

The radical right parties under the economic crisis: The Greek case

Vasiliki Georgiadou
Associate Professor, Panteion University
e-mail address: v_georgiadou@hotmail.com

Anastasia Kafe
PhD Candidate, Panteion University
e-mail address: ankafe@msn.com

Roula Nezi
PhD Candidate, University of Athens and Visiting Fellow, University of Twente
e-mail address: s.nezi@utwente.nl

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Abstract

Nowadays a new wave of socio-political disenchantment is emerging in most European countries due to the economic crisis. Exceptional examples among them are protest movements in Spain, Portugal, Greece, or even the UK. In the era of the economic crisis do the populist radical right parties continue to collect the protest vote or the economic crisis has changed the conditions in the political market and the role of parties in the electoral arena? In the case of Greece, the emergence of a populist radical right party, called LAOS (Popular Orthodox Rally), occurs when the rising middle classes in the late post-authoritarian era took shelter under the two main governmental parties, the socialist PASOK and the conservative New Democracy. LAOS, as a party of the radical right scene, collected in its bosom traditional conservative and ultra right voters, who were disaffected by ND and its shift in the center of the left-right ideological scale. In our research we employ data from 2007, when LAOS first elected representatives at the National Parliament, until 2009, the last national election before the economic crisis to examine the electoral base of the party. Further into our analysis we examine those variables that explain vote share for LAOS; sociodemographic characteristics, anti-immigrant perception and political cynicism variables are employed with appropriate regression models to analyze the electoral preferences for LAOS. We also take into account the current situation of economic crisis and the rising unemployment rates in the Greek labor market. We conclude that anti-immigrant perceptions and political cynicism are more important than sociodemographic characteristics and economic variables for shaping voters' preferences for LAOS.