and received the same number of seats at 17. This indicates low levels of support for the centre ground. The overall election results are hardly surprising given the context within which they took place: high levels of unemployment, disillusionment and social discontent. Both the campaign as well as the resulting coalition confirm the strength of the pro- and anti-bailout cleavage.

## The campaigns

The debate took place along the lines of continuity versus change, stability versus instability, Euro versus Grexit, austerity versus growth, and fear versus hope. During the short pre-election period, discussions were structured around the contrast between hope for a better future, on the one hand, and fear for a worse future to come, on the other. This illustrates the extent to which emotions were at the heart of party campaigns. Parties tapped into people's insecurities in an attempt to attract their vote. It is precisely the fear versus hope campaign that has polarised the debate.

Syriza was the advocate for 'hope': the party's logo 'Hope is on the way' was accompanied by rhetoric emphasising a new beginning, justice and equality, an end to the humanitarian disaster that austerity has created, a new Europe and a future with dignity. On the other hand New Democracy attempted to mobilise on the basis of fear. Its campaign, which in sum was characterised by scaremongering, was centred on the potential consequences of a Syriza victory, including the downgrading of Greece's credit rating, a Greek default, a Grexit, and an overall economic disaster which would 'undo' the sound economic policies that the New Democracy-led coalition government had been implementing since 2012. It appears that hope is a stronger emotion than fear and Syriza's campaign was the most successful.



## The new Syriza-led coalition government

What unites Syriza and ANEL is their anti-austerity stance. But what divides them is their viewpoints on key social issues, including nationalism, religion and immigration. The Independent Greeks are a radical right party emphasising what they term 'national issues': for example the Macedonian question, Cyprus, and Greece's relationship with Turkey, which they have identified as non-negotiable 'red lines'. This party may be classified as conservative authoritarian, emphasising the motto 'fatherland, religion and family'. These terms would seem to fundamentally contradict Syriza's left-wing, socially open ideals, such as their pro-immigration stance, their calls for the separation of Church and State, and support for same-sex marriage. Alexis Tsipras is the first Greek Prime Minister ever to take a political rather than a religious oath for his new government.

However, it was more strategic rather than ideological considerations that guided the formation of the coalition. The inclusion of Rahil Makri, a former ANEL MP, in Syriza indicates that the party is guided more by the pro versus anti-austerity cleavage rather than the left-right cleavage. Alternatively, this could be a good indication that Syriza is becoming a catch-all party attempting to attract a social base broader than its traditional left-wing supporters.

Even before the elections Syriza had started to compromise on its more radical positions. When it entered the Greek political scene as a contender in 2012, it did so on a radical left platform bearing all the features of a party in opposition. Emphasising anti-establishment ideas, Syriza had declared that it would renegotiate austerity at any cost. As the party got closer to power, it began to resemble a party in office: moderating its position in a bid to attract broader electoral support and put forward policies it can actually implement. Even if we accept that Syriza is moderating, it is still fundamentally distant ideologically from ANEL and this casts doubt on the stability of the coalition. In addition, Syriza's decision to make the Ministry of Defence the responsibility of ANEL's leader, Panos Kammenos, raises questions about the future of foreign policy and the so-called 'national questions'.

### A possible Grexit?

But what Europe is really interested in is Syriza's economic agenda. The party has pledged to take Greece out of austerity and alleviate poverty. Among other pledges, it has promised to restore some of the lowest pensions, return public sector jobs, stop taxing incomes up to 12,000 Euros, offer free electricity to 300,000 households, provide food allowances to poor families, free healthcare for all and housing subsidies to up to 25,000 families. It has also promised to address the issue of property tax (ENFIA) and not allow the auctioning of primary residences. The key question that arises from all this is where Syriza will get the money from.

The party has said it will tax the rich and give to the poor. But the obvious questions are who are the rich, how much are they going to be taxed, how will the problem of tax evasion among the rich be addressed, and what is going to happen to Greece's large middle class that has suffered from austerity. The party has not been clear about its programme for structural reform or about precisely how it will boost economic growth. The key is a balance between external demands and domestic politics. On the one hand, Syriza will need to renegotiate with the country's European partners on the issue of prolonging debt repayments. Domestically, on the other hand, the regulator will be the middle class. If we accept Politics 101, the middle class plays a determining role for both economic growth and democratic stability.

\* \* \*

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*Sofia Vasilopoulou is Lecturer in Politics at the University of York.*

*A previous version of this article appeared in the LSE European Politics and Policy blog (EU-ROPP, <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/euoppblog>).*

# 4 | Dimitris Tsarouhas

## The end of “politics as usual”?

### What happened on election night?

The Greek election result confirmed predictions: Syriza won, and it won big. The New Democracy-PASOK coalition government was on a downward spiral after the 2014 European elections and a series of tactical errors cost it dearly. Although New Democracy held its own relatively well, PASOK suffered a heavy defeat and its future is, to say the least, uncertain. Other parties entering Parliament hovered between 4 and 6 per cent; they did not lose, neither did they impress. Importantly, the far-right Golden Dawn ended up third largest party, confirming that its voter base is more solid than often assumed.

Syriza obtained 36% of the votes, a stellar achievement. Its second major objective, to win an absolute majority and govern singlehandedly, was missed however. In a very short space of time a deal was struck with the right-wing Independent Greeks (ANEL) and a coalition government has already been sworn in.

### What sort of government will that be?

Efficiency-wise, this is good news: the country needed a government quickly, not least to get on with the thorny issue of debt renegotiation. Content-wise, it is prudent to be sceptical: the radical left is poles apart from its junior partner on heavy issues such as immigration, citizenship law, law



The Presidential Mansion Garden (Jenny Tolou)

and order as well as state-church relations. Blending opposite views and synthesising them is the art of politics. It is a high art, however, and Syriza's choice of coalition partner does little to reduce uncertainty. At best, coalition squabbles will soon emerge. At worst, the government's ability to govern effectively will progressively disappear. In any case, Syriza will be forced to water down many of its policies on the aforementioned issues.

### **Will Greece exit the Eurozone?**

Highly unlikely, unless a crash course policy is consciously opted for by 'Brussels' and the new government. The forthcoming negotiations will be complicated – but the people in charge, sworn in Wednesday afternoon, can come up with a modest plan of debt restructuring that could ignite a bigger debate on the EU's fiscal rules. That should be enough to placate fears both in Greece and the Union.

### **Summing it up**

Sunday's result was a victory for democratic politics: popular disillusionment with a tired government translated into a golden opportunity for SYRIZA to assume office. It played its hands skilfully during the pre-election campaign, and exposed outgoing PM Samaras as a helpless scaremonger. It worked marvellously. Tough times lie ahead, however, and the coalition is ideologically very heterogeneous. Prime Minister Tsipras will have to opt for moderate politics at home and abroad. This is bound to disappoint many from within his own ranks, including his coalition partner. He can still pull this off, provided he proved genuinely ready to heed advice from liberals and social democrats outside his Cabinet.

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# 5 | Pavlos Vasilopoulos

## The moment of truth

After five years of dead-end austerity, the Greek electorate finally gave a clear mandate to a left party to renegotiate the country's fate, despite extended fear-mongering from EU officials. Understanding Syriza's popularity helps anticipating what the future holds for Greece and the Eurozone. It is important to note that despite its 'radical' tag, Syriza has actually toned down its platform. Instead of cancelling the bail-out deal, it now aims at a renegotiation in order to ease austerity. Furthermore, the new finance minister Yanis Varoufakis sent a first message of compromise by abandoning the idea of a drastic cut in the country's nominal debt.

As things stand, Syriza's 2015 platform is not drastically different from New Democracy's 2012 promises, which were never implemented as the government finally complied with the austerity demands of the country's lenders. Many austerity advocates in Germany and elsewhere in Europe expect Syriza to do the same. However a possible post-electoral switch to austerity by Syriza is considerably harder to achieve for two main reasons.

Firstly, despite the center-left turn of the official party line and the appointment of pragmatic party members in the key ministries of economy and finance, Tsipras chose to form a government with the Independent Greeks, a right-wing populist party. While the party does not share the Eurosceptic tendencies of the Front National, it is a hardline anti-bailout party which will prove particularly hard to make a switch to austerity.

Secondly, an important difference that makes any policy turn difficult is the vast difference in the electoral bases of New Democracy and Syriza. Whereas in 2012 New Democracy attracted support from upper economic classes who were willing to make sacrifices in order to ensure Greece will not default, Syriza receives exceptionally high support among those who have lost the most during the crisis, namely the youth, low earners and the unemployed. In short, Syriza appeals to voters who feel that they have lost all their basis of social security and are willing to risk in order to ease their personal economic hardship. This is the reason why the tremendous pressure exerted by EU officials and the government did not pay off. More importantly it shows that, unlike New Democracy in 2012, Syriza has a very limited space for a political manoeuvre.

Greece's lenders will be called to make a tough choice: either compromise by offering some relief from austerity and allow the government to ease the severe economic hardship of sensitive social groups; or risk a direct clash with the new Greek government with unpredictable consequences for the enterprise of European integration as a whole.

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## Part II

### The Continuing Transformation of the Greek Party System

## A new Greek party system is here to stay

The outcome of the 2015 Greek national election confirmed a new era in the Greek party system. While trends of significant transformations became visible well before the last election, it is only now that we can confidently talk about party system change in Greece. The 2015 election has not only brought about more innovative patterns to add to those seen in Greek politics in the last five years, but it has also formed a much more complete picture of what is really happening in the Greek party system as a whole. For that matter, all the main party system properties experienced substantial alterations:

### **Fragmentation**

A trend towards increasing fragmentation, which can be traced back to the 2009 and 2012 election, is now a pattern in the Greek party system. Party competition has become a multi-actor game, in which seven political parties are willing to shape new rules. In Sartori's terms, all political forces in parliament are now expected to play either a coalition or blackmail potential card. In that way, they are no longer passive political actors that cannot influence decision-making; rather, Greek minor parties have been guaranteed an active role in party competition in Greece.

### **Polarisation**

Higher polarisation patterns have also been confirmed in this election. From the Greek Communist Party (KKE) which is located close to the extreme lLeft to Golden Dawn which covers the extreme rRight, the position of the Greek parties that secured a place in parliament enhances a wide, if not full, range of ideological stances across the Left-Right spectrum. Clearly, a highly polarised debate is much concentrated in the two major political actors, Syriza and New Democracy. However, not only is Syriza a new political force in this debate, but also general political power has spread out much more among the several parties in parliament.

### **Government Composition**

Changes in fragmentation and polarisation scores were so significant, that they have led to an entirely innovative government composition pattern, in which the two coalition partners, Syriza and Independent Greeks (ANEL), have never been in government before. While signs of transition towards a new government composition and coalition formation pattern in the Greek party system were pinned down in 2012 with the coalition government of New Democracy, PASOK, and Democratic Left (DIMAR), the 2015 election confirmed that the new model is here to stay. Wholesome alternation in government, innovative governing formula, and open access to government, result in what Mair would describe as an open structure of competition.

The ongoing transformations in the three main party system properties show that the new trends that were identified in the previous Greek elections have now turned into patterns. In 2012, the country was still struggling to find itself in the midst of the Eurozone crisis and voting behaviour was a much more impassioned act. In 2015, Greece has already started leaving the worst memories behind, and Greek people voted with a cooler state of mind. All things considered, a new Greek party system is here to stay.

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## The Greek political system in crisis

On the evening of the elections day a historic change took place as a party of the left (Syriza) achieved the highest ever share of the vote. Yet, it fell short of forming a parliamentary majority by two seats. The morning of 26th January, Greece was set to change most of its leadership positions: the Prime Minister and ministers, the President of the Republic, the President of the Parliament, even the head of some of its parties. Meanwhile, the new coalition government of Syriza and the right-wing populist Independent Greeks (ANEL) forged a paradoxical alliance premised on both sides' claims against austerity and the Memoranda.

In this note I present a brief analysis of the dramatic changes in the Greek party system. My broader argument is that the Greek political system is undergoing substantial changes that have no equivalent compared to the political systems of the older EU member states. Since 2009, four general elections were held, four different governments have been formed, thereby creating conditions of government instability. Apart from the economic crisis and its social consequences, the political crisis is a major challenge in its own right affecting the prospects of Greece.

It remains to be seen whether the new government of the anti-memorandum camp will recover essential public trust and support to fulfil the tasks it set. The good news is that election campaigns, leaving aside the adversarial rhetoric, did not ignite further divisions within the electorate and a smooth transfer of power took place. Syriza was successful indeed in articulating diffuse demands against the old ruling parties and class, in targeting the New Democracy-PASOK government by almost every parliamentary means and, also, in advancing a kind of alternative set of policy goals that was endorsed by a large part of the electorate after a long period during which the party was trying to reassure the domestic public that Grexit was not a choice, but that it will firmly stick to the country's full membership in the EU.

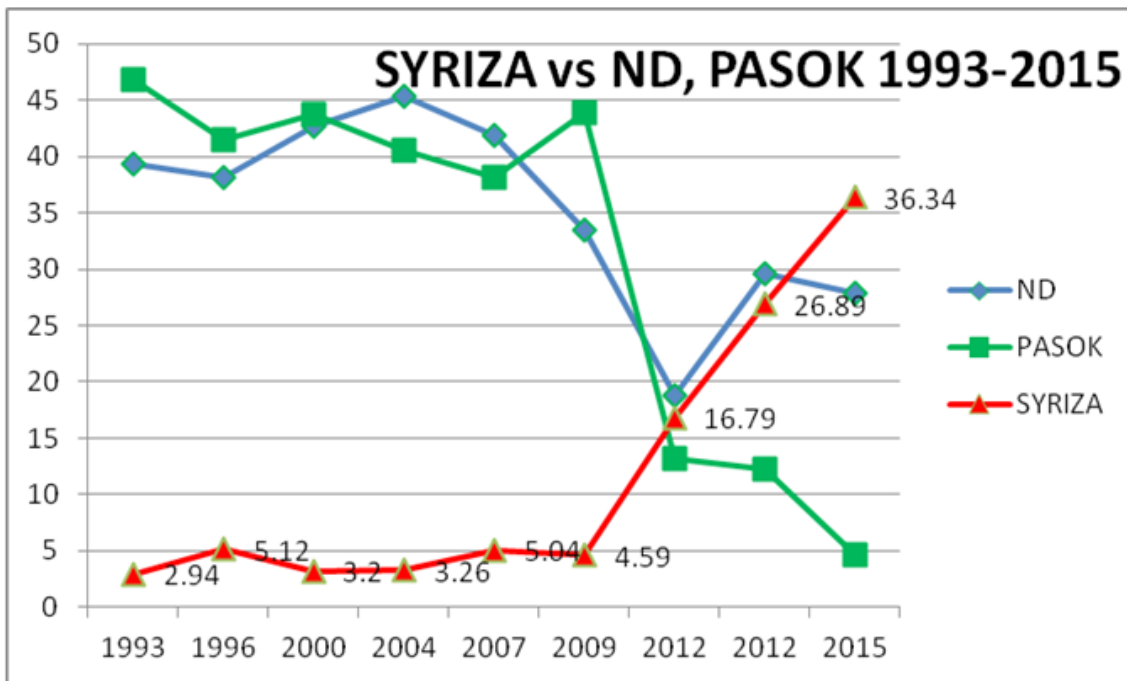
However, time is limited for the new government to deliver certain policy results. The problem though is that many factors are beyond its reach. The way its European counterparts will react to claims about re-negotiating the sustainability of debt or abandoning any policy conditionality is puzzling for the time speaking and most probably will not be as positive as expected.

Therefore, the broader argument is that the choice of the electorate, by passing the mandate to anti-austerity parties with no government involvement in the past, should be seen as a last chance for the political personnel to uphold as effectively as possible the interests of those most seriously hit by the crisis and to provide the grounds for the country's return to prosperity. If this last chance proves successful, Greek politics may restore some of its lost credibility vis-à-vis the citizenry. Most importantly, there is an urgent need to restore the convergence of the Greek political system with the well-entrenched political systems of the older EU member states over matters, such as the functioning and stability of government, the quality of parliamentary affairs, the conditions and rules of political antagonism, the marginalisation of certain extreme ideologies and practices.

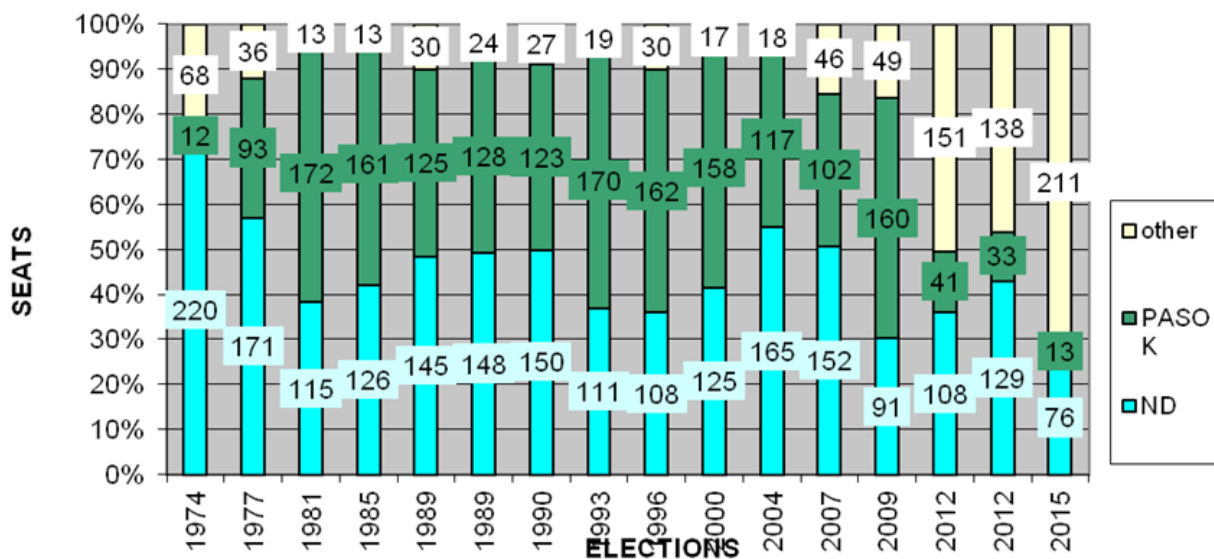
### **Aspects of the Greek political system in crisis:**

(1) The fall of a bi-polar party system based on New Democracy and PASOK with regard to the share of the vote and the allocation of parliamentary seats. Is this the new picture of the party system or are more changes under way? Seven parties are represented in the new parliament. The right-wing extremist Golden Dawn re-elected MPs, one party gained seats less than a year since it was founded (The River / To Potami) and a party of the left failed to re-elect MPs (Democratic Left

/ DIMAR).

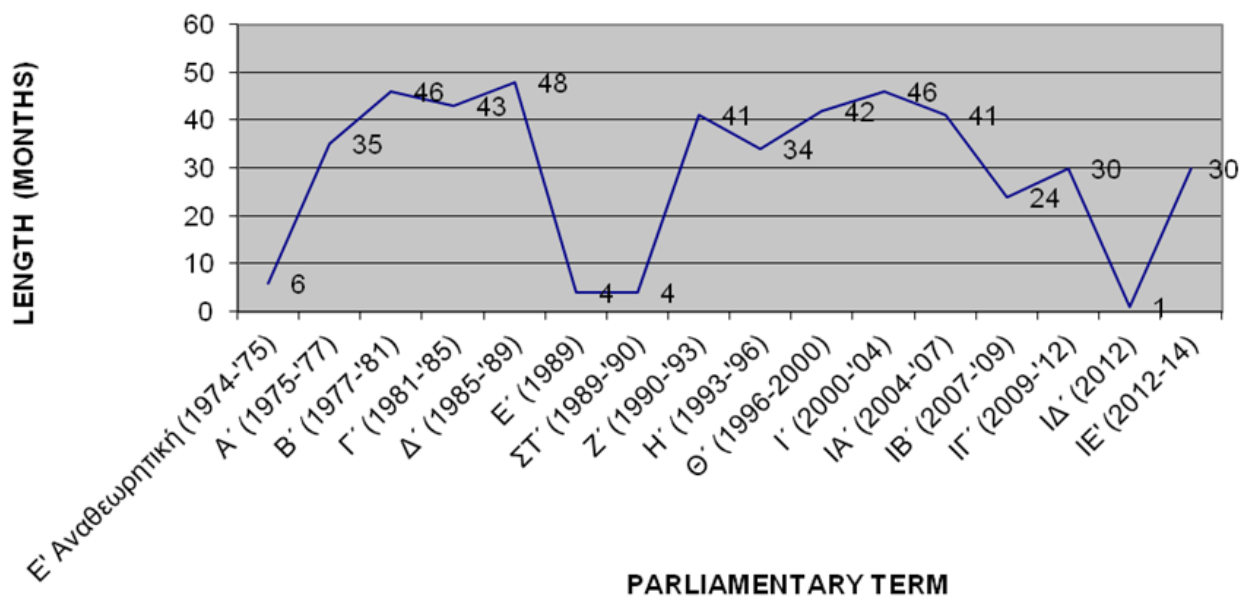


**Distribution of parliamentary seats 1974-2015**



(2) The length of the parliamentary term has been drastically reduced. In the last decade, for different reasons, none of the governments completed a full term. Syriza and the Independent Greeks have certain differences over policy issues and, as yet, no effective and coherent coalition agreement has been made. Members of the Greek parliament are to an unprecedented extent 'freshers'. While this is positive for the renewal of the political class, it means that many MPs are inexperienced with regard to the oversight of legislation regulating complex issues and, also, their behaviour may prove unpredictable.





### 3. Electoral volatility with no equivalent in older EU member states' political systems:

(i) The rocketing electoral success of SYRIZA (+31,71% since 2009) is comparable only with parties from the new democracies in Eastern Europe, for instance, the Hungarian Fidesz-MPP (+22,5% 1994-1998 and +45,7% within sixteen years 1994-2010). The Polish Platforma Obywatelska (+17,41% 2005-2007), the Finnish Perussuomalaiset/True Finns (+17,41% 2005-2007), the Hungarian MIÉP (+ 14,5% between 2006-2010), the Slovakian Smer-SD (+30,94% 2002-2012), the Swiss SVP/UDC (+ 11,7% 1995-2013) and the Slovenian Social Democrats (+20,25% between 2004-2008).

As most of these cases make evident, a massive transfer of votes is the exception rather than a normal phenomenon and is essentially a feature of political systems that are still at a stage of consolidating a functioning party system.

(ii) One of the old ruling parties (PASOK) lost nearly 39% of the votes it received in 2009. This loss has no equivalent in the older member states' party systems, e.g. the British Labour Party (-14,2% 1997-2010), the German SPD (-11,22% 2005-2009), the Dutch CDA (-19,4% within a decade). Only in Eastern Europe's new democracies can we observe similar cases: the Polish centre-left SLD (-32,76% within ten years), the Hungarian social-democratic MSZP (-23,9% 2006-2010), the Slovenian liberal LDS (-34,71% 2000-2011) and the Slovakian HZDS (-26,1% 2000-2011).

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## A step towards a new party system and the return of politics

Although most analyses of the elections of January 25th are focused on the potential policy consequences, the results should be considered a positive step forward in a transitional party system. One of the glaring effects of the economic crisis has been the prolonged and agonising death of the post-1974 party system, which had long ceased to function as an interest aggregation mechanism. Following the onset of the economic crisis in 2008, the severe recession and Troika-imposed austerity dominated public discourse and resulted in the collapse of electoral support for PASOK, the lynchpin of the centre-left, while at the same time posing challenges to the traditional centre-right, creating a vacuum into which populism, radicalism, and anti-austerity sentiment has rushed. Although the impact of the economic crisis and harsh austerity measures on ordinary Greek citizens cannot be understated, it is not just poor performance legitimacy and popular discontent with policy that has resulted in the collapse of the party system that had been in place since 1981; the problem is much deeper.

A snapshot of the new parliament illustrates a very fluid and potentially unstable party system. There are a plethora of loose coalitions, movements, and splinter-ideological groupings, which look more like lobbying groups than political parties, spread across the political and ideological spectrum. The most salient 'partisan' division is populist/patriotic 'anti-austerity' versus the imperative of the markets. Influenced as it is by a very tumultuous and divisive history in the 20th century in the geopolitical periphery of Europe, there is a fertile ground within Greek society for such divisions, particularly given that the austerity policies are largely seen as a consequence of exogenous forces that have eroded Greek sovereignty.

Interestingly, however, the sentiment, which is broadly represented by pro-EU and anti-EU perspectives, reflects a recurrent political division and popular narrative, which stretches at least to the 4th Crusade of 'us vs. them', and that is at the core of identity politics. As such, the coalition of expediency that is the partnership of Syriza and the nationalist Independent Greeks is best understood as a product of deep societal angst and, most likely, temporary. Despite the fact that the coalition partners have agreed to shelve all that divides them in the policy realm and concentrate on the one thing that unites them, the policy and ideological gulf is wide.

The election of Syriza has done a great deal to reshape the political landscape and bring to the forefront a new, younger generation of political elites, which has the potential to be a positive step in the process of creating the new political party system. The true test will be to what extent governing platforms emerge that reflect long-term interests across a range of pressing policy issues other than dissatisfaction and opposition to a single issue. Until then, the nascent new party system in Greece will simply continue to facilitate a clientelistic distribution of public resources, rather than relying on public policy to deliver on platform objectives emerging from articulated interests, which require a primacy of politics over economic imperatives.

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## Elections are not enough

Elections are not the answers to Greece's woes. The answer is political reforms; far-reaching political reforms that in turn will facilitate economic and societal reforms. It may seem as odd to make such a statement when all the attention seems to revolve around Syriza's electoral victory, but the truth is that general elections, especially in Greece, are overrated.

Without wishing to discredit the value of elections –parliamentary democracy is inconceivable without them– it should be made clear that national elections have become an obstacle to the modernisation of the country. The reason is fairly simple, yet not evident. Both politicians and citizens treat the national elections as a panacea. They have invested all hope for change in governmental change. Democracy has been reduced to casting a ballot every 2.7 years (instead of 4, which is what the constitution prescribes) forgetting not only that frequent elections can be costly, but also that elections in themselves do not suffice to save an ailing parliamentary democracy.

The latest (November 2014) Eurobarometer poll shows that 85% of the Greeks do not trust their parliament ([http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb82/eb82\\_anx\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb82/eb82_anx_en.pdf)). That is more than in any other EU country and higher even than in Turkey, FYROM, Serbia or Montenegro. In 2004, the same figure was only 33%, among the lowest in Europe. Similarly, electoral turnout in Greece was at the all time low of 62% in 2012 down from 77% in the 2004 elections. Contrary to expectations, voter turnout in the latest elections remained very low: just 64%.

And how are we to explain that the Union of Centrists, a marginal party ridiculed by most as a clown-party, suddenly got more than 4% in some districts and nationally nearly 2%, when the newly founded Movement of Democrats and Socialists (KIDISO) of former Prime Minister George Papandreou received 2.5%? Or how can we justify the fact that Golden Dawn, a neo-fascist and anti-establishment party, came third with more than 6% of the vote, despite the fact that its leader and several of its MPs were imprisoned and supposedly discredited? Aren't these results the electoral symptoms of a malfunctioning parliamentary democracy? In combination with the 2010-2012 demonstrations that had an obvious anti-establishment and anti-parliamentarian character, the signs of political alienation leave no room for complacency.

As I argue elsewhere (<http://tinyurl.com/meldsg4>), the gap between citizens and the Hellenic Parliament has grown at a dangerous level. Rather than looking only at the symptoms, we should be studying the structural deficiencies of Greek democracy and how they can be cured. Elections are not the only means to close the gap between represented and representatives. We have reached a point where the quality of political representation is more important than the quantity. Consequently, more elections at increasingly shorter intervals have little to offer. In fact, they are damaging.

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## The final collapse of the Greek cartel party system?

The January 25th general elections signalled the expected end of the party system of the Metapolitefsi era that lasted forty years. The established political parties' share of the votes decreased to less than one third due to the terrible consequences of the austerity policies they imposed as a condition of Greece's bailouts by the "troika". It must be noted that the sum of these parties' shares of the votes during the period 1981-2009 ranged from 77.3% (2009) to 86.86% (1989). PASOK (Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement), the smaller government partner, paid the heaviest toll. The conservative party of government (New Democracy) managed to limit its losses to 2% compared to the elections of June 2012. Syriza challenged and prevailed over the government gaining 36.34% of the votes cast. Syriza was formed in 2004 and its initial constituent groups can be traced back in the course of history (euro-communism, Trotskyism, Maoism etc.). Nowadays it is an enlarged coalition that includes the left-wing social democrats, who in the passage of time, since 2009 abandoned PASOK due to its "conversion to a neo-liberal party" as well the Ecologists-Greens. Syriza successively overthrew New Democracy's electoral strategy which consisted in creating an atmosphere of fear that Syriza's promise for renegotiation of the bailout package Greece might default or leave the Euro.

However, this is not the whole picture. Austerity policies caused the radicalisation and the stabilisation of the far right (Golden Dawn) as well the reinforcement of the traditional communist party (KKE) and various groups of the extra-parliamentary left (ANTARSYA etc). We must also include in the picture the new political parties that contested the election for the first time: The River (To Potami), KIDISO (Movement of Democrats and Socialists) and Full Stop (Teleia). The River was created by a well-known mainstream TV journalist who cooperated with politicians coming from both the neoliberal right and the reformist left parties. Full Stop was formed by a popular actor who has been mayor of a small Greek town after having cooperated with KKE in municipal elections. Exit polls show that there is a "generation gap" between Syriza and New Democracy's electorate since Syriza's votes came from young voters (especially among the age cohort of 35-54 with a lion's share of the votes amounting to 41.2%) in contrast to New Democracy's votes that came mainly from elder voters.

In these elections the internet and interactive social media played a very significant role in political communication compared with the past elections. Except Syriza and KKE that held mass outdoor election rallies, the other parties settled for small scale indoor gatherings. Moreover, there were special groups in the parties' organisation that created and shared humorous posters and videos aiming at the deconstruction of the other side's campaigns, policies and politicians' image through social media.

It seems that Greece is headed towards a new but different two-party system which will consist of a hegemonic movement party (Syriza) and a transitional conservative party. However, it is too early to judge this system's final development since due to the electoral law's provisions Syriza did not gain the outright majority of the parliamentary seats and had to form a coalition government with the right-wing Independent Greeks who also follow an anti-austerity policy. Moreover, the question is what will happen with The River, which must clarify its policies and set up a real organisational structure in order to become an effective and relevant party exhibiting blackmail potential, according to Giovanni Sartori's definition.

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## Why has PASOK kept collapsing?

Every election in Greece now seems to find PASOK hitting a new electoral low. From 2009 to May 2012 its collapse – from 43.9% to 13.2%, was astonishing. It was similar in scope to monumental collapses of ruling parties that occurred in the past – only more dramatic – such as the disintegration of the Canadian Progressive Conservatives in 1993 from 43% to 16% and the collapse of Irish Fianna Fail from 42% to 17% in 2011.

Where PASOK differs from these parties is the fact that it continued to collapse even after its dramatic implosion. The Canadian Progressive Conservatives found their support settling in the mid-to-high teens for every future general election that they would contest and Fianna Fail has seen some stability in their polling numbers in the last few years – winning 25.3% in the 2014 local election contest. By contrast PASOK's 2012 election results seemed more a small stop on the party's rapid descent rather than a new anchor and base of support. The party now commands the support of a mere 4.7% of the electorate and is the smallest of the parties in Parliament.

This raises a challenge for party identification in a Greek context. For PASOK, voters clearly are not sticking by their choice through thick and thin. Exit polls suggested that they kept a mere 37.2% of their voters. There is doubt based on this trend that PASOK may indeed have any 'floor' of voters, or any kind of minimum proportion of the electorate that really are willing to support them through anything. Without any kind of positive record to defend, the party may have hoped that loyal voters would stick with the party regardless, an impression reinforced by their nostalgic campaign. Either party identification does not matter now for PASOK, or the cultivated loyalty of voters never mattered for the party in the first place. Either would be an uncomfortable truth for the party.

The most obvious explanation as to why PASOK differs from similar parties though is government. Fianna Fail and the Progressive Conservatives left office – at least allowing voters to stop associating them with government decisions and giving them some chance of repairing their battered organizations. PASOK has not had that luxury, and has continued to fall in popularity as it exercised political authority. Now it has the opportunity to try to revive; something that neither the Progressive Conservatives could do, nor Fianna Fail has yet been able to do in opinion polls. Whether it can do so with such a political brand so tarnished in the eyes of the public remains to be seen.

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## The electoral fate of PASOK

*«And now gentlemen  
A word I give to remain in your memories and minds,  
As base and finale too for all metaphysics»  
(Walt Whitman, 'The Base of all Metaphysics').*

The parliamentary elections in Greece launched a new political period in the country. For the first time, a political party of the radical left (Syriza) came first, winning 36.34% of the vote. This article focuses on Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), which won 4.68% of the vote and elected 13 MPs. As it is clear, the party continued its downward trend, which began in the 2012 elections.

In the first parliamentary elections of 2012 (May), PASOK obtained 13.18% of the vote. In the second parliamentary elections, which took place one month later (June), the party obtained 12.3% of the vote. PASOK's share of the vote shows that Greece's once hegemonic social democratic party has been transformed into a party which can no longer play a dominant role in the party system. The austerity measures have reconstructed the traditional social base of the party.

In this election, the party also had to face the problem that arose with the departure of former Prime Minister and party leader, George Papandreou, who founded a new centre-left political party, the Movement of Democrats and Socialists (KIDISO). Yet, this new party failed to get into parliament only getting 2.46%.

We believe that this disruption has affected the electoral share of PASOK. Three centre-left political parties (PASOK, The River and KIDISO) competed for hegemony in the political space of the centre-left. The River won that competition. Now, PASOK finds itself at the limits of political survival. The electoral decline continued. And the most important element is the definitive loss of its influence in the lower socioeconomic classes. The most characteristic example of its collapse: the Union of Centrists (a non-parliamentary party) received a higher percentage than PASOK in the first Thessaloniki constituency (A' Thessalonikis).

The election results demonstrate that Syriza is now the key player in the Greek party system. The system's "historical" party (PASOK) faces political problems and questions of existence.

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## Green prospects in Greece

The radical left-wing Syriza and the Green party Ecologists Greens/Oikologoi Prasinoi (EG) have been seen as representatives of the left-libertarian/new politics party families in Greece. These type of parties are marked by a commitment to new politics issues such as gender and racial equality, peace and ecology. In countries where two party formations of this kind are in competition to attract a very similar clientele and one of them is electorally significant, it is unlikely for the other to achieve autonomous electoral success. This is a well-known fact that has penetrated discussions on the strategic orientation of both parties since their first electoral participation in 2004 (only European parliament elections for EG).

Since then, Syriza has been showing a remarkable growth of its electoral score (from 3.26% in 2004 to 16.78% in June 2012) whereas EG has failed to reach the 3% threshold for parliamentary entry in successive rounds of national elections. Notwithstanding their success in the 2009 European parliament elections, where EG scored 3.49% and the election of one MEP, in the two parliamentary elections of 2012 EG missed the 3% threshold with 2.93% in the May elections and with a cataclysmic downfall to 0.88% in the June election. The latter resulted in an intensification of factionalist conflict in the ranks of EG and the participation of two competing green party formations in the 2014 European parliament elections with really poor results.

On 4 January 2015, EG decided (75% member support) to accept Syriza's invitation for a joint electoral participation. That agreement was based on a common acceptance of "22 core ecological positions" (see [ecogreens-gr.org](http://ecogreens-gr.org)). In addition, the group Greens/Prasinoi of former MEP Nikos Chrysogelos formed a coalition with the Democratic Left/Dimokratiki Aristera (DIMAR) and a third group called Europe Ecologie joined forces with the River (To Potami).

The formation by Syriza of a governing coalition with the right-wing populist Independent Greeks (ANEL) party was a very uncomfortable development to many supporters of the SYRIZA/EG alliance and it remains to be seen how that is going to evolve. Moreover, through the SYRIZA/EG alliance, EG managed to gain one parliamentary seat with the election of Yorgos Dimaras.

The new "super"-ministry of Productive Reconstruction, Environment and Energy will coordinate the responsibilities of three ministries, among which is the ministry of the Environment, Energy and Climate Change. Panagiotis Lafazanis was given the portfolio of that super-ministry and the veteran ecologist, Yannis Tsironis, from EG was given the undersecretary portfolio.

No doubt, the election of one MP and the appointment in a ministerial position are great achievements for Green politics in Greece. However, Green participation and the dependency on that by the new government is rather small and cannot guarantee that the scale will tilt towards the Green options when confronted by the need for growth and development.

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# Part III

## Interpreting Syriza's Victory



# 14 | Theodore Chadjipadelis

## Is it the economy, stupid?

Of the three main axes of political and electoral competition, the oldest one, the left-right axis, is the least important. How could it be? Greek citizens, who feel that they are over-taxed and under-served, believe they should pay fewer taxes and receive better quality public services. In other words, while they suffer the ills of both systems (socialist high taxes and liberalist low public services), they demand the systems' beneficial sides (socialist high quality services and liberalist low taxes). They ask for public universities, postgraduate studies free of charge, a vigorous health care system, and public infrastructures without suffering high taxes.

Since all parties promise such policies, the competition along the left-right axis is not important. This appears as an obvious contradiction, but in fact it is not: Being aware that such policy is impossible, the citizens do not ask for equal treatment for all, but only for themselves or their social class or group. Thus we end up with a clientelistic party system that favors the demands of some social groups, but not all, as they are incapable to honour their promises after they come into power. Apart from that, left-wing parties received 57% of the votes (previously 52%) while the right-wing parties 47% (previously 52%).

The competition along the axis of social policies "liberal-authoritarian" is of greater significance, but despite parties' polarisation it does not affect the outcome of the elections. Most of the parties promise a liberal policy but they implement an authoritarian one! Every citizen respects the social and individual rights of the other, as long as it does not hurt them personally!

The data analysis of a sample of half a million citizens collected with the use of the VAA helpmevote.gr reveals as more important the competition along the axis of governance. The one pole of the axis expresses a peculiar egalitarian populism which asks for national isolationism. This is expressed with statements as "it would be better if we had a national currency", "ordinary people are better than politicians", "the parties don't care about us", and "it is legal for us to do whatever is right for us".

The opposite pole of the axis expresses a European political spirit of cooperation. Without generally being in agreement with political parties' views, voters for Syriza, the Communist Party of Greece (KKE), the Golden Dawn, the Independent Greeks and ANTARSYA concentrate on the pole of national isolationism, while the European cooperation pole concentrates the voters from New Democracy, PASOK, The River, Democratic Left and the Movement of Democrats and Socialists (KIDISO).

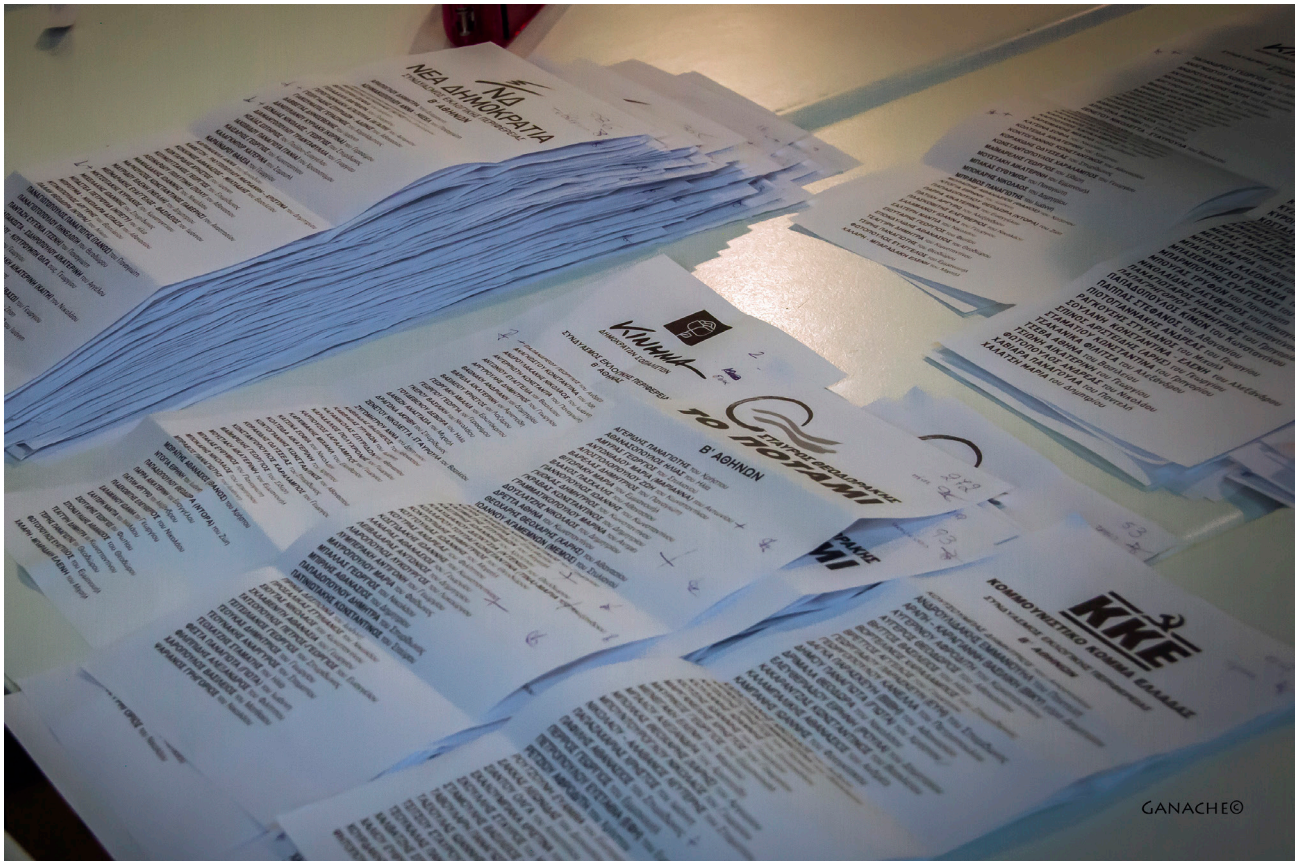
This was indeed the main issue of the elections: a peculiar egalitarian national isolationism without ideological background, against an equally non-ideological pluralistic European perspective. In this framework, the people voted for the parties, not for their manifestos which they do not trust, but for their so called "hidden agenda".

Since the electoral system is designed to support a one-party government, it is very difficult for a coalition government to arise out of it; another reason is the multifarious (almost contradictory) nature of the ideologies that coexist inside each of the poles. The fragmented party system tries to balance between a rock and a hard place, as the party system consists of parties that in the best case scenario show no will to cooperate, while in the worst case scenario resort to blackmailing tactics.

In the previous elections (2012) the European perspective parties got some 53% of the votes, while the parties of egalitarian nationalism got 47%. Today (2015) the situation is reversed: they received 47% and 53% of the votes respectively. So, is it “the economy, stupid”? Definitely yes! But according to “votes for favours”, the exchange model becomes “selfish economics”.

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By Eveline Konstantinidis – Ziegler

## A clear victory for the anti-austerity camp

Greek Politics after years of evidencing a fragmented political landscape, displayed a clear support towards anti-austerity parties. Seven parties entered parliament, out of which four are anti-austerity (Syriza, Golden Dawn, the Greek Communist Party (KKE) and Independent Greeks (ANEL), representing 52.84% of the vote) and three are pro-bailout (New Democracy, The River (To Potami) and PASOK representing 38.54% of the vote).

Below the results of the January 2015 General Election are compared to those of the June 2012 General Election:

Political Party	January 2015	June 2012
SYRIZA	36,34%	26,89%
New Democracy	27,81%	29,66%
Golden Dawn	6,28%	6,92%
To Potami	6,05%	-----
The Greek Communist Party	5,47%	4,50%
ANEL	4,75%	7,51%
PASOK	4,68%	12,28%

*Source: Greek Ministry of Interior*

Basing its electoral campaign on an anti-austerity but pro-Euro stance, it seems that Syriza, without reducing New Democracy's electoral base, was able to attract votes from the disintegrating PASOK and Democratic Left (DIMAR), as well as from the undecided voters, although it was short of an outright majority. This forced Syriza to form a coalition government with the populist right party Independent Greeks (ANEL), whose percentage fell by 3% from the 2012 elections, on the grounds of a common anti-austerity stance.

New Democracy managed to assert its control over the centre-right gaining more or less the same percentage of the vote as it did in 2012. Its electoral campaign based on alarmism has been blamed on a lot for this defeat, as it was obvious that the party tried to gain votes from the far right, including Golden Dawn, but failed in doing so. Nonetheless it seems that the austerity-at-all-costs policies implemented in the past two years by the coalition government was a more critical factor in the creation of the decisive margin by which Syriza won.

Despite the imprisonment of most of its members, including its leader, and the lack of a proper political campaign with barely any presence in the media, the extreme right party Golden Dawn managed to retain its percentage of the vote. This showcases clearly that anti-austerity fuelled wrath and anti-democratic sentiments are as strong as ever among a specific percentage of the Greek population.

PASOK and the Democratic Left (DIMAR) were severely punished by the Greek electorate; the former because of its perceived role in the crisis and the latter because of its inability to choose sides. The River, a party formed in 2014 with a political campaign targeting the pro-bailout moderate middle classes, managed to enter the Parliament, as did the Greek Communist Party (KKE), which despite the unmistakable move of the voters towards supporting Left anti-austerity parties, it

failed to gain any significant support.

Syriza showed its intentions from day one both inside and outside Greece. Internally many policies were reversed, like the redundancy of university administrators; the cancellation of laws governing the functioning of state universities; and the freezing of privatisation, to name but a few. Externally, the new Prime Minister, Mr Tsipras, already clashed with the EU Council over Russia and is contemplating posing a veto on new sanctions to the country, and Mr Varoufakis, the Minister for Finance, made it clear that the memorandum needs to be renegotiated. The question remains: Will the Syriza-led coalition government be able to lead transformation in Europe or will Greece have to face default by the end of 2015, and if that happens, will this unlikely union be able to survive?

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## The economic root causes of Syriza's victory

Starting in 1974, centre-right New Democracy and centre-left PASOK dominated Greek politics. Amid their regime, an amalgam of political-economic malignancies, such as high levels of tax evasion and corruption, weighty and complex regulations and rule by political and economic elites often reluctant to stay detached from vested privileges, has been brewing for decades. Greece, after being incorporated into the Eurozone, went through an era of impressive growth by borrowing too much money, having access to capital on international markets at low interest rates. Nevertheless, when the global economic crisis erupted, the country was significantly exposed to the turbulence of the financial markets as the weakest link of the Eurozone chain.

It should be underlined, though, that the domestic malignancies might explain why Greece was the first domino to fall. Nevertheless, they are insufficient in making clear the domino effect per se. For instance they do not justify how a tiny-sized sovereign debt crisis sparked in Athens has ballooned into an existential threat to the common currency. Thus, the responsibilities should merely fall upon the shoulders of other (f)actors as well.

Successive Greek governments (2010-2014) in tandem with the Troika of lenders embarked upon a large fiscal consolidation programme in order to put Greece's public finances in order. On the one side, this helped the country achieve an annual rate of fiscal consolidation of 4.2% GDP on average, the highest in the post-war developed world and a budgetary primary surplus during the previous year.

On the other side, this quick fiscal adjustment, focusing mainly on the symptoms and not on the roots of the problem, came at a high price. The heavy reliance of this programme on austerity-laden recipes (cutting salaries and increasing taxation) had accelerated the pace of economic recession more than anticipated. During these five years, the Greek governments were collecting a substantially higher share of GDP in taxes than usually, but with a declining GDP the overall tax take was following a downward trend. Furthermore, Greece has reached the highest rate of unemployment in the EU-28, while the recorded youth unemployment is close to 60%. Although the country started to grow again last year, at the current annual growth rate of 1.6% (a figure whose sustainability is questionable in the short-run), it would take much longer than a generation to reduce the rising national debt to a manageable level.

In a climate of severe polarisation, due to the wave of people's anger, fed up with the austerity policies leading to the loss of income and jobs, radical-left Syriza stormed to a victory in the last Greek elections. Its 41 year old leader, Alexis Tsipras has been trusted a clear mandate to negotiate an easing of austerity imposed by the Troika, and a write-off of at least some of the country's massive public sector debts. His first move was to share power with the populist right-wing Independent Greeks (ANEL) that holds an anti-Memorandum policy too. From now on, Tsipras has to face a two-level dilemma while seeking to restore the country's image both in the domestic and in the international arena:

- On a national level, he has to confront different constituencies that have cornered him into making pre-electoral radical promises whose delivery has been harshly criticized (vowing to "terminate the country's humiliation and pain") and to maintain the proper balances within a government composed of politically heterogeneous groups.
- On an international level, he has, given the critical situation in Greece, to convince the Euro-part-

ners and creditors to re-write the existing bailout agreements and reduce Greece's debt pile. The messages signaled by the Europartners seem ambivalent. Mario Draghi, the President of the ECB, has pulled off the "big bazooka" by unveiling a 1.1 trillion Euro quantitative easing (QE) package if applicant (including Greece) countries meet certain conditions. Nevertheless, Germany seems, for the time being at least, rather reluctant to discuss the possibility of any further debt reduction.

The future will show whether SYRIZA in alignment with other European forces, sharing Greece's anxieties and difficulties, will manage to drastically alter the entrenched austerity paradigm in the Eurozone or not.

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GANACHE©

By Eveline Konstantinidis – Ziegler

## Anti-austerity claims and a Freudian myth

It is certain that Syriza's victory is a great statement for the European austerity politics. It is also a great relief for Greek people, who for the last five years have been driven to poverty, relegation, despair and depression. And indeed, Greece seems to be the first European state to institutionally challenge the International Monetary Fund's policies, by voting for a party that promised to provide a solution to this dead-end. Yet, for most of the voters and supporters of the Left, there seems to be a black mark in the story: the collaboration with the right-wing party, the Independent Greeks (ANEL). And perhaps they are right. ANEL is a traditional, conservative right-wing party, with openly xenophobic, anti-Semitic, homophobic views. Nevertheless, the two parties managed to overcome their incompatible views and enter into a coalition government, based on one particular claim: anti-austerity.

Instead of rushing into condemning this coalition as a political compromise, experiencing a feeling of betrayal on behalf of the left party or questioning whether 'it is fine to be xenophobic and anti-gay as long as you are anti-austerity', it is important to ask ourselves 'what does this anti-austerity identity mean for Greek people and politics'. Perhaps behind this identity, a common enemy is fabricated: the authoritative, tyrannical and oppressive European Father – the IMF and the dogma of austerity. The construction of this enemy seems to have encouraged the two parties to unite and conveniently disguise their ideological differences; to incarnate a potential resolution not only for the current problems of Greek politics but also of the post-civil war polemical division between the left and the right. In fact, I am afraid that this division is such a traumatic experience in Greek history, so that its suppression might have the potential to legitimise, in the eyes of some, the coalition government. To put it in a sketchy metaphor, what this coalition brings to mind is the Freudian myth for the birth of society: the two brothers conspire to kill (and later eat) their tyrannical father.

The question from now on is not so much whether the cannibalistic act against the IMF will take place, but whether the traumatic disunity of Greek society and the suffocating feeling of injustice – which has made Greeks look like the angry teenagers of Europe – will be resolved. The Freudian myth might provide us with a warning:

“In the act of devouring the father, the two brothers accomplished their identification with him and each one of them acquired a portion of his strength” (Freud, S., 2004, *Totem and Taboo*, London: Routledge, p. 165).

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## The revenge of the Greek family

The recent national elections in Greece have brought about a major shift in the Greek and European political landscape. This is the first time that a Radical Left party has won national elections in Greece and, indeed, in Western Europe. This by itself is a major feat for Syriza and Mr. Tsipras, its charismatic populist leader. However, what the post-elections political discussion has missed out is that behind this radical shift lies the fact that the average Greek family as a major institution of the Greek society is not necessarily influenced by the ideology struggle between the Left and the Right.

The family was and still remains the cornerstone of the Greek society. It has historically constituted the safety net protecting the individual from the wider economic and social hardships. Nevertheless, after more than five years of increasing unemployment and reduction of its disposable income, the Greek family is now struggling to perform this fundamental role. The number of jobless households has surged in the country, while dissaving (or else negative saving) is now the norm.

Naturally, it is the lower middle class families that have suffered the most. These constitute the spine of Greek society. In the period after 1974, the so-called *Metapolitefsis* or else the post-dictatorship period, they managed to hoard some meagre assets. Hence, by the beginning of the financial crisis they were relatively affluent by Greek historical standards. They enjoyed a decent living based on the mutual help of their members.

The relatively affluent lower middle class families of the past have become the *nouveaux pauvres*, the new poor, of today. They have lost heavily in terms of material wealth. Their financial assets have vaporised, but they have retained vivid memory of more financially secure past times. To add to this, they also feel humiliated and betrayed by the traditional Greek political elites and the European partners. This has fuelled anger and has radicalised a segment of the population that has traditionally been socially conservative.

This part of the Greek society tended, until recently, to avoid abrupt political change. Hence, the Radical Left's political discourse used to scare them away. However, this has now changed. The average Greek family has nothing more to lose. It has nothing to be scared about. This is why the Right's attempt to frighten the Greek public in the recent elections failed to work as a political strategy. The Greek family feels lost, betrayed, and insecure. It is ready to go to the extreme, in order to manifest its anger and bitterness over years of loss and hardship. The recent elections prove just that. The Greek electorate has taken revenge for the hubris of shaking the most sacrosanct pillar of the Greek society; the family.

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## The electoral reader, 2015: an organic or a traditional reaction to the crisis?

On 25 January 2015, a new chapter of the political history of Greece and of Europe has begun. There are two popular interpretations for this historical moment; the first would be the Left's resurgence as an executive alternative in Western Europe; the second would emphasise the response to austerity policy-making due to the fiscal and debt crisis.

The second response should read as primarily a Eurosceptic reaction to the crisis, which fundamentally views the causes of the crisis as a faulty management by the European institutions. It does not acknowledge the factors of the crisis and its complicated nature.

However, the first interpretation should not be considered as a reaction to austerity due to the Euro crisis and a Eurosceptic opposition to the European Union's policy-making, but, on the contrary, as a popular agreement that the crisis, and its factors, have very little to do with the Union. Hence, the rise of the Left is identified as an honest European reaction to the crisis, which seeks to facilitate the European ideals as part of the solution.

The question that should be asked is which of the two accounts did the voters of Syriza acknowledge as valid? Could we assume by reading the party's Thessaloniki Programme (announced in September 2014), that Syriza's voters read this historical moment with a European-oriented approach (i.e. Greece should remain a dedicated member to the European Union and the Eurozone)?

In my opinion, Greek voters offered their trust to Syriza for three main reasons: a) because of the party's political honesty towards the current humanitarian crisis, b) because of their commitment to eliminating injustices and the cliental state, as well as c) Syriza's will to remain faithful to the EU and the European ideals (as the Greek public feels that the Euro has a positive effect on Greece and equally that the EU institutions are capable, in cooperation with the Greek government, to facilitate proper reform measures for the crisis' resolution, according to the *Flash Eurobarometer 405*, conducted in October 2014).

The question that should be prompted by the results of the elections need to underline the value of the Left as an alternative answer to the current public debates in Europe. Could the Left, in Europe, provide answers to issues on fiscal imbalances, economic underdevelopment, elimination of democratic deficit and social inequality? Could the European Left propose a rhetorical alternative, which will refocus the aims of policy-making by re-addressing the causes of the current crisis?

It is essential that the new Greek government of Syriza retains its intellectual honesty, emphasizing to the Greek people that this new crisis has little to do with old differences domestically or internationally. It remains to be seen whether or not the Greek decision to elect a European left party and to interpret this as an organic reaction to the crisis, will cause a pan-European response.

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## The Historic Victory of Syriza's Left Europeanism

Syriza's electoral victory on the recent legislative elections in Greece constitutes undoubtedly a historical event in Modern Greek history. Concurrently, Syriza's victory constitutes a milestone for the European left. This brief article argues that Syriza's distinct left Europeanism has played a very important role in the party's electoral success.

Syriza's left Europeanism constitutes an ideological constant throughout the party's history. Commencing with the party's origins and the period of the KKE-Interior, followed by the period of Synaspismos, the ideal of a Europe of the peoples has been ever-present in the party's discourse. The detrimental effects that the financial crisis had on Greek society has strengthened decisively the party's Europeanism, and has been amongst the decisive factors of Syriza's victory. This can be seen in the party's major political message, which related to a changing Europe (indeed, Syriza's electoral slogan read clearly: "the hope is coming, Greece advances, Europe is changing"). Syriza utilised this ideological component in order to provide a positive narrative with regards to Europe's future, a quasi-antithetical narrative in comparison to the increasingly negative one employed by the party's major political opponents.

In an effort to further substantiate this positive discourse of a changing Europe, Syriza emphasised the support of the party's European political allies. In fact, the presence of European leaders of the radical left during the electoral campaign can be seen as an attempt to place more salience on the party's European alliances and to Europeanise the national electoral process. The President and Vice-Presidents of the European Left Party (EL), Pierre Laurent, Maite Mola, and Marisa Matias, took part in Syriza's central political rally in Athens. In addition to this, numerous representatives of major radical left parties were present. The Spanish Izquierda Unida, the Italian Rifondazione, the German Die Linke, and the Portuguese Bloco de Esquerda were amongst the parties that opted for sending delegations on the eve of the Greek elections.

The most symbolic and at the same time significant move regarded the presence of Pablo Iglesias during Syriza's biggest rally in Athens. In another attempt to emphasize the changing nature of Europe, the leader of the Spanish movement Podemos was invited onto the stage by the President of Syriza, Alexis Tsipras. Mr Iglesias closed his brief greeting of the crowd with the following slogan: "*Syriza, Podemos, Venceremos*". In fact, Podemos polls very high, and seems the most likely winner in the legislative elections in Spain this coming September. By inviting Iglesias onto the stage, Tsipras visually reconstructed the proposed domino effect that Syriza's electoral victory could have on the European political life.

In the author's opinion, Syriza's decisive victory could mean the beginning of a new era for the European radical left. As the EL's decision clearly states, this could be the era when "we will create a Greece that is advancing in a Europe that is changing" (<http://www.european-left.org/fr/le-pge-mobilise-pour-une-grece-qui-avance-dans-une-europe-qui-change>); a choice of words that echoes Syriza's aforementioned electoral slogan.

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## Part IV

### Strange Bedfellows? Interpreting Syriza's Choice of Coalition Partner

# 21 | Elizabeth Monaghan and Ioannis Zisis

## When traditional theory is not enough

From the start of their campaign, Syriza emphasised the need for a dignified yet aggressive negotiation with Europe to regain national pride. Although this created huge ambiguity, following conflicting publically expressed opinions inland and abroad, to the 'wounded' Greek voters it was a new, tough, proud stance towards the Troika that proved to be an important influencing factor.

Comparing figures with the previous national election, this result was not decided upon a massive escape of voters from New Democracy. Syriza won due to the 600,000 votes gained from parties like Pasok and Dimar, members of the governing coalition in these last 2.5 years. The character of this election was punitive, but not in a typically accountable way. The measures were imposed by the Troika, not the governing parties, yet for the Greeks it was a political abnormality that social democratic parties dedicated to social welfare agreed to such harsh austerity policies. Consequently, voters from these parties became political 'orphans' in a highly polarised scenery. In his winning speech, Mr Tsipras referred to the 'sun of justice that rises again'. That was a touch from the past linked with the style and speeches of late Andreas Papandreou, dedicated to all those ex-Pasok voters who decided to punish their party for the coalition with rival ND and moved to the ideological neighbours Syriza, the same way that water runs through two connected vessels.

The argument of an ideological chasm between left and right had no electoral success, appealing only to the older generations. The election campaigns and the choice for voters was one of massive polarisation between Troika vs anti-Troika, new vs old, etc. As Syriza has formed a governing coalition with anti-Troika right-wing populist party Independent Greeks, we must admit that a few years back, no one would consider that parties so distant in the ideological spectrum would even discuss such a negotiation.

It is not the ambiguous Syriza agenda that made a difference, or that the New Democracy agenda was poorer in terms of offering benefits and reliefs to ease austerity and wage cuts. Furthermore, although Syriza executives lack the governmental experience or the knowledge of negotiating with European leaders, this might have been exactly to their advantage. No previous record means no bad record and Greeks are fed up with scandals, mischief and financial mismanagement these last 40 years.

Eventually, Syriza achieved a historic result that led to the first left-wing government in Greece by savouring electoral benefits deriving from: a) reaching a point of no return with austerity, b) an inexperienced yet clean profile, c) the punitive tendency towards abnormalities of the political tradition, d) a successful reference to a national-pride-driven negotiation with Europe and e) the law of 'communicative vessels' of ideological proximity among the electorate. These factors overcome political explanations and traditional representation practices based on the notions of authorisation and accountability. Thus, it will be interesting to see the electorate's behaviour in other European countries with forthcoming elections like in the UK.

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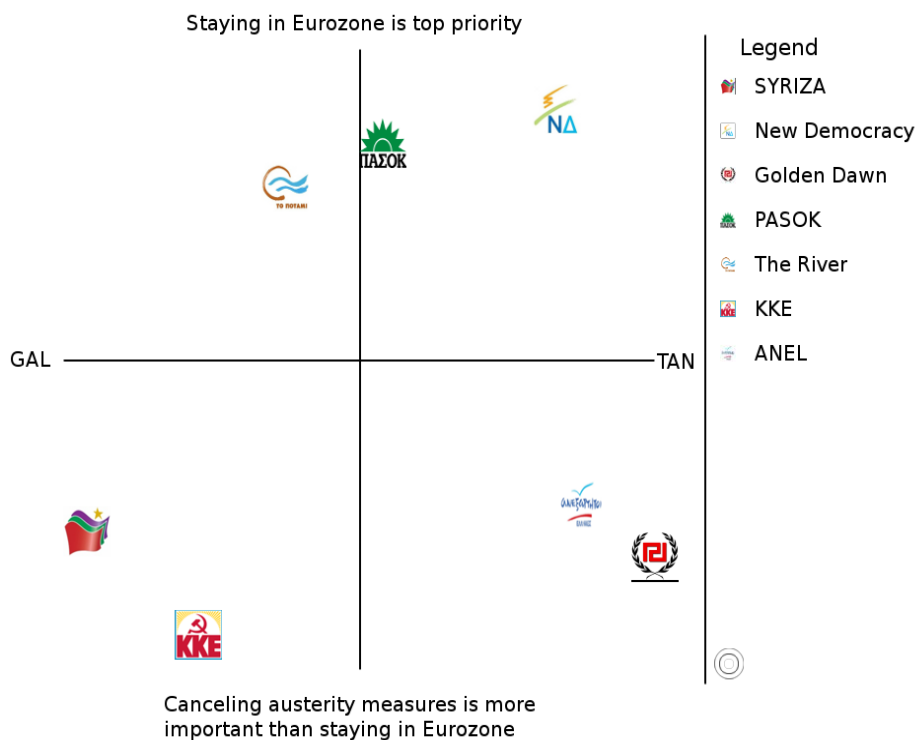
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## The ideological foundations of the Greek coalition government

There is a chasm separating Syriza and Independent Greeks (ANEL) on the Green-Alternative-Libertarian (GAL) vs Traditional-Authoritarian-Nationalist (TAN) axis. According to HelpMeVote 2015, (the Greek Voting Advice Application that was used by more than half a million voters before the recent Greek elections), the scores of Syriza and Independent Greeks on the GAL/TAN axis are -0.9 and 0.75 respectively (see **Diagram 1** - the HelpMeVote political map where -1 corresponds to GAL and 1 corresponds to TAN).

**Diagram 1. HelpMeVote 2015 political map**



This chasm can be identified through the different positions these two parties hold on a series of socio-cultural issues. For instance, in Syriza the idea that multiculturalism is a positive phenomenon for Greece is widely accepted, but for the Independent Greeks this opinion is not welcome. On the other hand, ANEL believe that same-sex marriage should be prohibited by law while in Syriza they believe the opposite.

The new Greek Prime Minister could have chosen to form a different coalition government. A new party, called The River (To Potami) could be a partner in a coalition government that would be formed by two parties that share a lot of common ground. For instance, the position of The River on the GAL/TAN axis is on -0.25.

So the main question is: why were the Independent Greeks preferred instead of the River by Syriza leadership as their government partner? The answer is found on the vertical axis of the HelpMeVote 2015 political map. This axis represents the position of the Greek parties on the issue of the management of the financial crisis and the relationship with the creditors of the Greek debt.

The maximum value (1) of this axis represents a policy that supports that remaining in the Eurozone should be the top priority. The minimum value (-1) represents the parties that support that the austerity measures should be cancelled immediately even if this would endanger the position of Greece in the Eurozone area. The positions of Syriza, the Independent Greeks and the River on this axis are -0.55, -0.47 and 0.55 respectively.

Thus, if Syriza's leadership had chosen the River, this would have indicated a clear U-turn regarding their position on the handling of the financial crisis. This would have destroyed the image of the new Prime Minister, Alexis Tsipras, in the eyes of Syriza supporters. In the aftermath of an election where the most important issues of the political debate were the issues of the financial crisis, where Syriza has promised the cancelation of the austerity measures and a real negotiation for a haircut of the Greek debt, the government that was formed should not be regarded as a surprise. Of course, if in the future Syriza decides to take less radical positions on the issues of the financial crisis, even if the party of Independent Greeks is unwilling to follow, this will not necessarily mean snap elections for Greece. The River will be there to support a new, moderate Greek government.

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## The 'sleeping giant' dreams up a new coalition

The economic crisis in Greece has profoundly reshaped traditional patterns of political competition. The latest national election turned out to be a “critical” one, following the definition by V. O. Key (1955). In such elections the traditional linkages between parties and voters are subject to a profound re-alignment. Indeed, if the previous double elections of 2012 were ones of extensive de-alignment, the recent election was one of re-alignment, even though only individual-level data can confirm this by observing whether patterns of stability in electoral behaviour have started to reappear in the party system. Indeed, one of the casualties of the economic crisis has been the unidimensional left-right space of political competition.

There are strong indications, reaffirmed by the post-electoral coalition between a party of the radical left and a party of the populist right, that nowadays in the Greek political arena the left-right dimension of political competition has ceased to be the only significant dimension in determining choices both at the voter and elite levels. One could argue that the so-called ‘sleeping giant’ that van der Eijk and Franklin (2004) talked about is in the process of being awakened in the context of the 2015 national election: “the pro-/anti-EU orientation... constitutes something of a ‘sleeping giant’ that has the potential, if awakened, to impel voters to political behaviour that (because of its degree of orthogonality with left/right orientations) undercuts the bases for contemporary party mobilisation in many, if not most, European polities (van der Eijk & Franklin 2004: 33)”.

In the case of Greece, the bidimensionality of the political space, consisting of a socio-political left-right dimension and a second one that is related to stances towards Europe and the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), had been detected already in post-electoral studies of the 2012 elections (e.g. Tsatsanis et al. 2014). After all, the previous coalition between New Democracy and PASOK was one that could hardly be expected before the onset of the economic crisis.

Considering the fact that SYRIZA and Independent Greeks share the rejection of the terms of the MoU and are both in favour of a unilateral restructuring of the national debt, we get more indications that the second axis has increased its importance in the 2015 election. Position issues related to social and political values continue to structure the vote and distinguish between party choices, but appear to be subordinate to the overarching question of the reaction to the MoU and the politics of austerity. In the near future with the help of appropriate fresh individual level data we will be able to provide more nuanced readings both on the interpretation of the results and the ongoing transformation of political competition in Greece.

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## What led to the coalition government between Syriza and Independent Greeks?

Once the Greek parliamentary elections were over, it was obvious that, this time around, the messages to all directions were clear, with clear lines drawn between winners and losers. The results showed that the majority of the Greek people are in favour of coalition governments, since Syriza could not achieve the necessary majority in the parliament and Independent Greeks (ANEL) managed to enter parliament and act as the second pillar of the new government. Despite The River (To Potami) appearing to be closer to Syriza – due to the fact that it is ideologically positioned in the broad space of the centre in the political spectrum, and therefore, closer to the left – this was not the preferred partner of Syriza.

It was obvious once the new Prime Minister Mr Alexis Tsipras finished his speech late on Sunday night that a new government was under way since it was apparent that many talks had been conducted in the previous months between Syriza's leader and Independent Greeks' leader. The confidence in Mr Tsipras' voice and phraseology was emanating from the fact that since ANEL managed to reach and overcome the 3 percent threshold that they had to acquire in order to have their representatives in the Greek Parliament, the game was over.

The pre-election campaign of Independent Greeks was rather simple and straightforward – some might even say simplistic. Judging from the outcome though, it was one of the most successful. The vast majority of opinion polls, especially in the first days of the pre-election period, were depicting Independent Greeks in the verge of not getting elected. It was then that a simple TV spot sent the clearest message. Abstaining from sonorous statements about the future of the country and the economy and avoiding perplexing their message by elaborating on the economic policies that will be followed, or the significant structural changes that are still necessary and have to be concluded, ANEL just said in simple words: "Vote us and we will keep everything under control"; targeting at the same time the party that they considered would be the winner, Syriza. This was something that everyone else, and especially The River (To Potami), which was the other potential pillar for a coalition government with Syriza, failed to do.

From Syriza's perspective, the cooperation with Independent Greeks, as much as it may seem strange due to the significant ideological distance that exists between the two, is something that seems to have been the goal from the outset. Syriza's leadership knew well before the elections that in the case of them winning the elections, it would be very difficult to have a majority of 151 MPs, and even if this was the case, it would be a very fragile majority, given especially all the difficult decisions that the government will be called to make in the following months.

Syriza was therefore looking to cooperate with a political party that would satisfy certain criteria: initially, that this party would have very distant ideological linkages with the parties that were pro-memorandum. Secondly, that it would not have explicit or implicit economic linkages with the economic elites of the country, therefore damaging the anti-corruption campaign that the government has declared (which is now formal with a minister appointed exclusively for the fight against corruption). Finally, that it could be a party that would have a strong foothold in areas where Syriza's ministers would be at least uneasy and almost definitely inefficient. Areas though, that are crucial for the proper functioning of the country such as the police and, especially, the army. These main points along with others constitute the Independent Greeks a more suitable (despite the façade of awkwardness and strangeness that it might have) partner for Syriza. After all, many



European coalition governments in the past saw left-wing parties cooperate with right-wing parties which, in European politics, has always been 'business as usual'.

To sum up, the allocation of ministries and especially the role that ANEL's ministers are called to play gives the impression that the new government has been well prepared in advance of its election. What remains to be seen is the success it will have when situations will call for decisions that might bring the two partners in discord by making them surpass the red lines that both have drawn in view of this cooperation. Absolute power has a tendency to corrupt. Shared power though, is something distinctly different. It can lead to agreements and common retreats or to significant clashes. This last point is something that remains to be seen.

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The Presidential Mansion [Detail]  
Jenny Tolou

## Syriza's radical factions as an obstacle to the coalition government

The results of the Greek national elections of 25 January 2015 came to formally confirm a series of political and social tendencies that have emerged in Greek society over the past years, along with the qualitative and quantitative limits of the Greek political parties.

Firstly, they confirmed the strong opposition of the largest part of the electorate to the lengthy period of extreme austerity and overtaking, which has been largely prescribed by non-Greek actors, i.e. international poles of power such as the International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank and the financial Directorate of Brussels. Secondly, at the same time, another large part of the electoral body has expressed its aversion to the discursive political populism and demagogic tactics of the anti-Memorandum parties, which could lead to economic, political and even national escapades, with irreparable implications for the nation.

In addition, the 36.4% received by the anti-Memorandum party of the Coalition of the Radical Left–Unitary Social Front (Syriza), with a 8.5% difference from the second centre-right party of New Democracy (ND), and a 9.6% increase in its own performance compared to the 2012 parliamentary elections, is clearly a wide electoral success. However, it also confirms its inherent deficiency in political and electoral dynamics since having marginally gained 149 seats it has not achieved absolute parliamentary majority. On the other hand, ND's 27.8%, indicates both its high degree of clustering as well as the preservation of its solid and coherent tendency of a large part of Greek conservative voters (a decrease of merely 1.8% over a period of 2.5 years of extreme austerity), bringing it nonetheless to the second position losing, at least in the short-term, the political initiative in Greek politics.

According to the above, despite the large difference in parliamentary power (73 seats), from ND, Syriza's coalition with the right-wing, conservative, anti-Memorandum party of the Independent Greeks (ANEL), which cumulatively reaches 162 seats, is imperative in order to form a government.

On a political level, the assignment of the Ministry of National Defence to the government partner ANEL, which traditionally focuses on national security and public order issues, gives the Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras a breadth of political manoeuvres on the wider political level, particularly in the negotiations with the country's lenders. Nonetheless, Syriza's ideo-political palimpsest, which *inter alia* includes Trotskyist, Maoist and Stalinist groups, makes the new government extremely fragile, with a small margin for losses.

Indeed, the key question is whether the new government will be able to contain the loss rate that it is going to suffer from the leftmost, ideologically oppressed, extreme and monolithic components that constitute a considerable part of the popular base of Syriza. More specifically, Syriza's certain compromise with the country's lenders and the *grosso modo*, gradual convergence of its programme with the memorandum commitments, arises as the first *in vivo* test of its coherence as a governing party. This is an imminent event, since the next Eurogroup will be held on 15 February, while on 22 February the two-month extension that was granted by Troika, on account of the elections, for the continuation of the Greek restructuring programme, lapses.

In other words, it is extremely doubtful if some of the only typically self-dissolved, leftmost, non-systemic components of Syriza will agree to such a political somersault by the government.

These include:

- KOE: inspired by Mao and Stalin, the Communist Organization of Greece stands out for its dynamism and hard positions
- DEA: the Internationalist Workers' Left, emerged from the Socialist Revolution Organisation (OSE), which began as a Trotskyist group. With reference to revolutionary Marxism and citing the tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg and Gramsci suggests to “stop payments to local and international loan-sharks; nationalisation of the banks under public-democratic-workers’ control; heavy taxation of businesses and the rich, combined with measures against the ‘escaping’ of capital”, while it has even threatened to withdraw from Syriza, as it is absolutely negative to the possibility of self-dissolution)
- ROSA: Rosa is placed leftmost of Syriza and declares “unwilling to underestimate the base procedures in favour of concentration of essential functions of Syriza in the top echelons of the party”, while considering the political views of non-party committed leftist, to be of equal gravity to those of the party members
- RED
- Greek Eco-Socialists
- AKOA
- APO and
- the Non-Aligned Leftists.

On the contrary, it is more likely that they will oppose the implementation of such a political convergence and will secede from the main body of Syriza. As a result, there will be a respective secession of the parliamentary seats they hold from its parliamentary team. Consequently, Syriza’s inherent centrifugal tendency is about to become the primary focus of political distress, and possibly political crisis, which may eventually come to an irreversible loss of the popular affirmation.

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## Coalition government “Made in Greece”

Co-operation is a big word. Throughout the political history of modern Greece, the country has definitely not been used to such words, especially when it comes to political authority. Often, political parties are entrenched in their own ideological, or to be more concrete, ‘inner party’ lines, without seeking any form of assistance, even during major events such as economic crises. The double elections of 2012 dramatically changed this political environment. The electorate’s verdict was clear: no one shall have absolute power; the issues at stake are too important to be left only to a single party.

Although empowering the winning party, last Sunday’s elections demonstrated the same will. Syriza gained 36,34% and 149 seats in the Parliament, 2 less than the required for the vote of confidence. As a result, Syriza needed a partner to form a coalition government. The next question was on which basis this government will be formed. Prominent members of Syriza had already stated that their most important ally would be the Communist Party which, even before the elections, rejected such a prospect. The previous governmental coalition partners, Nea Demokratia and PASOK, would naturally be out of the question due to several political incidents; thus at the end two choices were left: the centrist, liberal The River (To Potami) and the right-wing Independent Greeks (ANEL).

This brief analysis examines the two alternatives as potential partners of Syriza in forming a coalition government. For the sake of the argument, let us establish the different ideologies of Syriza and The River: Syriza represents democratic socialism whilst The River embraces more liberal approaches. However, the Independent Greeks’ political belief is national conservatism; would that be more acceptable for a leftist party?

More specifically, a basis for agreement between Syriza and the Independent Greeks is essentially the anti-memorandum rhetoric. Both parties have to a large extent based their political success on populism, presenting the memorandum as the reason for the crisis and not the other way around. In that sense, their co-operation is highly opportunistic and vague; they both largely use the term “renegotiation” without always being in a position to provide accurate alternatives. Furthermore, divergences between the two parties in the field of human rights are enormous. For example, will same-sex marriage be recognized as Syriza proposed? Or what about secularism that Syriza endorses, as long as the Independent Greeks preserve the close Church and State relations?

That could exactly be a potential basis for a coalition government among Syriza and The River: human rights. Both parties have expressed similar perceptions in that particular field. Even having different backgrounds, protection of human rights is highly placed on both parties’ agenda. Taking into account that, under all circumstances, respect for human rights is a prerequisite for the democratic function of the government, this is a crucial starting point for a successful coalition.

Another element that distinguishes The River from Independent Greeks as a governmental partner is its stable position in favour of European integration. The River is the only Greek political party that openly speaks of a federal Europe. Similarly, at least on an official level, Syriza has repeatedly acknowledged the importance of staying within the core of the European Union and supports such a prospect. On the other hand, the Independent Greeks do not seem to embrace this perception; the party participates in the Eurosceptic ECR group in the European Parliament, opposing the idea of a closer Europe.

Despite their differences, it is clear from the aforementioned that The River is a much more suitable governmental partner for Syriza. However, the tendency of simply being against the memorandum turned out to be stronger than respect for human rights and common European values.

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# Part V

The Day After for Greece and for the  
European Union

## Debt restructuring is preferable to continued austerity or default for Greece and the Eurozone

Most EU officials and most government officials of Eurozone countries officially reject any suggestion of a debt restructuring for Greece. Continuing pressure for ever more austerity demanded in return for external assistance will raise political opposition against adjustment policies in the troubled countries themselves. In the end, this leaves only one route open. Populist political opposition as seen by the recent Greek Parliament elections has already gathered momentum in creditor and debtor nations and will enforce an end to either austerity or financial assistance and will thus trigger a debt restructuring.

Many people no longer trust mainstream politicians, EU technocrats and elites in general. They seem captured by vested interests and incapable of improving the life of ordinary people, let alone setting out a compelling vision of a brighter future. Politics is turning nasty, fractious and inward-looking – with unpredictable consequences. Worst of all, many people are losing faith in democracy itself. Europe's sluggish economies are strangled by vested interests that stifle opportunity. There is a perception that the European Union has become an instrument for creditor nations to impose their will on debtors.

Many have commented on the ill-advised comments from the European Commission after the Greeks decided on parliamentary elections on 25 January 2015. Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker's call to avoid the "wrong outcome" seemed to reveal a contempt for democracy which makes a mockery of the notion of a Union that respects the sovereignty of its member states. "I think that the Greeks – who have a very different life – know very well what a wrong election result would mean for Greece and the Eurozone," he said in an Austrian TV public debate in December 2014. The European Commission is supposed to be answerable to the citizens of its member states. The citizens of member states are not answerable to the Commission and, by definition, the Commission can have no view on what is a "correct" and what is a "wrong" electoral outcome.

Wolfgang Schäuble, Germany's finance minister, said in a statement: "We want to give Greece further support on its path of reform, helping it to help itself. If Greece chooses another way, it will be difficult. New elections will not change any of the agreements made with the Greek government. Any new government must keep to the contractual agreements of its predecessor." Schäuble went on to warn Greeks not to play with fire by pressing impossible demands. "Fresh elections won't change Greece's debt. (...) If Greece chooses another way, it's going to be tough," he said.

Either Germany changes its tune, or Greece may default on its €245 billion debt. Unfortunately, the most likely outcome of this strategy is chaos since a default would certainly lead to Greece exiting the Euro. It would be unwise of Germany to underestimate the possible or likely contagion in the financial markets that would result from a Greek exit.

In all sovereign debt restructuring processes, the key to success is to do it sufficiently forceful in order to eliminate all doubts about a country's longer-term sustainability, so as to only have to go through this politically tortuous process once. This could happen in form of a European debt conference to wipe away a portion of the debt, as happened with Germany in 1953. Greece can start afresh with private creditors, since the task of monitoring Greek fiscal accounts must shift from

public to private creditors.

There is no chance whatsoever of Greece repaying their debts. Only the creditor nations of the north refuse to acknowledge this reality. The current set-up is completely unsustainable. There is no reason why Europe cannot recognize this unsustainable setup and make the necessary adjustments. Otherwise, the most likely winners will be populist anti-Euro and anti-EU parties who want to put an end to the Euro construct and eventually the European Union as a whole.

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## Hope has arrived (on a dark horse). Will it deliver?

Following the elections of the 25th of January, Syriza won with 36.3% but no absolute majority in the Parliament and formed a government with the Independent Greeks (ANEL). Their collaboration gives the government 162 out of 300 seats. The Independent Greeks are a populist, right wing party, whose leader Panos Kammenos and MPs have been openly expressing xenophobic, homophobic and anti-semitic and Euroskeptical views. Syriza and ANEL have been leading the campaign against austerity in Greece, an austerity that they have been blaming entirely on the Troika demands and the inability or unwillingness of the previous Greek governments to effectively oppose it. Other than that, the origins and electoral platforms of the two parties have important differences on other social issues, such as immigration and the relations between the Greek Church and the State, which, however, did not impede the forming of a coalition as, apparently, the economic agenda is trumping everything else at this juncture.

Five years after the Eurozone sovereign debt crisis broke out in Greece, the prospect of a Syriza victory has generated high hopes among Progressives in Europe and beyond (<http://bit.ly/1uurDy5>, <http://bit.ly/1EYn2dY>, <http://nyti.ms/1xYVvse>). Its promise to seek a debt write-down for Greece and to reject and renegotiate the austerity policies dictated by the Troika have been anticipated as the first real challenge of democratic politics against the deflationary policies of austerity that have swept over the continent since 2010 as a result of the EU economic governance. According to numerous influential mainstream economists, these policies have been largely responsible for Europe's prolonged economic stagnation since then (<http://on.ft.com/1wTnhk8>, <http://bit.ly/1vog6qe>, <http://nyti.ms/1DmeyM0>).

In Greece as elsewhere, the policies imposed by the Troika, often in an intrusive manner (<http://bit.ly/1t864WQ>), aggravated the recession that the economy was already experiencing since 2009 and inevitably led to much higher public debt/GDP ratio than was intended. Following efforts that were, by any standards, unprecedented, the country's budget deficit has by now turned into a surplus and its current account deficit has been largely rebalanced. Still, this adjustment has taken place at unnecessarily high social costs while the structural problems that underlay these chronic imbalances remain unresolved. These criticisms notwithstanding, one would be hard pressed to argue, without sounding populist, that the country could have avoided going through any recession once the global financial crisis broke out, given that in 2008-9 the Greek budget and current account deficits as a share of GDP peaked at 15.3 and 16.3 percent respectively.

Can the new government deliver on Syriza's promises to write down the Greek debt, end austerity and get rid of the Troika, all while staying in the Eurozone? And will that mark the beginning of any changes in economic policies in Europe?

### Pragmatic compromises

For starters, there appears to have been a shift in the government's demands from debt write-down to renegotiating the interest rate and maturities and from ending austerity to committing to primary balanced budgets (<http://bloom.bg/1HxJD5T>). A write-down of the debt held by the EU member states would have been politically implausible. According to many analysts (e.g. <http://nyti.ms/1KiOXX6>, <http://bit.ly/18G2cp4>) it is even beside the point, as the annual debt servicing burden is a very low share of GDP. Instead, a further lightening of the debt service conditions has, under certain conditions, been on the cards as the EU partners had in fact already committed to

consider it in 2012.

A primary balanced budget certainly implies less austerity than the current obligation of registering 4.5 per cent surplus every year under conditions of virtually zero growth and fragile recovery. However, unless nominal output growth picks up considerably, a commitment to zero deficits is not exactly the end of tighter than necessary fiscal policy, that is, the end of austerity but rather 'lighter austerity'. Such a commitment from the Greek government will, however, be a necessary offer to make to the EU lenders, including the ECB, to get them to agree to some loosening of fiscal policy in Greece.

Can the government get rid of the Troika? In its current form and under this name, it is quite likely that yes, as its image has been tarnished during the years when the hardest economic adjustments took place. However, given that it is in the best interest of Greece to continue receiving financial support by the EU under the preferential terms it does, it is inconceivable that its EU partners would provide this support without any conditions, the progress towards the fulfillment of which will have to be monitored. This will be true even if, as suggested, the government manages to change the logic of the economic policy program that will come attached to its continued financial support.

Most importantly though, the Greek banking system depends on the ECB as a source of essential liquidity. The ECB, the third Troika member, sets its own conditions for this support. At the moment the ECB is the strongest lever of pressure on Greece to continue being subject to a conditionality program, because this is a condition for providing liquidity to the Greek banks and for Greece to benefit from its quantitative easing policy as a means to stimulate demand in the economy.

All in all, therefore, if Greece is to stay in the Eurozone, the new government will most likely only be able to partly deliver on its promises of ending austerity and getting rid of a supervision mechanism like the Troika.

### **The price of a sidelined debate?**

Even a lighter conditionality program will certainly contain requirements for structural reforms that would reassure the EU partners that the problems that have made Greece prone to budget and current account deficits in the past will be tackled. On this domain, Syriza's electoral programme mentions fundamental issues such as the eradication of corruption, the establishment of a fairer tax system and the modernisation of public administration. However, these are desired outcomes. A credible reform program should also explain how these objectives would be achieved but should also cover a broader range of domains.

For example, to support the modernisation of its economy, Greece needs to rethink its welfare state and reshape it to strengthen and recalibrate the safety net it provides to support the production regime of the economy. It will also have to make strategic choices on its economic development model. Given the very tight deadlines within which the new (and inexperienced) government will likely have to decide upon these issues, it is not even certain whether it will be manage to come up with sufficiently well thought out proposals to avoid having once again policies imposed on it.

Pursuing these objectives involve policy choices that are deeply political and which in fact, do have a left or right sign. Having campaigned on an agenda that focused on ending the externally imposed austerity and healing the wounds it has opened in some groups in society, Syriza managed to collect voters from a wide range of the political spectrum as the electoral cleavage was articulated around the pro-/anti-austerity question. The problem that the government may soon

face, however, is that it will have to make policy choices for rebuilding the Greek economy whose distributional consequences have not been debated. It is not clear how the heterogeneous group of Syriza voters will react to different options and therefore, how much support the party would continue to command in government. Ironically, the discourse that propelled the party from 4% to 36% in just a few years may prove to be its Achilles heel.

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By Jenny Tolou

## Reintegration or chaos?

The outcome of the Greek election on 25th January overtly signifies the voters' preference for a strong confrontation with the European funders over a continuation of current policies, which have been faithfully aligned to the directives of the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund for almost five years now. The triumphal victory of the anti-bailout radical leftist party, Syriza, is indeed of historic importance for the Greek Left.

Syriza, which had as central campaign slogan "Greece is Moving Forward. Europe is Changing. Hope is Coming", is now required to form, and hold together (allied with the small right-wing party "Independent Greeks") a stable and viable government, with the ultimate aim to renegotiate Greece's debt and borrowing terms, as well as to effectively tackle a huge mass of emergent complexities. This is rather not an easy thing, although the electoral system automatically gives the winning party an extra 50 seats to make it easier to form a government. A coherent set of decisions will systematically be required and there is a real possibility of the coalition government falling apart under stress.

Besides, Syriza's promise to refuse the Troika's assessment of the Greek economy and to nationalise the Greek banks and other former public companies privatised in recent years, may currently cause deep anxiety to Europe's political status quo and leaders. This may also provoke turmoil and volatility – at least for a while – in European and global politics, albeit Syriza's proclaimed desire to retain Greece's strategic European orientation.

In addition, Syriza's clear victory may potentially increase tensions at the EU periphery and reinforce other non-establishment voices and parties across Europe (such as the anti-austerity Podemos party in Spain), thus breaking the fragile and precarious consensus that holds the Eurozone together so far. In any case, negotiating debt relief will be an extremely difficult task, with too many risks. For sure, the EU will demand a strong commitment to serious structural reforms, something that profoundly and directly opposes to deeply entrenched patterns of economic and social conduct.

No doubt, these elections confused the financial markets and raised more questions than answers. As Antonis Karakousis (newspaper "To Vima") perceptively wonders, will Syriza's leader and new Prime Minister, Mr. Tsipras, be able to overcome the bad historic experiences that persistently accompany the Greek Left and truly make a difference, or will he get caught up in a dynamic deadlock straight away and jeopardise the country's future?

Greece is fraying European nerves once again. In complex systems theory terms, the electoral outcome may lead the Greek political system either to reintegration at a higher level of complexity or to a relatively quick and unpredictable descent into chaos – that is, a Greek tragedy for Europe. Is the so-called "Greek crisis" doomed to escalate (perhaps toward a catastrophic Grexit, something narrowly avoided in 2012) or is there light at the end of the tunnel? The clock is ticking and the very fabric of Europe as a whole is still at risk.

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## Is there a democratic deficit in CFSP decision making?

When former British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, was warning that the path towards deeper integration was opening a “democratic deficit” (Blair, 2012), he surely didn’t have in mind the freshly elected Greek Prime minister Alexis Tsipras’ reaction towards Federica Mogherini’s (European Union foreign policy chief) statement on the growing crisis in the Ukraine. Mr. Tsipras’ reaction brought once again to light the intergovernmental-institutional debate, or in Tony Blair’s words, it opened “the gap between the importance of the European-wide decisions and the accountability of the European institutions making them” (Blair, 2012). More specifically, Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras argued that he had not been consulted prior to the statement of Mrs. Mogherini on the growing crisis in the Ukraine and the possible new sanctions against Russia while he underlined that the decision does not have Greece’s consent (Mackenzie, 2015).

Mr Tsipras’ reaction raised several issues on the European Union’s Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) decision-making process, due to the fact that the fundamental decision-making mechanisms of the Union seem to have been undermined: it is up to “the member states (to) decide on European foreign and security policy” (Sjursen, 2011, pp. 1,078) and not up to the European Union foreign policy chief. This initiative, by the EU foreign policy chief, reflects a development which is beyond intergovernmentalism at the EU level and surely requires legitimating (Sjursen, 2011, pp. 1,091).

Mr. Tsipras’ reaction also exposed important gaps in the system of international relations and diplomatic coordination among EU member states, while revealing weaknesses in the partly-formed foreign policy and in the economic diplomacy of the Union (Smith, 2005, p. 87). Moreover, and in the prospect of new Minister of Defence (and Independent Greeks’ leader) Mr. Panos Kammenos’ initial actions to restart Greek national defence industries (Newsbomb, 2015), a lot of ambiguity seems to be raised on Smith’s claims that European foreign policy is a kind of ‘post-modern’ or ‘post-sovereign’ foreign policy (Smith, 2005, pp. 87-88). In addition, Medrano argues that with Maastricht, European unification reached the limits of competence- and sovereignty-sharing while, when it is up to the citizens to decide, there seem to be a strong resistance to supranational governance (Medrano, 2012, p. 198).

All these aspects and claims raise new and old questions regarding Europeanisation, CFSP and EU governing mechanisms. However, the key question which remains unanswered is whether the CFSP realisation represents a wishful political plan or the common aims of EU citizens.

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## A peak into European political clashes to come

The results of the Greek elections were largely anticipated in terms of vote distribution across parties, however, the realisation of its potential political repercussions at the EU level primarily, and its expression of domestic change secondarily, cause both nervousness and excitement.

At the domestic level Syriza's win (36.64%) expresses a shift in political attitudes; a public worn down by clientelism, the crisis and austerity measures voted for a party that offered (marketed) political renewal and hope through (relatively) new political faces and by prioritising popular issues linked to the "humanitarian crisis". However, disappointment in the political system is highlighted by the lack of a parliamentary majority and a seven-party parliament with the third runner-up being Nazi-like Golden Dawn (GD) (6.28%). Syriza has formed a coalition government with the anti-austerity right-wing-populist Independent Greeks (ANEL) (4.75%), an uncomfortable but strategic choice. The party aims to draw in right-wing voters lost to GD through ANEL; hoping to absorb its coalition partner in the long run as well. Nonetheless, the coalition is a fragile one and will demand strong party discipline. At the same time New Democracy's defeat (27.81%) and the old socialist guard's (PASOK) humiliation (4.68%) further underline the shift in political power and their struggle to remain relevant.

At the EU/ international level there is concern, as a team of largely inexperienced policymakers and academics head an anti-austerity government which nonetheless states it wants to remain in the Euro. The new government is volatile: it halted the privatisation of the national electricity provider and the port of Piraeus, it pledged that it will raise the minimum wage and re-hire 11,000 public sector employees; all overnight and all contrary to major requirements of the austerity programme. International markets remain relatively stable indicating that the Greek question is a thorny but a manageable one; ring-fencing allows for an easier isolation in case of a default (unlikely). This seems more like negotiation-manoeuving with Syriza hoping to gain extended maturities on the debt and bond-buying from the ECB, while the troika and EU leaders aim to avoid a Grexit and debt write-off; results that can be brought back home as victories for both sides.

Syriza's win represents something bigger; the potential rise of a South-European left-leaning government alliance unwilling to repay North-European liberal-conservative debtors; for example, Spain through Podemos and/ or Italy through centre-left coalitions. The European impact is noticeable as leaders both on the right and left demanded fiscal responsibility along with their congratulations; statements from the left have been less demanding. In a game of chicken, Syriza has upped the stakes not for Greece but more importantly for the EU project and in particular its political aspect; arguably the less developed sister of European integration. It has given prospects for the left in Europe after a period of ideological stagnation and threatens the liberal-right that faces the same problem. Ironically while Syriza's win offers potential for a political shift on an EU scale, policy results at the national level are necessary to keep it alive.

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## Syriza's victory as the final act in Europe's drama

Along with everything else, what the Eurozone crisis has brought is a much greater relevance of the EU for domestic politics and party competition. While very often European voters are indifferent about the EU and they feel detached from what goes on in Brussels, the Eurozone crisis has linked EU and national politics together and has allowed the EU to shape public opinion and therefore political parties and elections.

This can be most clearly seen in the example of Greece, the country at the very heart of the Eurozone crisis. While historically the EU has not played an important role for Greek party competition, the Eurozone crisis gave birth to two main camps: on the one hand, those parties that promote themselves as strongly pro-EU and they support measures that satisfy the conditions of the EU bailout agreements and, on the other side, those which oppose these deals and austerity. But this impact of the EU on political parties and their debate is most evident in the case of Syriza and its journey until claiming victory in last Sunday's elections.

As the crisis unfolded and Greeks became more Eurosceptic, Syriza's share of votes went up: from 5 per cent in the elections just before the crisis to 36.34% in last Sunday's elections. But on their way to government, Syriza had to take into account that, while Eurosceptic, the vast majority of Greeks wanted to remain party of the EU and use the Euro. For that reason, Syriza has toned down some of its more radical rhetoric and has tried to promote itself as a more moderate and pro-EU party – albeit with an alternative vision for Europe and with many different voices on what the future should look like – and does not negotiate the place of the country in the Eurozone.

But for all the obvious impact of the EU on the Greek elections battle, the big question now is what sort of party Syriza will be the day after. And, since Greece has often been seen as the country that could set the tone of an alternative solution to the Eurozone crisis, this is a question crucial for the rest of Europe too. Because, despite all its transformation which has brought it closer to the EU, Syriza remains a party that evangelises a different, more radical, anti-austerity agenda for Greece and for Europe.

The words of Alexis Tsipras following the election results do not leave room for misunderstandings: “the verdict of the Greek people ...annuls... in an indisputable fashion the bailout agreements of austerity and disaster”. The following months could well prove to be the final act in Europe's drama, testing whether a different Europe can actually exist.

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## Back to basics for the EU

We are going through the sixth year of economic depression. The economic situation of Greece resembles that of a fully bankrupt state. The Greek state paid the calamitous price for its unwillingness to reform its economic model, which in conjunction with the continuing turbulence in the international financial system made Greece the weakest link of the Eurozone's chain. After signing the so-called Memorandums, Greece was obliged to bear up a difficult programme of reforms to avoid a disastrous default. A default could bring total chaos to the structure of the Eurozone, considering the debts of other, bigger economies (Spain, Italy, France) as well as the destructive impact that a potential collapse of the Eurozone could bring about in the financial markets. Although concerns vis-a-vis a potential Grexit have been entertained by EU officials, the aim of this piece is to touch upon three dimensions that are embedded into our approach of the Greek crisis.

Firstly, we should cast light upon the domestic dimension. The lack of structural reforms within the Greek state, combined with the vast amount of non-solvent private loans and the absence of the so-called diversification of productivity, have created the circumstances for Greece's economic failure. What is at stake for the sustainability of the country's economy is the amount of non-solvent private loans, since a significant percentage of Greek citizens have received loans whose payment cannot be met by their existing salaries (indicating an over 40% debt/salary ratio).

Moreover, there is a second dimension attached to the Greek question. During the construction of the Eurozone, the founders of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) had not estimated the danger and the risk of putting different economies into a common monetary union. Considering the values that the European Economic Community (EEC) had been built upon since 1957, the contemporary European Union seems to be heading into a fallacious direction. We should re-establish the 'Europe of the people', in which the different nations decided to embrace Locke's trust.

To this effect, the negotiation with respect to the Greek debt should unfold under the prism of a core European value, which is consensus, and not become subject to hardliner positions that create divisions and suspiciousness among the EU partners. The EU is considered a strong pillar for the very structure of Greece, both in terms of domestic affairs and its foreign policy orientations. Finally, Greek Elections and Syriza's victory probably poses no threat to Greek membership of the EU. The Greek people, instead, have sent the following message: There is no dilemma between 'EU' or 'no EU' but between whether we follow the European values, (which have been violated by the application of the austerity programmes) or not.

Finally, there is an additional perspective of the Greek elections, a broader international one. The international media strongly believe that a positive-oriented European "wind of change" will blow, following the change in Greece's government. Aligned with this perception and given the global challenges that the EU has to face, the latter should return to its conceptually genuine track, meaning the principles it was founded upon. The stake here is unity. Otherwise, the sustainability of the European project, despite the diachronic efforts, will be put into jeopardy.

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## Syriza and Greek-Turkish relations

The majority of the initial reactions and analyses about the rise into power of Syriza have focused so far on the upcoming negotiations of Greece with the Troika (International Monetary Fund, European Commission, European Central Bank) and on the issue of the Greek debt. Less attention has been paid to the possible impact on Greece's foreign policy and, in particular, on the relations with Turkey. It is argued in this short commentary that, at least in the short term, no radical changes should be expected on the Greek-Turkish relations and that a foreign policy by Syriza presents both opportunities and challenges for the Greek-Turkish relations.

Regarding the first point, the ultimate priority of Syriza at this time is the negotiation of a new deal with the Troika on the debt issue. It is therefore unlikely that the new government will open a new front in the external relations of Greece. Indeed, several Syriza cadres have explicitly mentioned that, as far as foreign policy is concerned, Syriza's time and resources will be geared predominantly towards the negotiations with Greece's debtors.

Regarding the second point, an opportunity for improving the Greek-Turkish relations lies in the fact that, at least in terms of the party's programmatic declarations, Syriza seems much more willing to discuss the demands of the Muslim minority in Greece, including the controversial issue of how the minority's religious leaders should be appointed. Moreover, Syriza appears to be strongly committed to Turkey's EU membership and in favour of any additional confidence-building measure that could enhance the two sides' mutual trust. In general, in the past Syriza has been critical of what it saw as a nationalist and war-mongering policy and rhetoric of the right.

At the same time, however, there are several issues that could create challenges in Greek-Turkish relations. Syriza has formed a coalition government with a populist and nationalist right-wing party which can potentially veto Syriza's policies and initiatives on foreign policy matters. Moreover, the support of Syriza for the 2013 Gezi protests in Turkey and its traditionally pro-Kurdish stance can create friction with the Turkish government.

Finally, the positions of Syriza and the new Greek Minister of Foreign affairs, Nikos Kotzias, on the Cyprus issue and the Aegean conflict do not depart radically from the views of the previous Greek governments. In its programmatic declarations, Syriza calls for a solution of the Aegean conflict based on the United Nations Convention on the Law on the Sea which Turkey has not, however, signed. Regarding the Cyprus issue, Syriza calls for the establishment of a bi-communal and bi-zonal Cypriot state and for the withdrawal of the Turkish military forces from the island, and it has recently condemned the explorations of the Turkish vessel "Barbaros" off the Cypriot coast.

Given the above, it seems more likely that, at least in the short term, there will be no spectacular changes and no major breakthrough in the relations between Greece and Turkey.

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## Part VI

### Decision Time for the Syriza Government

## Pressing economic questions for the new government to answer

The Greek election of the 25 of January was defined by a clash between two policy proposals about how Greece can overcome a deep economic crisis. On the one side, former Prime Minister Samaras followed the economically 'orthodox' view crystallised in the Greek Memorandum – an agreement which includes strict terms and conditions in return for financial assistance to Greece by the European Union and the IMF. Fiscal austerity aimed to achieve a budgetary primary surplus and it was expected that the country would restore its capacity to borrow from private markets and would be able to leave the European bailout mechanism just as Ireland and Portugal eventually did. Greece would then 'restart' its economy with private investment geared towards exports.

This plan was unsuccessful. The Samaras government shied away from implementing deep-cutting structural reforms and heavily relied on high taxes. The primary balance was achieved at a huge cost in terms of economic output, unemployment rates and social cohesion, while the rate of growth recorded for the first time in five years was anaemic and mostly associated with a booming tourist season. Since the onset of the crisis Greece has lost almost one third of its GDP, and exhibits an unemployment rate of 30%. The policy mix was also discredited by the Samaras himself who had previously campaigned in the 2012 election with a clear promise to renegotiate and relax the terms of the first Memorandum.

On the other side, Syriza has adopted a hybrid 'neo- Keynesian' calling for an end to austerity and a boost of domestic demand, which will help the country achieve fiscal stabilisation thanks to a re-growing economy. In Syriza's view, the dire economic situation in Greece is largely the result of an obsessive quest for primary budget surpluses and the highly experimental policy of internal devaluation of wages and assets that was supposed to serve as a substitute for currency devaluation. This policy mix reduced domestic demand, shook the stability of the banking system and undermined the conditions for investment and job creation.

The electoral result of 25 January was partly a rejection of sharp austerity and partly a leap of faith into the unknown. Syriza's economic policy advocates the relaxation of austerity policies as a way to restore domestic demand that will subsequently spur higher levels of employment. This resonates with a number of economists who firmly believe that the Greek debt as it stands is not viable and that shock-therapy austerity measures generate negative side effects on growth and employment. Yet Syriza's alternative economic proposal is not fully specified and its political feasibility remains uncertain.

The Syriza government confronts a sceptical audience among other EU governments and its political priority - achieving some debt relief for Greece – is likely to test how consistent the EU governments will be with their own policy agendas at home.

There are pressing questions which the new government will soon address:

1. Does the new government believe that structural reforms are necessary for Greece's economic recovery?
2. What is its attitude towards foreign investment?
3. Will the new government overturn some or all the reforms enacted by the previous government in the labour market?

4. What policy compromises is it willing to make in order to strike a new agreement on the repayment of the Greek public debt?

In the midst of campaign priorities and ideological commitments these questions have been left unaddressed.

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The Hellenic Parliament (Roman Gerodimos)

## Growing hope in uncharted waters

Syriza achieved a monumental victory in Greece's snap election, managing to convince the biggest part of young unemployed and the segments of middle-class professionals that have been roughly affected by austerity measures. Syriza also achieved to shift a considerable part of influential, international media networks in its favour, thus building on necessary allies for the coming critical months.

Syriza's top priorities are, firstly, the immediate allocation of public spending towards the most vulnerable parts of the society; secondly, the negotiation with the country's creditors for a win-win solution regarding austerity measures and the debt crisis.

As for the other parties, New Democracy avoided a free-fall, mainly bidding on propaganda against Syriza, while the Golden Dawn preserved a strong presence in the next parliament against the odds. The newcomers from The River (To Potami) went pretty well, having the chance to play a mediating role when imbalances in parliament (and the government) might occur. PASOK's defeat was overwhelming, thus bringing into surface a complex struggle for the next leadership. Independent Greeks (ALON) got the lion's share, forming a coalition government with Syriza after providing their counter-austerity credentials this last couple of years.

The next day for Greece is filled with hope, but challenges and struggles for the government might be tricky. Syriza has to bring about crucial changes in public policy, while lobbying and pushing for a broader recovery and investment-led convergence programme in the Eurozone.

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# 37 | Stylianos Tzagkarakis and Apostolos Kamekis

## A doubtful step

For the first time after the dictatorship, more than two million Greeks have voted for a radical left party. The main reason is that the permanent austerity of the last five years has created enormous social and economic problems for most of the Greek citizens. Syriza took advantage of this difficult situation using a populist pre-electoral campaign that contained a huge number of promises for benefits, public sector extension and a rhetoric of collision with the lenders (European partners) of the country in order to win the elections.

But, the new government has only two choices. On the one hand, it is impossible to implement policies which include the extensive amount of benefits they have promised, without lenders' permission. Moreover, the rhetoric of collision and renegotiation with lenders is not a panacea. Lenders are not offering anything more than a time extension for debt reimbursement and reduction of the interest rate along with the agreement for further reforms. However, this is not included in the plans of the new government.

On the other hand, if the government does not manage to persuade lenders during the renegotiation process, it should find a common ground for agreement and, surely, step back from several of the pre-electoral promises. In that case, the government will have to cope with internal problems that will definitely occur from its radical left components and the far-right coalition partner (Independent Greeks). In the case that the government chooses to follow the radical way and reach a negotiation impasse, the country will enter a difficult, dangerous and insecure era with negative economic and social consequences. Furthermore, the coalition of Syriza with the party of Independent Greeks is rather strange, as the ability to cooperate in crucial issues such as immigration and foreign relations is doubtful because of their extensive ideological discrepancies.

New Democracy, which is now the main opposition party, despite being the main governmental party in a difficult economic period (2012-2014), has lost only 2% of the electorate comparing with the national elections of 2012. This shows that the party has a stable base that allows its members to hope that they can expediently subvert the disappointment in the case of a future governmental failure in negotiations. At the same time, Syriza attracted most of the centre-left voters, as PASOK has wasted a huge part of its 2012 electorate. The centre-left party The River was the second choice for voters who were disappointed with PASOK and did not trust Syriza. An unsettling result of these elections is neo-Nazi Golden Dawn's maintenance of the 2012 vote share which indicates that a crucial number of voters disappointed with the political system are heading towards extreme choices.

In retrospect, it seems that Greece has made a doubtful step that either will lead to the extension of the transitional and turbulent period towards the establishment of a more stabilised economy or dispute the European future of the country. In any case, the anti-European voices inside the new government comprise at least one negative fact.

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## Internal and external challenges facing the government

The results of the Greek elections of 2015 mark a historic change for the country and seal the end of the two-party system, while bringing into power a left-wing party for the first time in history. The center-left parties appear to be reinforced with a cumulative rate over 45% (excluding The River and PASOK), a fact that provides Syriza with the oxygen needed for the first months of its governance. However, there is no time for tactical manoeuvres and inaction on behalf of the Tsipras-Kammenos coalition government, as it will be required to deal fast with some hot issues, concerning mainly the financial and insurance sector problems. That means that the newly-formed government will probably confront three types of conflicts.

The first conflict is related to the several different internal constituencies that Syriza is composed of, that, as an integral part of the same government, should now find a common line of expression. Although pluralism of opinions within a party is positive, diversity, continuous contradictions and lust for power result in separatist trends. Such an image is prohibitive at this time, as Syriza should appear with a strong and united voice towards its European partners.

The second conflict to be faced by the new government is the battle against the powerful economic and political interests involved in the country over the last 40 years. During the election campaign, Syriza pledged to fight tax evasion, to provide tax relief for the lower classes and a fair distribution of social dividends. These proclamations require a direct confrontation with strong economic and political power-poles, while any failure is going to result in intense social discontent.

The third conflict will most probably arise from Syriza's willingness to renegotiate the Greek loan agreement. A few hours after the first results, the President of the Bundesbank, Jens Weidmann, stated that a loan haircut is out of the question, and Athens should remain staunch regarding its contractual commitments, if it wishes to continue receiving financial assistance. Along the same lines were the statements of the German Finance Minister, Schäuble, and the Finnish Prime Minister, Stubb, who only promised to examine a repayment extension, should Athens stay committed to the programme.

Nevertheless, there is also a fourth conflict that is of great importance for the EU itself. That has to do with the quantitative easing programme and President of the European Central Bank Mario Draghi's statement that the EU has to be economically integrated through structural reforms. This opinion contrasts with the German and the Dutch aspect which finds the mutualisation of the North's debt a very bad idea.

Recently, 18 famous economists expressed the view, through the Financial Times, that Europe is going to gain profit by offering Greece a new beginning. If not done rapidly and if it is not realised that the survival of the monetary union requires large financial transfers and the existence of a lender of last resort, Europe is doomed to re-live moments from its not so glorious and not so peaceful past.

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# Part VII

## The Politics of Radical Populism

## Luftwaffe on autopilot

The extreme right Golden Dawn (GD) party has scored yet another important victory. Some may argue that things are not so bad. After all, a comparison of voter support for GD between this week's general election (388,447 votes) with that of June 2012 (426,025) might suggest that the party is finally beginning to lose steam.

Such a conclusion, unfortunately, amounts to woeful optimism.

The recent results clearly show that GD continues to maintain a strong and unwavering base of support. Polling data gathered just before the elections suggest that almost 74 per cent of voters who cast their ballots in favor of GD in 2012 did the same last Sunday. This comes despite a mainstream media shutout, a freezing of state funding, and the party leadership having to campaign with recorded messages from jail while awaiting trial on organised crime charges. In the face of these obstacles, GD has achieved the symbolic milestone of entering Parliament as the third most popular party—a rank which it has trumpeted as its rightful place over the past two years.

The tragedy is that, if not for institutional failings, this outcome might have been averted. In October 2014, the prosecutor handling the criminal investigation of the party sent a 700 page motion to the Appeals Council declaring that GD is an illegal entity and asked for the indictment of all GD MPs and another 52 party members on organised crime charges and other related crimes. Instead of pouncing on the opportunity, the judges opted to let the report gather dust. Now the damage is done; even if the newly elected MPs are convicted and stripped of their political rights, the party does not lose its seats in Parliament.

GD has won yet another round of breathing space as well as a forum to broadcast its hateful rhetoric. It continues to lurk the halls of power, while seeking to exploit the deepening political and economic instability which is gripping the country in order to realise its dreams of retribution and domination.

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# 40 | Daphne Halikiopoulou and Sofia Vasilopoulou

## A crisis of democracy

While the analysis of Sunday's Greek national elections has focused on the victory of the far left-wing Syriza and the formation of a coalition with the far right-wing Independent Greeks, what is less discussed is the electoral result of the Golden Dawn and its implications for Greek democracy.

While support for the party dropped from the 9.38% it received during the 2014 EP elections and the 6.97% it received during the June 2012 national elections, Golden Dawn still managed to attract 6.28% of the votes cast, now occupying third place in the Greek Parliament with 17 seats. Within the context of the imprisonment and pending indictment of its leading members, this is a significant result in itself and indicates that there is a substantial percentage of Greek voters with far right-wing ideas that the Golden Dawn accommodates. It is notable that the party did not even participate in the electoral campaigns. Despite this, it managed to attract high percentages in several constituencies and even in Piraeus, the birthplace of left-wing activist Pavlos Fyssas whose murder is associated with the Golden Dawn.

The results raise the question of whether support for the Golden Dawn is simply a temporary anti-systemic vote or a phenomenon embedded in Greek society.

The economic crisis has undoubtedly shifted attitudes favourably to the Golden Dawn. An analysis of the 2014 EP elections indicates that support for the Golden Dawn is an attitudinal phenomenon deriving from people's stance on the political system in general: a protest vote against the status quo and disillusionment with governing parties. It also indicates, however, that those voters more likely to opt for the Golden Dawn are ones with right-wing socially conservative and authoritarian ideas.

Within the context of a crisis that, beyond economic, also has fundamental political and ideological implications, we may speak of a crisis of democracy. To this crisis, the Golden Dawn has offered a 'nationalist' solution drawing on ideas that are already prevalent in Greece. This is why a party that puts forward a rhetoric based on fascist myths, such as social decadence and national rebirth, was able to dramatically increase its support in 2012 and almost maintain it in 2015 despite its anti-democratic and unconstitutional activities.

In managing the crisis, the new government must also focus on the Golden Dawn phenomenon. And if we accept the classic paradigm that both democracy and economic growth depend on an empowered middle class, then this is the key to addressing both austerity and the far right phenomenon in Greece.

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*Daphne Halikiopoulou and Sofia Vasilopoulou have co-authored a forthcoming book on the Golden Dawn entitled The Golden Dawn's 'Nationalist Solution': Explaining the Rise of the Far Right in Greece.*

*For more information, please see: <http://www.palgrave.com/page/detail/the-gold-en-dawn%92s-daphne-halikiopoulou/?K=9781137487124>*

## The rise of patriotic socialism 21st-century style

After nearly five years of living under a 'Troika' rule that pushed for austerity policies to rescue the collapsing Greek economy, the Greek people decided on who should bring their lives back to normality. In what has been called an 'angry vote', exactly 36.34% of the Greek electorate voted in the January 25th parliamentary elections for the radical left party Syriza, believing that 'Hope is Coming'. What Greeks woke up to on the 26th January was 'unthinkable' a few years back; a coalition of patriotic solidarity between the radical left Syriza and the right-wing, nationalistic ANEL (Independent Greeks) party which took another 4.75% of the votes. It might well have been the first time in Greek history that a radical left party wins the majority of parliament seats and forms a government, but this historical moment has been overshadowed by Syriza's coalition with Independent Greeks.

Though much of the public debate has focused on how the new government will renegotiate the terms of debt repayment (or, better, writ the debt off) and on the ending of austerity policies and how this may affect economic governance in the Eurozone, there have been political developments that need to be brought forward. The Syriza/ANEL coalition marks the first time in Greek history that the two political 'ends' (radical left and nationalist right) meet to govern. This coalition might have been forged on an 'anti' (anti-austerity, anti-reform, anti-European) axis and rhetoric lacking any deeper ideological basis, nevertheless its impact on European politics could be much greater. A 21st century style political doctrine of patriotic (rather than national) solidarity is shaped which combines the patriotic rhetoric in foreign policy and an equally populist economic policy for 'the people'. With the collapse of the centrist political parties and the inability of liberal parties to persuade the electorate, a – very possible – deterioration in the socio-economic life in Greece will bring more power, not to the radical left this time, but to the populist right. ANEL could easily adopt more of the anti-capitalist economic rhetoric and gain popular support in a collapsing economy and state. While the electorate is also in search of alternative political options in the European countries, Greece might show the way.

The January 25th elections marked another historical first in Greek politics: The climbing of the Nazi-inspired Golden Dawn to the third place in the Greek Parliament with 6.28% of the votes. This high percentage comes despite the fact that the party's leader and several of its MPs are in jail, facing charges of participating in a 'criminal organisation'. One should not this time simply interpret the Golden Dawn's share as an 'angry' vote since the consecutive high percentages of the Golden Dawn in the 2012 parliamentary and June 2014 European Parliament elections indicate that neo-Nazis 'are here to stay' as an established vote.

The Greek result is indeed a sign of the political change that is happening in Europe. It is not just about the failure of austerity and the need for new economic policies and a development paradigm. It is also and mainly about the dramatic rise of populism which has no limits in bridging the far-right with the far-left and being segmented by anti-austerity sentiments among others. This could be extremely dangerous for Europe's cohesion and democratic, liberal prosperity. Much of the strength of populism will depend on the turn the European economies take. But this is another difficult puzzle to sort out. Greek results have shown that populist political forces have been appointed by the electorate to solve that puzzle.

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## A comparison of the Golden Dawn's manifestos for the 2012 and 2015 elections

In this article we will try to establish whether Golden Dawn's official speech has been radicalised in the nearly three years between the two elections. For this reason we are going to research two official papers that the organisation has published:

- a) the paper named "Political Positions – For the Golden Dawn of Hellenism", from 2012 (<http://www.xryshaygh.com/assets/files/politikes-theseis.pdf>) and
- b) the paper named "Political Manifesto 2015 – Thieves in Prison, Greeks in Power" (<http://www.xryshaygh.com/assets/files/programma-2015.pdf>). Both of them are short in length: "Political Positions" has 24 pages and "Political Manifesto 2015" has 16 pages.



Voting Booth (Spyros Papaspyropoulos - under Creative Commons licence)

"Political Positions" seems to be a more everyday paper for Golden Dawn, because of the very simple content it has. We see no photos in it, only bold-font letters in the headlines and at the points it wants to emphasise. On the other side, the "Political Manifesto 2015" seems to be a real and modern political programme, because of the photos on its first page, the photo with its political leader's message on the second page, the link to the party's website and the appearance of a telephone number which covers Greek territory.

Taking a deeper look inside the "Political Manifesto 2015", we see that it is building on a policy agenda of 12 steps, similar to the "Political Positions". The difference between the two manifestos is that "Political Positions" first talks about Greece's independence, which is possible if the country

tightens its relationships with Russia and confirms its territorial waters, while at the same time defending Cyprus. Contrary to this, "Political Manifesto 2015" starts talking about political justice against all those who "betrayed" the country and are responsible for the crisis. This was third in 2012, while now the country's independence has gone one step down.

Both manifestos talk about popular sovereignty and economic self-sufficiency. References to natural wealth and raw materials are to more important in the recent manifesto than in 2012, while unemployment seems to be less important, stressing however the problem that immigrants pose for our economy according to the authors.

The economic programme remains the same in these two manifestos, with references to the cancellation of bank debts, the claim of the loan Germany has owed Greece since World War II, and income redistribution. The problem of illegal immigrants is following, higher than 2012 and after this the party's position on the demographic problem of Greece. The party's position on health and security are lower than 2012 and both of them are finishing with the positions on education and orthodoxy.

To sum up this comparison, the Golden Dawn's manifestos are almost the same between the two elections. Despite the party's criminal and neo-Nazi face, which became more obvious after the murder of Pavlos Fissas in September of 2013, its official stand hasn't changed, remaining at the same time radical right in the matters of immigration, security, education, demographics and international relations, and left in the matters of economy, popular sovereignty and memorandum.

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# Part VIII

## The Politics of Hope

## A blast from the past and an opportunity for tomorrow

On January 25, 2015, the anti-austerity party of Syriza managed to rise to power by winning the general election on promising that 'hope is coming'. Pledging to end the austerity 'pain' and re-negotiate the country's debt, Syriza's leader Tsipras underlined, in the presence of cheering and ecstatic supporters, that "Today Greece wrote history".

Undoubtedly, the importance of such victory cannot be underestimated, but there was something familiar in the winning speech of Tsipras on the night of the elections. It was in 1981 that 'Greece swung left' for the first time, with Andreas Papandreou, the leader of Pasok triumphing in the general elections in a period where Greece's reliability was similarly questioned by the European partners. Although a comparison between the two cases would be rather vague due to their differences it appears that Syriza has adopted a populist rhetoric that proved to remain a key core of the political scene in Greece.

The electoral campaigns that were launched in this short-time pre-election period emphasised the issue of austerity, which in the end determined the outcome of the elections. The results on Sunday verified that the majority of the electorate trusted the vision of the charismatic leader Tsipras sending a strong message to the established political parties that ruled the country for the last few decades. But how far can we actually claim that with the win of Syriza the country swings to the left? And is the left-right scale the proper tool to explain or assess Syriza's success? In order to answer this question we need to reflect back to the populist rhetoric of Syriza and the indication of lack of political ideology in the voting behavior, which suggest a more opportunistic perspective when analysing the profile of the voter.

What is obvious even for the previous elections in 2012 is the necessity for all Greeks to be confronted with the inconvenient truths for the past that led not only to an economic, but also to a crisis in society and its values. The initiative of Syriza to transform the political system to a deeper democracy and the party's priority to confront the crisis in society appears to be an ideal opportunity for the Greeks to become more involved in politics and realise that the responsibility for a country does not lay only in the hands of the people who govern, but it concerns every citizen.

Hope implies optimism and Greece is expecting positive outcomes from the new government. But hope cannot stand alone. In order for the change to happen, mobilisation and effort are required, not only from the government's perspective, but also from society. Syriza calls for solidarity and commits to an overthrow; not for conquering the present but for securing a better future. If not now, when?

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## Choosing hope over fear

Emotional appeal is a usual strategy for candidate parties during election time in Greece. Within a complex socioeconomic context, public discussion in the years of the crisis has been characterised by extended economical and technocratic debates as well as information overload, often confusing voters about the best policies to deal with economic crisis. This might be one of the reasons the two major opponents, Syriza and New Democracy, organized their pre-electoral campaigns on the basis of two different emotions: hope and fear.

On one hand, Syriza used the phrase “Hope is coming” as its core campaign motto (turning it into “Hope has won” the day after), stating that “Five years of disaster and fear have led nowhere” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCsVgDh7Qck>). On the other hand, New Democracy focused on a presumably disastrous impact in case of the opposition’s victory, with the threat of ‘Grexit’ as the worst-case scenario, avoiding to present the party’s agenda itself. These two emotions were launched as competitive rather than complementary, urging voters to choose sides. Following this trend, smaller parties such as Independent Greeks (ANEL) and PASOK tried to present themselves as watchdogs of Syriza. At the same time, one could argue that both Syriza and New Democracy have stretched the limits of their campaigns, resorting to either populism or intimidation.

A first conclusion drawn from the electoral results could be that hope proved to be a more successful strategy than fear, since people felt they had “nothing to lose”, especially after five years of austerity measures. The results could also be regarded as a voters’ choice of a more pleasant form of manipulation or merely a different one (speaking of emotions, one shouldn’t leave out of discussion the collective anger towards the political system, mainly reflected on the high levels of the extreme right party). However, a closer look points out that a fear strategy, despite having been proven effective in past elections, actually annoyed voters more than Syriza’s easy promises leading to a negative vote for New Democracy. According to an opinion poll by RASS, 34.4% were annoyed by New Democracy’s alarmism whereas 24.8% were annoyed by Syriza’s easy promises (<https://left.gr/news/dimoskopisi-rass-mprosta-me-42-o-syriza>).

In addition to a series of other reasons such as the impact of austerity measures and the reproduction of a corrupt system attributed to the parties that governed Greece since Metapolitefsi, this negative vote could reflect a reaction to the overuse of fear as an instrument of political manipulation and the absence of actual political proposals. It could also be indicative of voters’ demand for respect and fair game in order for a candidate party to be trusted.

In this sense, choosing hope over fear could be interpreted as a sign of political maturity and rational judgment. Such a research hypothesis remains to be further investigated in the future.

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# 45 | Giouli Giannadaki

## The need for a new policy

The results of the elections in Greece on 25 January 2015 highlight the need for a new kind of policy on national and international (EU) level. For the first time the anti-bailout, left-wing Coalition of the Radical Left party (Syriza, 36.34%) won the elections and made a coalition government with the anti-bailout right party Independent Greeks (4.75%). This demonstrates the urgent need for coalition governments (a phenomenon which started in 2012) as a more democratic style of governance. It also probably means the end of the hegemonic role of the two traditional poles in the political system (conservatives and socialists).

In the Greek political system, for the first time a left wing party won the elections and increased its percentage compared to 1958 (24.42%). The ideology of democratic socialism and Euroscepticism and the need for negotiations towards a European market economy and globalisation process came to power. Indeed the stability programme, the restrictive public and income policy and the drastic limitation of public expenses during the past five years caused a deeper recession of the economy (reduced total spending, unemployment, a negative impact on GDP growth). The disappointment in the above policies, against the EU-IMF bailout memorandum, expressed at first



The Presidential Mansion Garden (Jenny Tolou)

with protests against austerity and the social movements of Indignant Citizens (Kínima Aganak-tisménon), finally brought the anti-bailout party into power, and the need for international negotiations for the future of the EU.

The voters expressed their disappointment in the applied policy measures and in the two traditional parties of power, the centre-left party PASOK(4.68%) and the centre-right party New Democracy(27.81%). The need for a change in the paradigm of public policy and the opposition to

the old political system was shown through the electoral performance of new parties, such as The River (To Potami, 6.05%). For Alexis Tsipras, the leader of Syriza and Greek Prime Minister, a new approach to public governance is expected, because he does not follow the mainstream political traditions. His beliefs are opposed to the Greek stereotypes (for example religion which is interconnected with the Greek political system).

The most disappointing aspect of the political and economic crisis is the rise in power of the neo-Nazi, fascist and xenophobic party Golden Dawn (XA) (6.28%), which is the third party in parliament even if its members are arrested and charged with forming a criminal organisation. If the economy and policy restarts, then extreme powers will be under control in a democratic and stabilised political governance.

To conclude, the neoliberal model of governance of the last years (severe austerity) was unable to solve the financial and political crisis. Maybe a new period starts for Greece as a regional country of the EU that means the need for a changing production model. Each country in the EU has its own capabilities, and austerity doesn't work. Maybe we need policies not only for political elites. Those policies have to be more Keynesian with strong aggregate demand purposes, the empowerment of the production sectors with public investments, public sector expenses and not neoliberal approaches which intensify the current depression.

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## The difficult but promising road of Syriza

The winner of the elections of January 25th was largely known. The crucial question was whether Syriza would achieve an overall majority in parliament or not. The victory of Syriza with 36.4% gave it only 149 seats (two away from the 151 threshold) and so led Syriza in an odd and rather fragile partnership with a political incongruous partner, the small right-wing anti-memorandum party Independent Greeks.

During the pre-election campaign, Alexis Tsipras, in the terms of Ernesto Laclau, managed to build a long chain of equivalence among numerous social groups who had been hurt in recent years by the implementation of the memorandum and strict austerity policies. He also managed to express their demands by condensing them in the empty signifier of "Hope". At the same time, using the signifier of hope, he could put forward a positive project - a vision - and managed to attract large support for his party against the fear that was systematically cultivated, until the last minute, by New Democracy. The two basic emotions of fear and hope were mobilised and dominated the political arena, and in the end hope won. From this campaign, however, two problems may arise: the management of this (because of its range) unstable chain of equivalence and the satisfaction of increased expectations either pre-existing or explicitly caused by the discourse of the party.

A major challenge in the new era that begins for the country, which will be led for the first time by a leftist prime minister, is the avoidance of complacency from the side of the people and the grassroots movement. The risk of a passive standby is real. The government of Syriza, as Alexis Tsipras has highlighted many times, needs the people, its active support and even its pressure. The popular, grassroots movement must remain active throughout the whole term of Alexis Tsipras' government. Challenge for the government of Syriza would be also the greater engagement of people in decision-making and in the country's governance in the broader sense, with regular and honest information, notably regarding the progress of negotiations with the European Union and the IMF and even by holding referendum(s) if necessary.

Finally, Syriza has a very important task. Syriza must prove in practice that there are alternatives. Against the relentless logic of the one-way road, it is called upon to open the field of experimentation and political imagination. Unfortunately, the ruptures and transformations espoused by Syriza, particularly in the social and cultural field, would confront with the limits set by the cooperation with the party of Independent Greeks. The degree of freedom is limited and this must be taken into account. In these cases, we will either see a postponement of tackling these social and cultural issues, especially whenever the economic situation improves, or Syriza will seek, where appropriate, the cooperation of other parties in parliament, as opposed to that of its government partner.

A success of Syriza will encourage the Left across Europe and will revive the necessary political confrontation between real alternatives.

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## Hope and a promise for change

This commentary focuses on the promise of “hope” that Syriza raised before the Greek elections and still does, and especially on its economic ramifications. It is a fact that Syriza found itself with several advantages in the middle of an intense political-ideological rivalry between its persistent and relatively stable anti-memorandum rhetoric, the features of its young and enduring leader, and the other side’s inability to continue handling social discontent using intimidation and intolerance.

However, the most important advantage for SYRIZA has been “hope”, the central element and concept of its communications campaign, derived from the party’s programming priorities and suggested economic policy and, after all, its ideological stance. The intent to relieve the lower-income strata and to address the humanitarian crisis as a first step to economic recovery, brought to the fore an almost unprecedented political interest in human rights as well as the needs of different social groups that have experienced considerable pressure (discrimination and mistreatment in the labour market and in social life) throughout the crisis.

Along with the economically disadvantaged, working women, second generation immigrants, employees in precarious posts, young scientists, the unemployed and many others developing all the more concrete collective identities (e.g. gays, social activists, artists) found a reason to be optimistic in this “new deal” for cultural change and socioeconomic welfare which, as promised, is to be generated by knowledge, creativity and social justice.

According to this new vision, it becomes clear that different social groups, defined under various criteria, but falling into the most vibrant and (in terms of age) productive part of the work force, can be engaged in an alternative development plan, involving also the restructuring of production and extended reforms on the organisation of markets and industry and the function of the state. In a way, Syriza promises to “restart the economy” by turning diversity and social disintegration into strength while using forces that have been for years (in some cases even before the crisis) marginalised or obsolete, and to explore alternative paths to socioeconomic welfare, by embracing knowledge and innovation practices, investment in the social economy and the flexible dynamics of the small enterprises.

On the other hand, New Democracy insisted on a diametrically opposed doctrine and counter-posed the already implemented economic policies. In reality, neither of the two parties can be considered to be going against the European common agenda for growth and competitiveness or economic recovery, but in the case of Greece, it is only the former that has not yet been tested, and it is only the former that entails a legitimate and essential transformation in the long run, provided that a mutually beneficial and viable agreement on the Greek debt will be found. In this sense, one could argue that at this critical moment, the Greeks have chosen the “uphill” but still virtuous way to solve their perpetuating problems

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## Two cheers for Hope

Syriza's electoral victory constitutes a monumental event in Europe's post-war politics. As I write this, Alexis Tsipras has already met the President and been sworn in as Prime Minister, having reached an agreement to form a majority government of 162 with the Independent Greeks (ANEL) leader, Panos Kammenos. Beyond the economic challenges before Syriza's nascent administration, there are two important issues I would like to underscore: first, that Syriza's victory has ushered in a much needed dose of hope and, second, that the Communist Party's (KKE) refusal to support Syriza will be a point of potentially vociferous contention in the Greek left.



Alexis Tsipras HOPE Poster (Ana Alania)

That Syriza managed to achieve over 36% of the vote even after the biased (at best) stance of the Greek mainstream media bears testament to the will of the Greek people to bring about change; this is not a small thing for a country which has been ruled by two parties and a handful of families for the last forty years. Also, Syriza's decision to hold its post-electoral celebrations at Propylaia University and not at Zappeion reveals, in my view, a willingness to reorient Greek politics from the pomp and ceremony of previous administrations to an initiative which places Greece's youth at the centre of political discourse; and, to be sure, Greece's youth knows all too well that political power is neither absolute nor sanctified; it is a conflagration of contingency, antagonism and continuous struggle apropos of a youth that designates itself as radical. In addition, we have today's events: the short, demure ceremony; the civil rather than religious oath; the laying of a wreath at Kaisariani as Tsipras's first act as PM; and, of course, the fact that he did not wear a tie even when he was being sworn in.

Now, even though KKE's decision was expected, I believe it will haunt its leadership and will definitely fuel bitter sectarianism, the perennial problem of the (Greek) left. I simply cannot fathom why the historical conjuncture of 1989 compelled Florakis to enter into an agreement with Mitsotakis's New Democracy, whilst KKE's current leadership remains cold to the pleas of the people of the left. Sadly, I see no role for KKE in its current form. For the last five years the people of Greece have been humiliated, degraded, lied to and choked by chemicals whenever they dared protest. That KKE has denied them hope is an, in my view, unforgivable development. It seems that those who position themselves as Marx's sons and daughters tend to think that only they can call him 'father'.

However, something is changing; in *Resources of Hope*, published posthumously in 1989, Ray-

mond Williams writes that 'to be truly radical is to make hope possible rather than despair convincing'. If imbuing the people of Greece with a bit of hope was SYRIZA's first task then it has succeeded admirably. A government of the radical left in a European country is surely an historic development and, I suggest, one that the KKE will regret not being part of.

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## Celebrations over Syriza's victory are premature

It was October 1981 when the brash leader of PASOK, Andreas Papandreou, promised 'hope' and 'change', calling for a Greek departure from the EU and NATO. After his victory, Time Magazine featured Papandreou on its cover with the headline "Greece Swings Left". Most of the radical promises were broken, however, and Greece remained in the EU and NATO.

Flashing forward to this year, young Alexis Tsipras and Syriza emerged victorious in the elections. Across Greece and the world, celebrations ensued. Global media coverage was hyperbolic, deeming the first 'leftist' victory in modern Greek history (apparently 1981 is forgotten) as a 'slap in the face' of austerity and comparing Tsipras to Che Guevara and Uruguay's 'president of the poor' José Mujica.

This was not so much a victory for Syriza, however, but a defeat for the two previously dominant parties, whose rule had become increasingly authoritarian. The results reflected the increased polarisation of Greek society, with voters who were weary of austerity congregating towards Syriza, while voters who wished to keep the 'leftists' out congregated towards New Democracy, which finished only two percent below its June 2012 result.

Much has been said about Syriza's coalition with the Independent Greeks, with many Syriza supporters accusing the latter of being far-right, nationalist and racist. Such criticisms weren't heard, however, when Syriza admitted former Independent Greek MPs such as Rachel Makri into its ranks. Similarly, Syriza's supporters remained muted regarding the party's absorption of former PASOK MPs, some of whom had voted for the memorandum agreements.

Another notable result is the high abstention rate of 34%, with 3.5 million voters abstaining compared to Syriza's 2.2 million votes. This indicates that many voters were not swayed by Syriza's promises, nor by the proclamations of New Democracy and PASOK regarding Greece's supposed 'success story'.

One last highlight was the demonstrated lack of credibility of public opinion surveys, which showed Syriza and New Democracy engaged in a close race and which were inaccurate in their projections for practically every other party. This further fuels arguments that such polls serve as tools of political manipulation. Similarly, foreign media displayed an astonishing naiveté of Greek politics, as demonstrated by the widely-publicised assumption that The River would serve as 'kingmaker'.

Ultimately, Syriza's victory doesn't represent a leftward swing of the electorate as much as it reflects their desperation to oust the old guard. Syriza has made numerous promises, but it may be judged ultimately on what it fails to deliver. The reality is that Syriza is 'radical leftist' in name only. Its rhetoric has tempered considerably, and its refusal to even place issues such as a 'Grexit', Greece's strongest negotiating weapon, on the table may backfire. Furthermore, its consideration of conservative figures for the presidency may repel many voters. Broken promises and a sense that it has caved to Troika demands won't bode well for Syriza's fragile coalition, and as Andreas Papandreou, Barack Obama, and Francois Hollande proved, the rhetoric of 'hope and change' often differs considerably from the political reality which ensues.

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