

# GREEK ELECTIONS 2012

GREEK  
POLITICS



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GROUP

First thoughts on the 6 May 2012 election in Greece

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Edited by Roman Gerodimos

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## Editorial

The 6 May 2012 election in Greece constitutes an important event in the country's contemporary political history in many ways. This was the first election after the outbreak of Greece's debt crisis in 2009, after its entry into the EU/IMF bailout mechanism in 2010 and after the Papademos coalition government that was formed in late 2011. PASOK and New Democracy – the two parties that dominated the post-1974 electoral landscape – saw their support collapsing. In 2009 New Democracy lost the election with 33% of the vote. At the time that was its worst electoral performance in history. In the May 2012 election, PASOK and New Democracy together received less than 33% and, against most predictions, were unable to form a coalition government that would have allowed them to proceed with the implementation of the austerity measures. This election also reflects the fragmentation of the party system with 7 parties entering parliament (none of which got more than 20% of the vote) and almost 20% of voters choosing parties that did not reach the 3% threshold. Last but not least, this election officially marks the rise of extremism in Greek politics with neo-Nazi Golden Dawn achieving a shocking 7%.

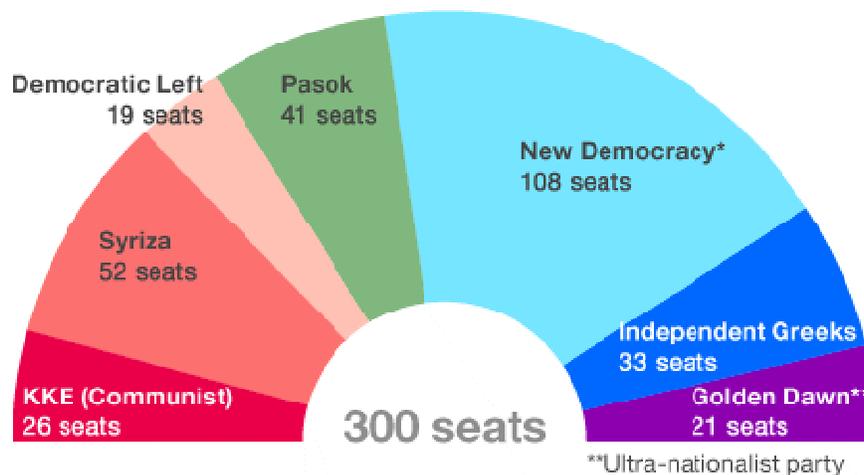
The Greek Politics Specialist Group (GPSG) of the Political Studies Association (PSA) of the UK invited short commentaries from its members, colleagues and affiliates as a first response to the electoral outcome. This pamphlet is by no means a comprehensive, detailed or definitive account of the election. It is merely a forum – an opportunity for colleagues to reflect on this historic event. Our contributors agree that the Greek political system is going through a violent transformation which will lead to realignment of political parties, ideologies and voters. The article in this collection also consider other important aspects of the current political landscape, including Greece's relationship with the EU, the role of opinion polls and of the electoral system, as well as different ways and means of mobilising and understanding voters. We hope that this publication will lead to a fruitful dialogue and we welcome further contributions through our various outlets, such as the GPSG Working Papers series, the series of Articles on our website and newsletter and, of course, our forthcoming events and panels.

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### Greek parliamentary election results

Parties ordered from political left to political right



\*includes 50 extra seats for coming first

Source: Greek interior ministry

Graph: BBC News - [http://news.bbcimg.co.uk/media/images/60135000/gif/\\_60135057\\_greece\\_elect\\_results2\\_464qr.gif](http://news.bbcimg.co.uk/media/images/60135000/gif/_60135057_greece_elect_results2_464qr.gif)

## Contents

### **Section A: The Greek political system in transition**

1. Dimitris Tsarouhas: *A paradigm change*
2. Takis Pappas: *The extinction of the Greek party dinosaurs?*
3. George Diakoumakos: *A political system in transition*
4. Vasilis Leontitsis: *Is there life outside the Greek Parliament?*
5. Theodore Chadjipadelis: *A new political landscape*
6. Theofanis Exadaktylos: *Fragmentation and Punishment*
7. Athanasios Tsakiris: *Sea changes in the party system*
8. Manos Papazoglou: *Revisiting the style of leadership*
9. Ioannis Sotiropoulos: *The June election as a prelude of change in the Political Party Map in Greece*
10. Dimitris Rapidis: *Can Greece be governed?*
11. Stellina Galitopoulou: *On the brink of collapse*

### **Section B: “It’s the economy, stupid” – Greece and the EU**

12. Georgios Karyotis: *The electoral impact of austerity: lessons from Greece*
13. Zoe Lefkofridi: *Greece & Europe 2012: Friends or Foes?*
14. Anastasios Chardas: *Is economic development really the missing link of the Greek economy?*
15. Sofia Cheimara: *The day after the day after the election*
16. Sotirios Adamopoulos: *A traumatised political system in search of stability*
17. George Tassiopoulos: *A comparison of the French and Greek elections*
18. Julie Kolokotsa: *The world is watching*

## **Section C: Analysing the election campaign: opinion polls and campaign tools**

19. Emmanuel Heretakis: *The serious problem of electoral predictions (not only) in Greece*

20. Kostas Bizas: *What do pre-election opinion polls tell us about the impact of the election campaign?*

21. Nikos S. Panagiotou: *Winning the Hearts and Minds: Grass Roots E-mail Campaigns a successful Election Tool*

## **Section D: Democracy is working: the May 6<sup>th</sup> election as a sign of democratic health**

22. Emmanuel Sigalas: *It's not all bad news*

23. Giorgos Katsambekis: *Politics is back on the agenda*

24. Dafni Diliagka: *IMF austerity cannot be applied on a permanent and stable basis in a democratic society*

25. Nikolaos Markoulakis: *A historic moment of meta-matapolitefsi's manifestation*

## **Section E: A very Greek electoral system**

26. Kostas Theologou & Anastasia Veneti: *Affecting democratic processes by virtue of petty-minded political design*

27. David Green: *An idiosyncratic electoral system*

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## Section A: The Greek political system in transition

1

**Dimitris Tsarouhas**

### A paradigm change

This is a watershed, a paradigm change in the Greek party political system. The two big parties had monopolized power for decades and their electoral collapse had been predicted countless times before. This time their collapse did indeed take place, and the fundamental reason for that is the economic crisis and in particular the austerity measures in place since 2010.

The Socialists especially have lost 60% of their 2009 voting power, and their status as a mass party is not assured any more. The party paid a very heavy price for its decisions and actions since 2010.

ND has ended up first, but gaining 18.8% of the vote is another historic low following the 2009 defeat. Under different circumstances the ND leader Samaras would have been forced to resign, yet the fact that the country is in search of a government postpones such debates.

The big winner is the Left Coalition, while the extremist far Right Golden Dawn party and the Independent Greeks of the former ND MP Kammenos won big as well. The Communists lost in relative terms, and the LAOS party's failure to pass the 3% threshold is the price it pays for entering the coalition government and changing its stance on the bailout packages rather frequently.

The two big parties together do not have a majority in Parliament, falling just short (149). Even if they are able to find a few MPs from other parties willing to tolerate or support such a coalition, they will enjoy no legitimacy in governing. One scenario would be for a third party, such as the Democratic Left party, to join in a coalition government. This is very unlikely indeed, as it would compromise the party's rejection of the "pro-austerity" path PASOK and ND have followed.

To sum up, it is unclear what kind of a government Greece will have from tomorrow on. The repercussions of this game-changing elections will run for a long time, and it is not clear how these will play out in the next days and weeks. More interesting developments are to be expected very soon, and the most likely scenario right now is a fresh poll in June.

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## 2

### Takis Pappas

#### The extinction of the Greek party dinosaurs?

##### **Do PASOK and New Democracy have a future after their crashing defeat in the recent elections?**

It is evident that after over three decades of ruling the country, twopartism in Greece is dead. After the last elections, the combined vote of the two major parties, PASOK and New Democracy (ND) stands below 33%. The question that arises is: What has happened to these parties? And what is in store for them in the future? Quite different things, I think.

For PASOK, first, the current electoral result stands as verification of the party's political bankruptcy. It ended up in third place with meagre 13.2%, down from 43.9% in the elections of 2009. In what looked like a stampede, its erstwhile voters fled to both left and right. The most sizeable portion of them voted for the parties of the left, Syriza and the Democratic Left, both opposed to the bailout and austerity measures. Others were dispersed to a host of liberal and further tiny parties that eventually did not enter parliament. As pre-election surveys already suggested, some emigrated to the Communist Party and even to the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn.

The situation looks different for the ND. It may have won first place with a meagre 18.9%, but stands well below its results from 2009 that stood at 33.5%. In this case voter flight was mainly directed to parties created by leaders formerly belonging to ND, that is, the Independent Greeks, a party founded by nativist nationalist Panos Kammenos, and Democratic Alliance, founded by Dora Bakoyannis, a former foreign minister and ND party heavyweight. Leaving aside the marginal give-and-take of votes between ND and other parties, one only has to add up the results of ND and those of the two splinter parties (10.6% and 2.6%, respectively) to realize that the total centre-right vote of 2009 is anything but irreversibly dispersed.

What do these results tell us about the future of the two parties that have dominated Greek politics since the transition of the country to democracy in 1974?

Can PASOK survive in the future? The answer must be an almost unqualified 'No' for reasons related to the nature and history of this party. PASOK was created in 1974 by populist Andreas Papandreou and first came to power as early as 1981. Since then, the party ruled Greece at intervals using patronage politics made possible through cheap foreign loans and the expansion of the public sector. Always under the spell of its charismatic founder, PASOK would remain a party without clear ideology, internal democratic organization, or a coherent policy platform. Even after the death of Andreas in 1996, and despite the modernizing attempts of new party leader Costas Simitis, PASOK remained controlled by a powerful cohort of populists that had been mentored by Papandreou and created their own extensive patronage networks. Being a party dependent on charismatic leaders, it is no wonder that in 2004 PASOK elected Andreas' own son, George Papandreou, as leader, who eventually led it to its last moment of glory that were the 2009 elections. The PASOK bubble burst as soon as the sovereign debt crisis in the Eurozone hit Greece in 2010, which immediately halted the flow of foreign loans to finance the Greek state. And as George had neither the charisma of his father nor the political skill to keep his party united, he was forced to resign and hand the party leadership to a former rival, Evangelos Venizelos. Meanwhile, members and voters had begun to abandon PASOK. What explains both the large number of defectors and their subsequent drift, and relocation, across the entire ideological space from extreme left to extreme right is precisely the chronic lack of ideological coherence within PASOK and the fact that, for all those people, once the party became deprived of state resources, it lost its social utility. To reclaim the voters that have now abandoned it, PASOK will need a new attractive ideology,

efficient party organization, realistic policy ideas, and a capable leadership. For the time being, none of this is on offer.

In contrast to PASOK, ND's prospects for the future are, perhaps, slightly better thanks to the party's history and nature. The party was founded in 1974 by Constantine Karamanlis and was responsible for Greece's smooth transition to democracy, a liberal constitution, and the country's EU membership. Progressively, however, and to a large extent because of contagion from PASOK, the initially liberal-conservative ideology of ND was diluted by populism and nationalism. Enjoying power when PASOK was out of it, ND used exactly the same patronage tactics to maintain its electoral clientele, also contributing to unreasonable state enlargement. And yet, despite sporadic splits from the party (most notably that of George Karatzaferis, founder of the extreme right LAOS party), ND had no difficulty to maintain its unity as a broad political camp. It was Antonis Samaras, a rather amoral, power hungry political entrepreneur who changed this and took the helm of the party after its resounding defeat in the 2009 elections. Since then, he has proved a poor leader piling one mistake upon another. Initially a fierce opponent of the first EU-IMF bailout of Greece, he subsequently decided to join a coalition government that negotiated the second loan agreement. But such shilly-shallying came at enormous costs for the party as, while holding the counter-bailout view, Samaras expelled bailout advocate Bakoyannis while, after switching to the pro-bailout stance, he had to also expel bailout adversary Kammenos.

It is this breakup of the formerly potent conservative camp that explains the poor electoral results of ND in the last elections. It also, however, suggests that this camp is now neatly divided along three ideological strands, each represented by a single party: statism (ND), nationalism (Independent Greeks), and moderate liberalism (Democratic Alliance). Time will show whether these strands are to converge again or will be pulled further apart. Rather most certainly, as the recent elections made quite clear, there is a large, gaping void in the Centre of the political competition space waiting to be filled by liberal forces. It remains to be seen whether this space will become the meeting point of liberals coming from both seriously ailing ND and all-but-extinct PASOK in the future.

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### 3

## George Diakoumakos

### A political system in transition

The opinion polls failed miserably in predicting the outcome of the Greek elections. This should not come as a surprise; conducting accurate opinion polls is a much more daunting task than we tend to believe, and it depends on a number of empirical observations and "rules" known about a relatively stable political environment. And here's the catch: the Greek political system is not stable. Everything we know about Greek politics since the consolidation of democracy at 1974, a period known as *Metapolitefsi*, is not valid any more.

There were hints about this fact even before the memorandum with the European Union and the IMF was signed. A few recent political studies showed that the perception of politics in Greece has radically changed, especially among the younger generation, while particular events such as the uprising of December 2008 or the temporary revival of "terrorist" or "urban guerilla" groups could not be explained according to the accepted theories. It seems that the Greek political system was already undergoing deep changes, and their pace was dramatically hastened after the bailout agreement.

As a result, the ever increasing disappointment with the mainstream political parties increased the influence of the most extremist political forces, both left and right. The radical left and communist parties, which until now received only 10-15% of the vote, got a total of 30-35% (the exact percentage depends on which parties can be included under this definition). On the other hand, the xenophobic far-right parties got a total of 20%, while they never received more than 5%, at their best, during the past elections.

The coexistence of strong radical left and far-right parties, in combination with the demise of the centre of the political spectrum, can have completely unpredictable consequences. The Greek political system is in transition, and the current electoral results don't even hint to the form of a new party system; it will take some time before we know. The only thing that we can be sure of is that anything is possible - and we mean anything at all.

European leaders and media seem to ask if Greece is going to honour its economic obligations; this is asking the wrong question. One should rather ask whether Greece will remain a European democratic country or not.

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## 4

### Vasilis Leontitsis

#### Is there life outside the Greek Parliament?

There is no doubt that the ultimate winners of the Greek national elections were SYRIZA (a left, radical party) and the Golden Dawn (a neo-Nazi party). The former managed to snap second place, causing a political earthquake in a political landscape accustomed to a two-party system. The latter, fuelled by the despair and anger of the Greek voters in times of deep recession, increased its share of the votes **by more than 20 times** entering the Greek parliament for the first time. On the other hand, the ultimate losers were ND (the conservative party) and PASOK (the socialist party) that saw their percentage of the vote plummet and their claim to political primacy shaken a great deal.

Naturally, not many analysts will pay attention to the parties that failed to enter parliament, gaining less than 3% of the votes; the electoral threshold to elect MP's in Greece. However, in reality, almost **one out of five voters** went for those parties and their votes will not be represented in the parliament. Three political parties gained between 2.6 and 2.9% of the votes. Those parties were the Greek Green Party, LAOS (a far-right party that lost all its seats) and Demokratiki Symachia (a neo-liberal party that was pro-memorandum). Additionally, two liberal, right-leaning parties (DRASI and Dimiourgia Ksana) received close to 2% and naturally stayed outside the parliament, as well.

DRASI, Dimiourgia Ksana and Demokratiki Symachia ascribe, broadly speaking, to political liberalism and free markets. Despite the fact that they share much in common in terms of political and economic values, they failed to form an alliance that could potentially secure lasting presence in Greek politics. This, I dare to say, is a symptom of the malice of the Greek political system, which is namely the lack of consensual culture. For one reason or the other, Greek political parties find it difficult to communicate with each other and create bridges among themselves, falling prey to personal ambitions and (minor or major) differences. The result is lack of political dialogue and inability to govern in times of political fragmentation.

Interestingly so, following the elections and since ND under Antonis Samaras has moved further towards the right end of the political spectrum, the political space of the liberal right remains under-represented if not uninhabited in the Greek parliament. Time will show whether the small liberal right parties will manage to unite, lead an unsubstantial life on the fringes of the political system or even perish in the months or years to come.

The Greek Green party, on the other hand, did not manage to enter the parliament by just a few thousand votes. Its ideological stance remained firmly based on political liberalism and environmental protection. However, its language remained rather nebulous on important issues such as the economic policy to be followed by the Greek government. In times of acute crisis, securing a job and a decent income are of paramount importance and they tend to hold primacy over saving one's natural environment or even protecting basic liberties. Even though the Greens did try to argue for an economic alternative, their electoral programme was not straight-forward enough to allow them secure the crucial 3% of the votes. The law of politics is rather harsh and if the party does not find a way to get its message across in the near future, it seems doomed to lead a marginalised and unsubstantial life.

Finally, LAOS paid the price for its initial support towards the austerity measures followed and its frequent change of political speech. In the end, the party was not trusted even by its former voters and, at the same time, it was outflanked by other right and far-right parties on issues related to nationalism and immigration; its strong ideological and policy areas.

It is undeniable that the Greeks wanted to punish the two major parties, which according to one reading, are responsible for the sufferings they are presently going through. At the same time, many of them seem to have rewarded xenophobic, nationalistic, introverted and populist electoral behaviours. It is interesting to notice that four out of five parties, namely the Greek Green party, Demokratiki Symachia, Dimiourgia Ksana and DRASI, which have received between 1.5 and 3% of the votes were parties with ideological platforms based on political liberalism.

**Is political liberalism, a child of the Enlightenment, unfashionable luxury for the Greek society in times of crisis?** I do not believe so. However, I do believe that the subtle and accommodating speech of political liberalism might get lost when tensions are too high and voices too loud for it to be heard. The remedy for that is clarity, simplicity and unity. Political parties with similar progressive political ideologies have to learn to unite rather than fragment. At the same time, they have to learn to simplify their political language, so that they are intelligible to the Greek voter. As those parties have recently found out, this is no time for elitistic or selfish behaviours. They have to learn to make themselves understood and cooperate. This is important for their own survival, but also out of respect for the rather high percentage of Greek voters who have recently voted for them, but who find themselves unrepresented in the Greek parliament.

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## 5

### Theodore Chadjipadelis

#### A new political landscape

And suddenly before us is the great explosion in our party system! As happens in other countries in transition where parties are born and parties explode and create small factions. The two axes that determined the choice of the electorate were (a) the established "Left-Right" axis and (b) the question of governance.

The pole of the Right as a whole kept its electoral influence constant at 40% with approximately 15% (ie nearly 40% of its power) transferred to the populist right and the far right. The Left, including the Greens and the Liberals, maintained its power as a whole, but the collapse of PASOK reinforced the populist wing while liberals paid the price of non-collaboration.

Thus, a new landscape is forming in the Greek political system. The parties should consider the building of a majority with specific partners (as in the cases of Italy or France). This search must be done with pre-election pledges and programmatic elements in mind; not with promises of employment or with the aim of settling various issues. Until we move on from the model of the catch-all party, it is likely that we will experience a difficult situation. In order for that transition to happen, the political parties should change. They should boost their internal functions by mobilising their members at the stages of policy development and candidate selection. They should also consider proposing realistic policies and not unrealistic wishes that aim to please all.

However, we are essentially in difficulty because of the weakness of governance platform configuration. The clientelistic phenomenon is not affected. The uncritical acceptance of claims, mostly unrealistic, promises to everyone and everything that characterizes the version of populist forces SYRIZA and the Independent Greeks created the same expectations that are usually created by individual mediation. In this sense, ND and PASOK fell into the same trap that they themselves set up.

But what could be done now? After four out of the seven parliamentary parties (i.e. the Communist Party, Independent Greeks, the Golden Dawn and SYRIZA) excluded themselves from a possible coalition government, and while DIM.AR. thinks that the possibility of the next election should block the formation of government as parties compete with each other, there is the perceived inability to form a government. There is also the opportunity for anyone to propose the dissolution of individuality (which apparently is not convincing as the largest party got almost 19%) or to form an advance government proposal gathering more forces.

The mere repetition of the elections will, of course, not produce a viable solution. The political parties should either change the electoral law or form poles or coalitions (rather than parties). Until that happens, we will be monitoring the impossible solution that we voted for. As for coming back to the pre-2009 state of affairs...

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## 6

### Theofanis Exadaktylos

#### Fragmentation and Punishment

The election results reveal not only the fragmentation of the political system but also the punitive attitude of the electorate. Despite the calls from the major parties for the people to vote on the basis of rational proposals and logic, the people seem to have punished harshly the two parties that brought the country to this state.

As far as **PASOK** is concerned, it was credited with the failures of previous administrations and the wider financial crisis, and in my opinion, a lot more than their fair share. PASOK received a percentage close to its debut percentage in 1974, which signals the need for reinvention of the party.

**New Democracy** was also punished for its arrogance and over-confidence that the people would support them with their vote and counted on the belief that the electorate has short memory. In addition, they were also credited with the failures of the crisis, not even managing to reach their 2009 percentages, but benefiting from the electoral law abnormalities in terms of seats in Parliament.

**SYRIZA** (the Coalition of the Radical Left) came in as second party. Yet they too don't seem to convince the people. However, what we experience is that the people have been hooked on a hope that things can be better. In my opinion, this utopian projection of other alternatives was what gave them their high percentage which is almost 4 times as much as the votes they had in 2009 and includes a mixed bag of voters from across the political spectrum.

Certainly the fact that those three received more or less similar percentages reveal that the Greek people were not convinced by any of those electoral platforms. We cannot be certain who will participate in the new government formations but we can be certain that it needs more than two partners. This of course can jeopardize the timing and implementation of further reforms.

Finally, there was a strong **international dimension** that was added on the Greek elections, which had, in my opinion, a strong impact on the undecided voters of the past 15 days. The dynamic of François Hollande for victory, gave a certain backing to the left wing parties that there may be another alternative apart from austerity. However, at the same time, statements by Wolfgang Schäuble about the Greek elections may have turned plenty of last minute voters either against the main stream parties or even away from the polling stations. There was just over 61% of electoral participation which means that more than 1 in 3 did not vote in what was coined the most important electoral contest of Greek history.

Regarding the advent of a **Neo-Nazi party** that gained 22 seats in parliament for the first time, the support came mainly from the big urban centres that have indeed suffered a lot more than the countryside during these tough times, hence hard populist rhetoric found fertile ground (much like it did with France's Marine Le Pen). It shouldn't therefore come as a surprise to see them in. At the same time, the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA) was also successful in the urban centres for the same reason. So despair, on the one hand, and looking for a hope to grapple on, on the other, in addition to the failure of austerity politics that they are the way forward led to the results we had.

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## 7

### Athanasios Tsakiris

#### Sea changes in the party system

The early elections in Greece, on May 6<sup>th</sup>, signed the end of the so-called “Metapolitefsi” (regime change) that was established in 1974 after the collapse of the 1967-1974 military dictatorship. This regime lasted 38 years and its “end” had been heralded several times after 1989, by various political scientists, commentators and politicians.

What this view missed was that the two-party system was rooted in a political tradition that valued state and political party dominance upon the civil society. Trade unions and other social organizations and movements were almost totally dominated by the mainstream political parties and their factions. It was only at times of turbulence that social movements surpassed parties and acted independently.

The massive demonstrations, marches and occupations against the implementation of austerity policies that convulsed the cities of Greece during the last two years showed that an autonomous social protest movement emerged independently of political parties and traditional bureaucratic trade unions. The Greek “indignados” contributed to the final collapse of the “Metapolitefsi” political party system. Social unrest was diffused throughout the “left-right” political spectrum causing the emergence of both far-right and radical left political organizations.

On the far-right side of the spectrum, the neo-Nazi party (“Golden Dawn”) took advantage of the nationalist and xenophobic attitudes of people who could not attribute the acute crisis and its consequences to the policies and operations of the capitalist class system, thus blaming the victims (immigrants) for their “destiny”. Moreover, “Golden Dawn” outnumbered LA.O.S. (“Popular Orthodox Rally”), the parliamentary far-right party until May 6<sup>th</sup>, because of the latter’s contradictory stances towards the Memorandum and its participation in the three-party government under the premiership of ex-banker, Mr. Lucas Papademos, in cooperation with the conservative “Nea Dimokratia” and the Panhellenic Socialist Movement that dominated the party system since 1974.

On the radical left side, the changes were even more exciting. SYRIZA (“Coalition of Radical Left”) outnumbered the traditional Communist Party of Greece (“KKE”, the strongest Stalinist party in Europe) for the first time in Greek history. Although SYRIZA was formed in 2004, its constituent groups can be traced back in the course of history (euro-communism, Trotskyism, Maoism etc). Now SYRIZA is an expanded coalition that includes left-wing social democrats, who since 2009 abandoned PASOK due to its “conversion to a neo-liberal party”, according to its critics. SYRIZA conquered the second place in voters’ preference and aims at creating a viable government with the Left as its axis.

With regard to the previously dominant parties now: PASOK with 13.2% seems to have played its role in the Greek political system as the main cartel party and it is not certain whether it will recover soon from its heavy defeat to lead a coalition of minor parties of the centre and centre-right (“Action”, “Liberal Alliance”), whose members had cooperated with PASOK in the past. New Democracy, under the leadership of Antonios Samaras will attempt to forge a troubled coalition government of the right - a mission impossible since “Independent Greeks” led by Panos Kammenos who formed his party against Samaras’s pro-memorandum policy and “Golden Dawn” was denounced by him as neo-Nazi. Neither could Samaras form a government with PASOK since that would be the most unstable government under the current conditions.

Since the other parties of the Left cannot add their votes to SYRIZA's support either due to unresponsiveness (KKE) or to lack of policy consistency ("Democratic Left" led by moderate Fotis Kouvelis) it might be equally impossible to form a minority government.

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## 8

### **Manos Papazoglou**

#### Revisiting the style of leadership

The result of the general elections in Greece is puzzling yet, in no way unpredictable. I shall argue that voters' disenchantment with governing parties and the sharp increase of protest and marginal parties may be attributed to the transactional character of the representative relationship between leadership and citizenship, as has been forged in Greek politics.

The restoration of democracy (1974, Metapolitefsi) may have facilitated party pluralism but, also, maintained some features of the old political culture, most notably the prevailing model of transactional leadership. Governing parties mobilized supporters through the means of polarization, populism, clientelist networks and demagoguery. They secured party identification by projecting a thin ideological platform, an easily perceived dichotomy between 'us' and the 'others', while promising (state derived) rewards once they gained executive power.

Leaders of the Right and the Centre acted as hegemonies in the management of party and government affairs. They did not take seriously the need for intraparty democracy and instead, used to rely on the assistance of a restricted circle of political staff.

Democratic participation is certainly generated through specific individualised motives and benefits. Nevertheless, transactional leadership came at the cost of a poor policy record regarding reforms that had to be concluded in a timely manner with a view to European and global trends. Governments found themselves hostage to supporters' claims for rewards. That was evident with the pressure put on Papandreou's governments in the 1980s for distributing state resources to the 'non-privileged' social groups that underpinned PASOK's electoral hegemony. Clearly, leaders succumbed to the Charybdis of electoral efficiency, thereby neglecting governmental capacity.

True, successive leaders (K. Mitsotakis (1990-1993), A. Papandreou (1993-1996), Costas Simitis (1996-2004), Kostas Karamanlis (2004-2009), G. Papandreou (2009-2011)) reached only limited reforming results, mainly because they failed to direct effectively the party and government functions and accordingly, to conclude far-reaching policy change.

The election results of May 2012 seem to bring back the transactional nature of leadership at a time when full-scale transformation is urgent. A large part of the electorate, trained as it was in receiving rewards for its electoral preferences, given that there are very low expectations for an exchange with governing elites, opted for party de-alignment, voted for protest, marginal, extremist parties or even abstained. The fact that the majority of the electorate show little substantial affiliation with the core party principles that used to support (PASOK and ND lost nearly 2/3 and 1/2 of their electoral strength respectively) should carefully be studied with regard to the overall legitimacy of the party system.

To put it in a nutshell, economic crisis provided the opportunity (rather than the cause) for the mass withdrawal from mainstream parties. This is certainly a result of the choices of leadership in the management of their supporters. The picture of Greek politics today resembles that of a palimpsest, that is hardly readable due to the overlapping political writings.

The challenge for Greek politics is to clearly re-write its political narrative along the lines of strong adherence to democracy and Europeanization. The time is ripe for leaderships to set up new foundations for exercising power, becoming responsive to urgent societal needs and balancing the interests of their electoral base with the pursuit of sustainable development, especially with a view to the least advantaged and future generations.

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## 9 Ioannis Sotiropoulos

### The June election as a prelude of change in the Political Party Map in Greece

As it has been made clear, the Greek voters unhesitatingly “punished” the two big traditional parties, as they are convinced that they function as puppets of a European Economic Directorate. As a result, they turned to the traditional anti-memorandum political parties, as well as the newly-established anti-memorandum parties, satisfied that in one hand they “punished” those responsible for the Greek debt crisis, hoping on the other hand to reinforce a more rigid stance and in any case a more active re-negotiation with Troika on the Memorandum terms, to a degree that approaches denial to repay the Greek debt.

The anti-memorandum party of the Coalition of the Radical Left-Unitary Social Front (SYRIZA), a coalition of left wing parties, comprising of various Leftist political forces, such as Leftist-Socialists, Marxists, Traditional Euro-Communists and Revisionists, which positions itself ideologico-politically between social democracy and communism and party-wise between PASOK (the Greek Socialist Party) and the Communist Party of Greece, has triumphed, penetrating dynamically the traditional supremacy of the two historic parties in the Greek political scene, reminiscing the days of 1958. In particular, it emerged in the second place with 16,8% (52 seats), only 2% behind the popular-liberal party of New Democracy (18,9% and 108 seats) and 3,5% above PASOK (13,2% and 41 seats). The popular-antimemorandum right wing with the newly established party of Independent Greeks received a 10,6% (33 seats), whilst the Communist Party of Greece an 8,5% (26 seats) and the extreme nationalists enter the Greek parliament for the first time since 1974 with 7% and 21 seats. Finally, the moderate leftist party of Democratic Left remains at 6,1% (19 seats) with the remaining 19% of votes allocated to parties that did not manage to achieve the minimum of 3% for parliamentary representation. The abstention rate came to the unprecedented, for Greek standards, 35%.

Nevertheless, the collapse of the two-party political system that functioned for the last 35 years remains unfinished and incomplete. Indeed, given the extreme difficulty in forming a new government and the certainty that the creative chaos which is in full swing in Greece, the next election is anticipated to clarify the political landscape. This is because in one hand the antimemorandum political trend that is being fermented will be further expressed, is anticipated

to promote SYRIZA and on the other that the voters that chose to punish and blackball with their vote the traditional governing parties will reassess the emerging situation based on new data after the recent election.

SYRIZA with 17% as a starting point cannot turn more to the left. This is mainly due to the fact that the Communist Party does not possess an adequate voter tank so as to tempt SYRIZA and that its political views remain frozen and unchanged since its establishment something that renders the movement of any voters towards SYRIZA completely negligible. Irrespective of what it proclaims, SYRIZA will move to the right, depreciating its ideological stance aiming at the prospect of absorbing as many voters as possible from PASOK and the Democratic Left. However, even in the hypothetical scenario that it gains an aggregate 15% of their voters, who at this election came to a combined 20%, its percentage rises to 32% and summing the 3% of the Ecologists Greens and the 1% of the Social Agreement reaches its maximum percentage of 36%. Any further increase is considered highly unlikely. Unless of course the unwise policy of the European Union transforms the Greeks from middle class liberals into leftist rebels, at least temporarily. Consequently, Alexis Tsipras cannot become the new Andreas Papandreou, as his arrival in the epicentre of the political scene originates from the left towards the centre; with the risk of losing a part of his left or ecological political audience during this speculative step. On the contrary, Andreas Papandreou emerged from a multi-tendency centre and expanded on both sides with specific tactics in a political framework that favoured the dynamic reconstruction of the Centre and promoting its socialist façade achieved its ultimate purpose during the 1980s.

On the other hand, the centre-right front may not be characterized by the dynamics of SYRIZA, but has a stronger voter base. It includes, the approximately 19% of its current core political base, 6,5% of neo-liberals that did not reach the electoral threshold because of their tripartition, the 10.5% of the newly established anti-memorandum party of the Independent Greeks, 3% of LAOS and finally the proportion of all those who in this election have “punished” the political system and will have to reassess the political situation. Consequently, we can sum up a percentage of at least 39% for the centre-right which must behave very carefully in order to achieve this convergence for the June election.

A very important, and possibly determining role, will be played by the portion of the voters that even though abstained from the current election (35%) intends to vote in the next electoral process, as well as the voters of the Golden Dawn, the Communist Party and the remaining from PASOK and Democratic Left (a total of 5,5% under the above assumption), the parties of which would wish to attach to the large formations on the basis of future collaboration as long as they entered enter the Parliament.

Consequently, three points will determine the results of the next election. Firstly, the direction towards which the portion of those who abstained in the current election will turn to in the next one. Secondly, the capacity of the SYRIZA dynamics to attract the remaining voter base of PASOK and Democratic Left as well as that of the Ecologists and the other smaller parties of the wider left that are not represented in the Parliament, without suffering material losses from the left. Finally, the third point is the extent to which the leaderships of the Popular, Liberal and Neo-liberal parties of European orientation intend to set aside their personal grievances demonstrating wisdom, political and party maturity, thinking of the national interest and social cohesion of the country in the upcoming calling of history.

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## Can Greece be governed?

The results of the parliamentary election of the 6th of May in Greece showed a quite predictable rise of the Left and the far Right. The alliance of the leftist groups under the umbrella of SYRIZA and the pro-Nazi party of the Golden Rise (Xrysi Aygi) can be considered as the expression of the discontent against the incumbent cabinet. Meanwhile, the two ex-major parties, New Democracy (ND) and the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) experienced a complete downturn as a result of their policies that failed to combat major macroeconomic issues dealing with the current crisis, like unemployment and pension cuts. Still the problem of governance remain as no party can concentrate the majority in the parliamentary composition and safeguard the bailout package signed few months ago between the IMF, the ECB and the Eurozone.

Coalition government has to be formed but no party seems to agree upon the critical economic issues dealing with the economic downturn of Greece. The future of Greece is under stake, not that of the Eurozone, and a potential repeat of elections is a most possible outcome mid-term. An equally reliable but short-term solution would be the formation of a coalition government entailed by PASOK, ND and the third leftist party, Democratic Left-all three declared to keep Greece inside the Eurozone- in order to negotiate next month the renewal of the bailout agreement. After that, and according to the results of the negotiation, a possible election could take place.

Meantime, the electorate is completely puzzled as abstention reached the historical highest degree of 41 per cent, the most stunning in modern Greek political history. Considering the rise of Left and extreme Right along with the abstention percentage, Greece is at crossroads. Radical solutions have to be decided and mutual compromises have to be taken in order to re-shape public policy and re-gain the damaged trust of the electorate. Under the current circumstances Greece is barely governable and two solutions are left: either bringing in rule a coalition government of the Left, including the Communist Party, or moving ahead to a second round of elections in lack of a manageable and clear advantage of a certain political party and ideology.

Keynote: bipolarism is over in Greece after almost 30 years and polls shown that youth unanimously approved the rise of a young leader as a potential national leader, coming from SYRIZA. In addition to that, almost 20 per cent of voters supported minor parties that could not catch the threshold, yet this trend can be better performed in the future elections.

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## On the brink of collapse

Last Sunday's elections in Greece led the country to a deadlock. Their character was undeniably historic and initiated a period of transition.

**Results:** One could observe three main phenomena. Firstly, for the first time since 1974 the two dominant political parties – the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) and New Democracy - lost a significant amount of votes as they both dropped below 20%, whereas in previous elections they used to gather in average 40% each. This clearly echoes, on the one hand, the dissatisfaction of the people with the function of the political system and its long-standing flaws, and on the other hand is a direct consequence of the inefficient handling of the crisis the last three years. Secondly, the rise of the popularity of the alternative choices to PASOK and ND for the dissatisfied voters; on the centre-left, the Coalition of Radical Left (SYRIZA) that gathered former voters of PASOK, and on the centre-right, the newly founded Independent Greeks, those of ND. Thirdly, and most worryingly, it is the high percentage of the Golden Dawn that sharply increased from 0,29% in 2009 to 7% in 2012. The Golden Dawn is an extremist organization with military characteristics that highly admires fascist and Nazi ideology. This action tends to be explained as an attempt to punish the system in an extreme way rather than as a vote for the organization itself as it is supposed that most of its voters were not really familiar with its ideological positions and practices. It is worth mentioning that its rise stems, also, from the seminal issue of illegal migration that has remained unresolved.

However, as no political party gathered the necessary amount of seats in the Parliament (151) in order to shape government, the efforts to create a coalition government have started. So far, neither ND nor SYRIZA managed to make it. It is highly unlikely that either PASOK will do so. Therefore, at the meeting of political leaders of the elected parties with the President of the Republic, they should try to create a government of common acceptance, which will consist of several technocrats, who are not influenced by the ballot, and consequently the political cost, and let them realize the necessary economic, structural and institutional reforms with a specific timeframe-longer than the one of Mr. Papademos- that in the medium-term will take the country out of its deadlock and will bring the very much expected "growth". In case that this scenario will not become true, a second round of elections during June will take place. Still, one should keep in mind that Greece is neither capable of bearing the cost of one more electoral round nor has the luxury to enter a period of further political and economic uncertainty that will retard the necessary structural reforms and will greatly influence negatively its economic partners.

**Key messages:** As the results illustrated, the majority of the Greeks voted with their eyes to the past- what they lost and how they could regain their life standards before 2009- rather than in the future. What is urgent for citizens is to understand is the gravity of the situation, and the necessity to reform and that all their sacrifices so far were not in vain. Thus, they should not be trapped or convinced easily by populist scenarios that are unrealistic and promise solutions without consequences. Politicians, on their side, have to realize that there is a quest for serious and reliable leadership that will put in force these reforms. Unfortunately, the short-term vision that dominated the electoral calculations leads Greece on the brink of collapse.

What do we need now? A clear mind above all.

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## Georgios Karyotis

### The electoral impact of austerity: lessons from Greece

Last weekend's election in Greece was heralded as an opportunity for the country to elect a democratic government, with a long term mandate that would lead it to economic salvation, implement the necessary reforms and convincingly dispel the persistent speculations of an imminent involuntary default on its debt.

The public vote, however, failed to produce a decisive outcome, as no party was able to secure a majority, while the possibility of a coalition being formed in the last minute appears slim. This stalemate will be likely to lead to a repeat election in June, raising fresh doubts about Greece's ability and commitment to implement the provisions of the bailout agreement, as well as the future of the Eurozone itself.

Amidst the pessimism ensuing from these developments, it could be easy to miss some lessons from this campaign. The result confirmed a consistent picture across Europe which sees incumbents suffer electoral punishment for welfare retrenchment. The dismissal of President Sarkozy in France and losses for the German and Italian governments in regional elections serve as recent examples.

In Greece, the two major parties, Pasok and New Democracy, that had taken turns to govern the country since 1974 with a joint share of no less than 77% of the vote, saw their combined power more than halved to just 32%. With the third party of the interim coalition, LAOS, failing to meet the 3% threshold required to enter Parliament, punishment for the incumbents was emphatic, despite their varied but ultimately unsuccessful attempts to relinquish responsibility and avoid blame in the run-up to the election.

The results in Greece and elsewhere also signify the first serious challenge to extreme austerity policies and horizontal cuts that have been prescribed as panacea across Europe. Two in three Greeks voted for parties that openly opposed the terms of the bailout agreement, led by the radical left party Syriza, which quadrupled its share to 16.8%, just behind New Democracy (18.9%) and above Pasok (13.2%). The relative electoral success of the left in Greece and particularly the election of Socialist Francois Hollande in France create a momentum for a more focused discussion about growth and social welfare in Europe, to balance a previous emphasis on fiscal austerity.

Advocates of a need for a new approach highlight that even countries like Ireland and Portugal, where the implementation of measures has been much smoother than in Greece, struggle to stave off recession. The problem thus may be with the medicine, not just a non-compliant patient. Nevertheless, whereas there may be some room for manoeuvre among political leaders to rethink their strategy, it is market forces that may prove the greatest obstacle to any change of course.

The drama in Greece has a human dimension concerning the social sustainability of the measures. Hitherto, a key driver for support of austerity and the core of the political message, domestically and in Europe, was that there is no alternative to it, however painful or even unfair the measures may be seen as. Paradoxically, the majority of anti-austerity forces in Greece continue to see its future in Europe and the Eurozone but wish to cancel the bailout agreement, two goals that seem difficult to compromise. The rejection of austerity is therefore not one that is simply explained by support for a tangible alternative strategy. It is, instead, a

message to national and international audiences that, if pushed too hard, many may prefer an unstable and uncertain future to an intolerable one.

Such political behaviour, driven by anger and despair rather than rational choice and hope, may be understandable but it can also be counterproductive. The 7% share of the vote that the extreme nationalist right-wing party Golden Dawn received in the election is testament to this and a manifestation of a wider issue.

Former Prime Minister Papandreou described Greece as Europe's 'lab rat'. The next stage of the experiment is to see whether the ferocity of the punishment for the incumbents will defuse public anger towards them and allow them to regroup or whether people will crystallise and strengthen their support for a new route, which will have to be more precisely defined by the time of the next election. Either way, any solution to the Greek debt crisis will demand decisive reforms at home, coupled with effective leadership, flexibility and solidarity at the European level, or else the likely demise of the 'rat' may bring the whole lab down with it.

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**Greece & Europe 2012: Friends or Foes?****What does this electoral outcome reflect on the public stance vis-à-vis the EU?**

The interdependence of domestic and European policy has never been more evident: Europe was centre-stage in the 2012 Greek election. And it is common wisdom that the outcome reflects “punishment” of/“protest against” PASOK/+ND. In their capacity as governmental parties PASOK and ND have been representing the Greek people at Intergovernmental Conferences on EU treaty revisions, and daily EU-policy making. They have also been voicing the wishes and concerns of the European Council, the Council(s) of Ministers, and the European Commission at the Hellenic Vouli (Parliament). Hence, one could argue that voters’ strategy for ‘kicking the rascals out’ included the rejection the EU as a system of governance in its entirety. In other words, along with their governments, voters might have also wanted to punish the EU.

The ‘2 in 1’ protest option was indeed available. The Supreme Court allowed as many as thirty-two parties to contest popular support. So there was a large menu of policy directions on offer that included pro- and anti-EU stances. Crucially, a major dichotomy concerned the Memorandum, which caused fissures within both large parties: some were expelled from their parties for voting in favour, and others for voting against it. In defiance of the Memorandum, Greece might (further) endanger its credibility as a member of the Eurozone --and the EU altogether. However, the only elected party explicitly supporting exit from the EU was the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) witnessed an electoral gain of less than one percent. Other explicitly anti-EU parties did not manage to pass the 3% threshold. At first sight then, Greeks manage to punish the traditional ruling class and the Memorandum without opposing EU membership.

A closer look, however, reveals that with the exception of several liberal (pro-EU) parties that failed to enter parliament, the EU-stance of most parties is not clear-cut. The party discourse on Europe is neither specific, nor informative. Left parties that scored impressively, like the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA) and the Democratic Left (DEMAR) are Eurosceptic but also generally supportive of the ‘European orientation of the country’. Nationalist parties with good results, like the party of Independent Greeks (IG), a ND-splitter, and the ultra-far-right Golden Dawn (GD) did not provide for much detail on their EU-stance. IG supports a “European orientation” while the GD is in favour of “Europe of the Nations instead of Europe of the capital and loan sharks”.

Although the GD does not explicitly speak of “EU secession” and reference to Europe is not central, its EU opposition should be derived from its wish to establish law and order via military rule and the mobilization of latent mistrust towards political parties (Standard Eurobarometer 76). To be sure, the regime Golden Dawn envisages does not qualify for EU membership (see Copenhagen Criteria). But this, critically, is never made explicit.

It is thus high time to conduct an honest debate about the pros- and cons- of European integration for Greece and its incompatibility with nationalist populism. Those in favour of “European orientation” must elaborate on the benefits and duties derived from EU membership so that the public is able to make an informed and pragmatic choice.

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## Is economic development really the missing link of the Greek economy?

One of the issues that have dominated the political discourse during the Greek elections of May 2012 has been that of economic development. All the parties, regardless of their election prospects, have been very keen to portray themselves as strong advocates of economic policies that will favour economic development so as to countenance the austerity measures introduced by the 'troika'. In most of these discussions, the 'troika' was portrayed as the purveyor of negative policy recipes promoting further belt-tightening whilst the Greek political parties wanted to be seen to take care of their electorate through the adoption of developmental policies. These policies would provide the 'necessary oxygen' to the 'real' economy that has been starving for 'cash'. This rhetoric has been prevalent from politicians representing all the political parties and very few candidates -if any- have dared to challenge these views.

However, this portrayal of economic development as something exogenous that is only dependent on the existence of plentiful funding ignores the reality in Greece concerning what is undoubtedly a very ambitious developmental programme, the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) that supposedly started in 2008 and is planned to finish in 2013. This is the latest round of European Union (EU) funding -it follows the previous three Community Support Frameworks- which provides a coordinated plan for the upgrading of the endogenous capabilities of the Greek economy. The reality that has been skilfully omitted by the politicians of the two major parties -PASOK and ND- and strangely ignored by the smaller ones is that the funding available through the NSRF remains largely unused with the absorption rates incredibly low in most of the policy areas affected. Most importantly, this is the case even though the European Commission and the European Council -following strong pressure by the Greek government- have decided to basically ignore the rules concerning match-funding for Greece. As a concession to the Greek government, as well as a sign of solidarity because of the ongoing fiscal crisis, the EU has removed what has been one of the cornerstones of the regulatory framework governing its operations in Cohesion Policy, and now only requires national participation amounting to around 5% for most projects. Yet, the Greek government, due to a combination of factors -administrative, limited capacity for collective action from potential beneficiaries to name just a few- has failed to take advantage of this opportunity so far. Instead, it resorts to blaming the 'troika' for the 'imposed' austerity and demands more expansionary macroeconomic policies by the EU.

There is little doubt that the current balance of power at the level of the EU Council strongly favours the promotion of restrictive macroeconomic policies and that their impact in kick-starting the European economy is far from guaranteed. Therefore, the Greek government has every right to press for more developmental policies that will countenance the -undoubtedly- negative consequences of austerity. However, when there is developmental funding available through the NSRF and the main impediment for its utilization -the requirement for national match-funding- is removed, there is little doubt that the next Greek government will need a lot of negotiating clout to convince its partners at the EU that they should adopt more expansionary measures.

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## The day after the day after the election

There are three main issues that attracted my attention after the elections, each one of which enshrines a problem of the past three years of austerity:

1. It must be the first time in history that a major opposition party, which had gathered 33% two and half years ago and that had been requesting for elections for more than a year, managed to lose almost half of its voters, gathering less than 19% of the electorate. The explanation behind this butchering of the party's quota lies in its leader's instability of opinion. When the memorandum was firstly introduced, Mr Samaras was the first to condemn it, deleting from the party MPs voting for it. But after a year, when the first memorandum proved to be inadequate for the crisis, Mr Samaras voted for the second one, threatening MPs that would not vote for it.

2. It is the first time in recent Greek history that a party coming from the extreme right wing is being elected, gathering almost 7% of the valid votes. Although a turn to the right wing parties has been apparent in most of the European countries, the originality of "Golden Dawn" lies in the fact that it is in fact a neo-Nazi party, proud to present themselves as such, resembling to the German NPD. But have 440.000 Greeks changed so as to promote a group of muscular men, with IQ inversely proportional to their muscles' mass, asking for journalists' respect towards their leader to be shown through standing and saluting? The answer is simple as well. No. They simply tried to show their intolerance towards the economic policy. They did not know what they voted for, because the press had not been showing the party's motives, so as not to promote them. As it is now apparent, it would have been better for their black shirts and military salutations to be shown to the wider public so as to understand that the dangers of voting them might be even greater than bankruptcy.

3. Greece's leftists are by no means ready to govern and present an alternative to the status quo before the elections. More specifically, SYRIZA was the only winner of the elections, raising its ratio from 6% to almost 17%. However, when he was asking for our vote, he did not expect that to happen. To be completely honest, I do not believe anyone voting for Tsipras to have believed that he would achieve such a ratio. On the contrary, we (the electorate) thought that the situation would not have changed radically and the two major parties would gather a ratio allowing them to form a coalition government. So we were voting for another player to enter the parliament, a player that would not be afraid to confront the government. Now, three days have passed, showing that we gave Tsipras a vote share allowing him to threaten our position in Europe.

So let François Hollande be with us, and give us a second chance to prove that we want Europe more than we showed this Sunday.

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## A traumatised political system in search of stability

The political problem of Greece has turned into a phobia of a whole nation. The results of the Greek elections of 6 May 2012 constitute a loud shout of anxiety and tiredness of the electorate. In this election there are different types of victories and defeats; all of them contributing to the unprecedented confusion of the Greek society. Greek voters are politically disorientated and the elections have a strong emotional element. It is an astonishingly complex outcome and a symptom of general political and social crisis that extends beyond the monetary and economic context.

Greece not only lacks a stable government but also a big gap has been revealed between the left and the right, previously filled by social democratic forces. Social democracy appears to be going through a weak phase that has left the country unprotected at a European and international level. The Left ought to submit an essential and practical agenda and to be prepared for heavy criticism while the Right is trapped between popular Right, neo-liberalism and neo-Nazism.

The political scenery of Greece is missing a stabilising political force that will drive the country out of the crisis and restore the credibility of a nation. The new role for PASOK will be proven more challenging than ever. For as long as the party does not develop a European profile with a clear social democratic programme then it allows Greece to remain uncertain and vulnerable.

The biggest loss for Greece is not the 'rise' of Golden Dawn. Its percentage does not reflect the actual size of the party. It is only an indication that ND and LAOS for years tolerated the extreme right into their layers. Golden Dawn, with its systematic, disciplined and organised manner, pulled these elements from ND and LAOS into its own structure.

The biggest loss for Greece is the damaged relationship between the Greek society and Europe. The loss of confidence, the loss of vision and the loss of direction as a result of scapegoating, has traumatised the European orientation of the country. The Greeks did not vote against Europe, at least not in this election. The Greeks voted for a government that will reconsider and re-establish that very relationship between Greece and Europe.

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## A comparison of the French and Greek elections

Both the French presidential election and the Greek parliamentary one were dominated by the anger and the frustration, because of the rise of unemployment and the loss of purchasing power, especially for young people. But the results were not the same.

First of all the participation rate in France was of 83.97% (in the second round) even if voting is not compulsory. It was 65.10% in Greece, even if that vote is compulsory, which means that the Greek voters' abstention was the double of the French's' one (34.9% in comparison to 16.03%).

Second, in France the elections result was the alternation of political power between Right and Left. But, despite a rude electoral campaign, Nicolas Sarkozy invited François Hollande just two days later to participate with him to the ceremony of the WWII victory in the Arc de Triomphe in the Champs Elysées Avenue in Paris. The image of the French President and his freshly elected successor across all French media could be seen as a clear message for a smooth transition. As a result, life in Paris continues as usual.

But in Athens, the result of the elections was a deadlock. Because neither of the two main political parties PASOK and ND didn't manage to obtain the absolute majority in the 300 seats parliament. Even worse, they elected 149 MPs as a whole, in the 300 MPs new parliament. Both Right and Left mainstream parties collapsed at the same time representing no more than 32.03% of the electoral body. Why?

Except from the more obvious answer to that question, the deep crisis that affects many EU countries I can give two main reasons:

First, because of the differences between the electoral system in France and in Greece: As a result, 1/3 of the French voters expressed their anger by voting far right or far left candidates in the first round and in the second round made a choice between the two dominant mainstream parties candidates. But in Greece, the one round electoral system didn't allow to the voters to do the same thing. What if there was a two round election in Greece? Theoretically speaking, the result could be completely different. So perhaps, Greece has to modernize not only of its public administration, also its electoral law...

Second, because François Hollande, a pure product of the French elite system, managed to convince the majority of French voters that he can better govern his country than his rival. But in Greece, the main political leaders didn't convince their voters for the same thing. This reveals the deep crisis of the Greek elite system that could have even more devastating effects than the country's bankruptcy itself.

So the May 6 elections in France and in Greece left two open questions:

Will the freshly elected French president's party also win a parliamentary election next month?

Will the new parliamentary elections in Greece, that today seem inevitable, give a strong government majority?

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## The world is watching

Rarely do citizens vote not on the basis of right or left but right or wrong: and Greeks consider the tough austerity measures plain wrong. At the ballot box, voters punished the two predominant parties for their role in the economic crisis and for imposing spending cut measures on the population already suffering from a 22% unemployment rate, over 50% for younger people. This ends the predictable era of politics whereby Greek voters alternated between PASOK and New Democracy to govern.

### **Biggest winners: Syriza & Golden Dawn**

Illustrating the breadth of support, Syriza picked up voters who in 2009 had voted for Pasok (37%), New Democracy (14%) and KKE (9%), the greatest chunk of which were aged 18-35. According to opinion polls, support for Syriza blossomed when leader Alexis Tsipras announced his objective to form a left-leaning government. Moving from 4.6% support in 2009 to 16.8%, Syriza convinced voters it is more than a simple third party but a serious coalition partner or even a governing party. Another winner in the election was the “Golden Dawn” (“Chrysi Avgi”) party that stripped New Democracy of over 40% of its supporters and 20% of PASOK from 2009. Its base comes largely from under 35 year olds and is considered a mix of traditional right with youth feeling the pressure from increasing immigration in Greece. How this party might act in the Parliament is unclear but signals raised by party members demanding journalists stand up “to demonstrate respect” when the party leader entered a press conference are surely concerning.

### **End of two party alternating rule**

Voters delivered a blow to PASOK by stripping the party of 119 seats (of 300) in the Parliament. The party lost over 2 million voters from 2009 when it enjoyed 44% support. Back then it swept to power promising clean up and modernization of government, yet within weeks announced that Greece’s debt numbers had been fudged and that Greece was “corrupt to the bone”. Unsurprisingly this plummeted the country into a crisis of confidence involving the markets, then the whole Eurozone as fear of contagion spread. Two and a half years later, PASOK’s centre-right partner in the outgoing coalition, New Democracy (ND) had expected to win enough votes to form a government outright or at least with PASOK. ND finished first, allowing them to take advantage of a reinforced proportionality law (they pushed through while last in government) providing the first party 50 (!) bonus Parliamentary seats. Yet even this boost wasn’t sufficient to help ND secure a coalition government.

### **Unity government uncertainties**

New Democracy attempts failed to form a government, giving Syriza three days to form a coalition. Tsipras wasted no time announcing his hopes to build a government that operates inside the European Union, with the Euro, but rejects the austerity measures imposed by the Troika in return for billions to keep Greece afloat. For a country unaccustomed to coalitions yet accustomed to sweet election promises, the expectations raised by renegotiation rhetoric may undermine efforts to form a lasting coalition. Markets, lenders, European and global leaders are holding their breath while leaders of this country of only 11 million people decide more than the country’s future. Each passing day without a government brings increased uncertainty. The eyes of the world will continue to watch the machinations in Greece as a prophesy for what lies ahead for the European economy and beyond.

\* \* \*

*Julie Kolokotsa is a PhD student and Full Member of the GPSG*

## The serious problem of electoral predictions (not only) in Greece

The science of statistical prediction in the political arena has started to exhibit clear signs of fatigue, and this not only in the case of Greece. However, in the following article we shall concentrate on the Greek case, which constitutes the most recent example. This is, in fact, a critique against relying too much on past data, past (political and electoral) behaviours and on a very strong (and rather unjustifiable) insistence on quantification, and especially against the assumption that there exists a regular continuity, across the years, related to the evolution of political matters.

This is evident when uncharted, unpredictable and “underwater” currents run across the everyday life of entire populations. One must keep in mind the concept of bifurcation – quite a prominent (but still unstudied) notion in chaos theory. Neither the consideration of quite a number of scenarios proves to be of any use, since the majority of them are in total antithesis to the supremacy of fluidity and of continuous acceleration of meaning, constituting the major characteristics of our (post-)modern societies.

In the Greek case, at least a 70% of the sampled respondents throughout the country in the majority of opinion polls refused to reply to the agonizing calls of the research agencies. This simple fact explodes to smithereens the need for a randomly selected sample - and this plain fact should be publicly announced by the research agencies themselves. But this never materialized, and naturally, it created serious misunderstandings.

Another case in point is that the Greek law prohibited the publication of opinion polls on the last two weeks before the election - thus creating the ground for various unfounded rumours, originating from various sources, giving rise to a havoc of undue impressions across the electorate. Furthermore, quite a number of results were weighted with respect to the results of previous elections. This aggravated the divergence from what was actually happening.

All the above call for a fresh approach to opinion polls, by utilizing qualitative research methods, perhaps the only method being able to approach such a turbulent reality. And far from insisting on a horse-race approach, we should be referring to trends and not to plain numbers. Of course, this is more complicated than stating numbers, which are more “respectful” than trends for ordinary people. But this is purely a matter of education, not of propaganda, through quoting plain numbers, and thus trying to deceive the electorate towards certain ends.

I am sure that even now, at this very moment, research agencies have already started to think in terms of the qualitative approach. Or else.....

\* \* \*

*Dr. Emmanuel Heretakis is an Associate Professor at the University of Athens*

## What do pre-election opinion polls tell us about the impact of the election campaign?

Even though the pre-election opinion polls did not manage to sufficiently predict the electoral results of May 6<sup>th</sup>, an analysis of the polls may lead to certain valuable working hypotheses concerning the audiences of the different political parties and the impact of their pre-electoral campaign. As a primary source for our observation, we use the published polls during April 2012 until the legal ban of publication on 20th April. Our focus rests on the comparison between the assessments of the electoral power of each party in polls without a reduction being made to the valid votes on the one hand, and those under reduction on the other hand [i.e. with and without accounting for undecided or non-responding voters]. Our method allows us to proceed to sound working hypotheses for the impact of the pre-electoral campaign after 20th April and for the (non-) identification of the electoral audience of each party vis-à-vis the audience recorded at the polls.

As far as the two established government parties are concerned (ND-PASOK), we observe that their electoral percentages correspond to the moderate assessments of the polls where reduction to the valid votes is not made. Hence, a legitimate working hypothesis is that, at the end of the pre-electoral campaign, the two parties did not ultimately manage to attract the voters who were previously undecided. LAOS, which had joined last year's interim coalition government, and DISY, which articulated a managerial reforming political discourse, remained in their pre-electoral percentages (before redistributing the share of the undecided voters). The common feature of these four parties seems to have been their promotion, or at least their association, with the responsibility of "managing" of the present-day crisis under the conditions of the present terms of the international negotiation of Greece for its debt.

Radical left SYRIZA and centre-right Independent Greeks (ANEL) raised intensive accusations of the present-day terms of negotiation, suggesting radical and short-term solutions, and therefore both parties received important electoral gains. ANEL received one of the highest percentages which the reduction of the polling sample to the valid votes attributed to them, whereas SYRIZA, which incorporated in its pre-electoral campaign a governmental discourse addressing all the political forces of the Left, surpassed significantly even the most optimistic assessment of the sample adjustment. Consequently, we are allowed to suggest that both parties drew important groups of undecided voters of the governmental parties.

As far as the other left political parties are concerned, we observe that: a) KKE (the Communist Party) - which consolidated its anti-memorandum position without any attempts to present a newly-structured radicalism – made no significant gains vis-à-vis the unadjusted sample. b) DIMAR (Democratic Left) - which rejects the current terms of the memorandum with no intensity in its discourse and declared willingness for dialogue for wide governmental collaborations – achieved its minimum percentages of the unadjusted votes; hence it seems to have been compressed by SYRIZA, c) small extraparliamentary left ANTARSYA - with an anti-memorandum discourse and its projection as a new autonomous radical agent - drew some gains vis-à-vis its unadjusted share.

A special reference should be made to the Golden Dawn (Chryssi Aygi), which is characterized by a striking extreme-right profile of collision with the political system and avoided exposure to the media. The party surpassed all predictions regarding its electoral appeal, possibly indicating the existence of a part of its electoral base that did not declare its intention at the opinion polls.

We also note that: a) the Greens (Oikologoi Prasinoi), which advanced a low-tempered alternative leftist discourse, already promoted in the past without any new element remained on the percentage of the unadjusted share. b) centre-left KOI.SY., which emerged after a split from PASOK and advanced a low-tempered accusing discourse, did not make any gains. Closer to its projection under the reduction to valid votes was c) liberal Drassi, with a low-tempered reforming discourse, whereas d) the new liberal party “dimiourgia xana!” extracted the important percentage of 2% without any recorded indications in the pre-electoral polls.

A few possible more general conclusions we may obtain from our analysis are as follows: i) The appeal to the demand of management [of the crisis] did not attract the undecided voters, who turned towards the parties which articulated an accusatory discourse. ii) Low-key discourse alienated the undecided voters (vis-à-vis emotionally intense discourse). iii) Similarly, newly-structured radicalism seems to have been an attractive element. iv) The cases of the Golden Dawn and “dimiourgia xana!” may suggest the existence of anti-political/apolitical electoral audiences which lay beneath the radar of opinion polls.

\* \* \*

*Kostas Bizas is a graduate of the Universities of Athens and Exeter.*

Table 1. Published pre-election polls in April 2012 (before sample adjustment / reduction to valid votes)

| PUBLICATION DATE | DATE OF INTERVIEWS | POLLING COMPANY                   | MEDIA OUTLET         | ND   | PASOK | SYRIZA | KKE  | IND. GREEKS | GOLD. DAWN | DIM.AR. | LA.O.S | GREENS | DI.SY | DRA SSI | KOI. SY. | ANT ARS YA | ARMA POLIT ON | Other |
|------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|------|-------|--------|------|-------------|------------|---------|--------|--------|-------|---------|----------|------------|---------------|-------|
| 20/4/2012        | 17-19/04/12        | Rass                              | ELEYTHEROS TYPOS     | 18,6 | 13,2  | 8      | 6,7  | 7,3         | 3,3        | 6,5     | 2,6    | 2,9    | 2,5   |         |          |            |               | 5,7   |
| 20/4/2012        |                    | Kapa Research                     | TA NEA               | 19   | 14,2  | 6,8    | 7,9  | 5,7         | 3,9        | 4       | 3      | 2,7    | 2,8   | 1,3     |          |            |               | 3,1   |
| 19/4/2012        | 17-19/04/12        | ALCO                              | NEWSIT               | 18,5 | 13,3  | 7,9    | 7    | 8,3         | 3,9        | 6,6     | 3      | 2,7    | 2,2   | 1,2     |          |            |               | 5,9   |
| 19/4/2012        |                    | PulseRC                           | TO PONTIKI           | 17,5 | 12    | 9      | 8,5  | 8           | 4,5        | 7       | 2,5    | 3      | 2,5   |         |          | 1          |               | 4     |
| 19/4/2012        |                    | VPRC                              | EPIKAIRA             | 22   | 14,5  | 13     | 11,5 | 9           | 5          | 10      | 3,5    | 2,5    | 1,5   | 1,5     |          | 1          | 1,5           | 3,5   |
| 14/4/2012        |                    | MRB                               | RealNews             | 20,5 | 12,7  | 8,6    | 7,9  | 7,1         | 3,9        | 7       | 2,5    | 2,9    | 2,4   |         |          |            | 1             | 4,1   |
| 11/4/2012        | 29/03-08/04/12     | University of Economics of Athens | enikos.gr            | 15,3 | 14,6  | 10,4   | 8,1  | 9,8         | 4,9        | 5,6     | 1,7    | 4,3    | 1,7   |         | 0,6      |            | 1,2           | 3,6   |
| 9/4/2012         | 5-9/04/12          | GPO                               | ANATROPI-MEGA        | 18,2 | 14,2  | 6,2    | 8    | 7           | 3,1        | 5,9     | 4      | 1,5    | 2,5   |         |          |            |               |       |
|                  | 3-9/04/12          | Public Issue                      | SKAI – I KATHIMERINI | 19   | 14,5  | 13     | 11   | 11          | 5          | 12      | 3      | 3      | 2     | 2       |          | 1          |               |       |
| 8/4/2012         | 4-5/04/12          | MetronAnalysis                    |                      | 13,4 | 9,7   | 7,4    | 6,8  | 6,9         | 3,6        | 5,8     | 1,9    | 2,9    | 1,3   | 1,3     |          |            |               | 3,5   |
| 8/4/2012         |                    | ALCO                              | PROTO THEMA          | 20,5 | 13,8  | 7,4    | 7,5  | 6,5         | 3          | 6,7     | 2,9    | 2,5    | 2     |         | 1,4      |            | 0,8           | 4,1   |
|                  | 20/03-06/04        | MetronAnalysis                    |                      | 16,5 | 10,4  | 6,4    | 7,4  | 6,5         | 4,3        | 5,5     | 2,9    | 3      | 1,4   |         |          |            |               | 3,6   |
| 6/4/2012         |                    | ALCO                              | CRASH                | 20,8 | 13,5  | 6      | 8    | 7,1         | 2,1        | 7,8     | 2,9    | 2,5    | 2,1   |         | 1,4      |            | 1,1           | 2,3   |
|                  | 22-26/03/12        | Public Issue                      | SKAI – I KATHIMERINI | 22,5 | 15,5  | 12,5   | 12   | 8,5         | 5          | 12      | 2      | 3      | 2     |         |          |            | 1             | 4     |
| 2/4/2012         | 21-23/03/12        | MetronAnalysis                    | iefimerida.gr        | 12,7 | 12,2  | 6,6    | 7,2  | 8           | 3,8        | 7,8     | 2,1    | 2,1    | 1,3   |         |          |            |               | 3,8   |

Table 2. Published pre-electoral polls in April 2012 (after sample adjustment / valid votes only)

| PUBLICATION DATE | DATE OF INTERVIEWS | POLLING COMPANY | MEDIA OUTLET  | ND   | PASOK | SYRIZA | KKE  | INDEP. GREEKS | GOLDEN DAWN | DIM.AR. | LA.O.S | GREE NS | DI.SY. | DRASSI | KOI. SY.. | ANTARSYA | ARMA POLITON | Other |
|------------------|--------------------|-----------------|---------------|------|-------|--------|------|---------------|-------------|---------|--------|---------|--------|--------|-----------|----------|--------------|-------|
| 20/4/2012        | 17-19/04/12        | Rass            | ELEFTH. TYPOS | 24,1 | 17,1  | 10,3   | 8,7  | 9,4           | 4,3         | 8,4     | 3,8    | 3,4     | 3,2    |        |           |          |              | 7,3   |
| 20/4/2012        |                    | Kapa Research   | TA NEA        | 25,5 | 19,1  | 9,1    | 10,6 | 7,7           | 5,2         | 5,4     | 3,6    | 4       | 3,8    | 1,7    |           |          |              | 4,3   |
| 19/4/2012        | 17-19/04/12        | ALCO            | NEWSIT        | 22   | 16    | 9      | 8    | 9,5           | 4,5         | 7,5     | 3      | 3,5     | 2,8    | 1,5    |           |          |              | 6,5   |
| 19/4/2012        |                    | PulseRC         | TO PONTIKI    | 22   | 15    | 11     | 10,5 | 10            | 5,5         | 8,5     | 3,5    | 3       | 3      |        |           | 1,5      |              | 5     |
| 18/4/2012        |                    | Marc            | Alpha         | 22,3 | 17,8  | 9,8    | 9,7  | 9,9           | 5,7         | 8,6     | 3,1    | 3,9     | 3      |        |           |          |              | 6,2   |
| 14/4/2012        |                    | MRB             | RealNews      | 25,4 | 15,8  | 10,7   | 9,8  | 8,8           | 4,8         | 8,7     | 3,6    | 3,1     | 3      |        |           |          |              | 6,3   |
| 8/4/2012         | 4-5/04/12          | MetronAnalysis  |               | 20,8 | 15    | 11,5   | 10,5 | 10,6          | 5,5         | 9       | 4,6    | 3       | 2,1    | 2      |           |          |              | 5,4   |
| 8/4/2012         |                    | ALCO            | PROTO THEMA   | 24   | 16    | 8,5    | 8,6  | 7,5           | 3,5         | 8       | 3      | 3,3     | 2,5    |        | 1,6       |          | 1            | 4,5   |
|                  | 20/03-06/04        | MetronAnalysis  |               | 24,3 | 15,4  | 9,5    | 10,9 | 9,6           | 4,3         | 8       | 4,4    | 4,2     | 2,1    |        |           |          |              | 5,3   |
| 6/4/2012         |                    | ALCO            | CRASH         | 25   | 16,5  | 7,5    | 10   | 8             | 2,5         | 9       | 3      | 3,5     | 2,5    |        | 1,7       |          | 1,3          |       |
| 2/4/2012         | 21-23/03/12        | MetronAnalysis  | iefimerida.gr | 18,8 | 18    | 9,7    | 10,7 | 11,8          | 5,6         | 11,5    | 3,1    | 3,2     | 1,9    |        |           |          |              | 5,7   |

Table 3. Exit polls and final results of the elections of 6<sup>th</sup> May 2012

|              | POLLING COMPANY                          | MEDIA OUTLET           | ND   | SYRIZA | PASOK | INDEP. GREEKS | KKE | GOLD. DAWN | DIM.AR. | GREE NS | LA.O.S | DI. SY. | DIMIOURGIA XANA! | DRASSI | ANTARSYA | KOI. SY.. | Other |
|--------------|--|------------------------|------|--------|-------|---------------|-----|------------|---------|---------|--------|---------|------------------|--------|----------|-----------|-------|
|              | Opinion, ALCO, Marc, MetronAnalysis, MRB | NET, MEGA, ANT1, Alpha | 18,5 | 17     | 15,5  | 11            | 8,5 | 7          | 5,5     | 3       | 3      | 2,4     | 2,2              | 2,4    | 1,6      |           | 3     |
|              | Public Issue                             | SKAI                   | 22,5 | 16     | 15    | 8             | 9   | 6,5        | 7,5     | 3       | 4      | 2       |                  | 2      |          |           |       |
| *Mean values | Kapa Research                            | in.gr, tovima.gr       | 19   | 16,5   | 16,5  | 11            | 9,3 | 6,5        | 5,5     | 3       | 3      | 2,7     |                  | 2      |          |           | 6     |
|              | ELECTION RESULTS                         |                        | 18,9 | 16,8   | 13,2  | 10,6          | 8,5 | 7          | 6,1     | 2,9     | 2,9    | 2,6     | 2,2              | 1,8    | 1,2      | 1         | 4,5   |

## Winning the Hearts and Minds: Grass Roots E-mail Campaigns a successful Election Tool

The Greek Parliamentary Election Results of 6 May 2012 constitute a turning point in the political history of the country due to the rise of the Right-wing extremist party Golden Dawn, the declining influence of the two major parties (New Democracy and PASOK) and the rise of the Left with the prospect of forming a government for the first time in Greek political History. The decline of power of the two major parties actually signalled the rise of the parties of both Left and Right that were against the economic adjustment program agreed with the troika. Among the factors that influenced voters and especially the younger ones, is the internet and more specifically what I call a Grass Roots E-mail Campaign.

Political campaigns in Greece are turning more and more to the use of the internet and social media in order to generate awareness, distribute their calls-to-action and to get out the vote. However, web- pages, Facebook and twitter accounts have little impact in relation to what can be achieved through Grass Roots E-mail Campaign (GREC). GREC stands for e-mails that are not sent by a political organization but rather from its supporters with humorous content. It is easily circulated among the recipients and becomes in a way a chain e-mail, viewed by the majority of the recipients, as it results from my analysis, while it is more influential compared to official campaign tools, since it affects the recipients much more than any other campaign. Recipients are captured around the agenda of the Political Organization or Group that is using this tactic. It is a powerful mechanism since it is not regarded as an “official advertisement” while it retrieves the attention and endears the users much more than any other advertisement message. That was the case of the campaign launched against the Stability and Growth Pact, through documentaries that were circulated exclusively through Internet (Debtocracy, Katastroika) from left wing supporters of SYRIZA and E-mails that were targeting mainly the two major parties (New Democracy, PASOK, ) but also the Communist Party and LAOS (right wing party, that participated in the Coalition Government).

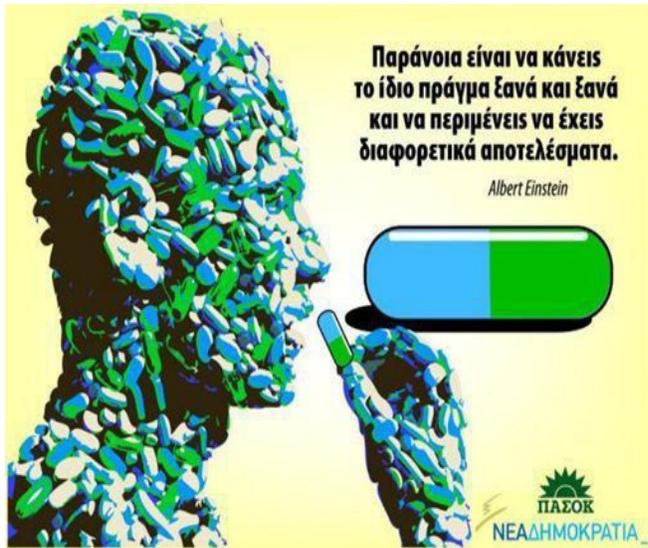
To conclude, the Grass Roots E-mail campaign is far more effective than any other form of traditional campaigns (ads in the mass media, posters etc) since its message is more easily adopted and transmitted as a cleverly “neutral” message. From the research that I am currently conducting, it emerges that this type of campaign clearly influences the younger generations, who are heavy users of Internet and who voted in favour of small parties and mainly for SYRIZA.

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## Grass Roots E-mail Campaign 1

Paranoia is to do the same thing again and again and to expect to get different results (Einstein)



Picture 2

However you vote you take as a present the Other One (President of New Democracy and PASOK)



**22**

**Emmanuel Sigalas**

**It's not all bad news**

The Greek elections of 6 May 2012 leave much to ask for. No clear mandate for a stable government, 21 seats to a neo-fascist party, the lowest ever turnout (35%) and a fragmented political scene. At the same time the results prove that electoral democracy works. When the electorate really want a change of government (or, as in the case of Greece, no single-party government) they will get it.

Greece proved it is a functioning democracy, in spite of rumours that the election results would be questioned by extremist forces sparking a new wave protests outside the parliament. Some feared that the legitimacy of the electoral outcome would be doubted. That parliamentary democracy would suffer a fatal blow sinking the country into chaos or a dictatorship. This, however, did not happen. The day after did not see any protests at all. Quite the opposite, many party followers had every reason to celebrate. Syriza, who in the not too distant past struggled to pass the 3% threshold and enter the parliament, is now the second largest party. The new parliament consists of 7 parliamentary groups and it came really close to have as many as 10 parties. In short, the bipartisan, bipolar political system of Greece is replaced now by a far more pluralistic one.

The new developments, of course, come at a cost. Government formation appears a tricky business. Greece lacks a political culture based on consensus and cooperation. In the past coalition governments proved unstable and short-lived. The country's electoral system gives the first party a top-up of 50 seats, but even this is not enough to form a two party government, let alone a single party government. Whether the Greek parties will prove able to overcome the urges of their selfish gene and start cooperating with each other in good faith is far from evident. In all honesty, it looks difficult but not impossible. After all, these are extraordinary times for Greece. The entry of the neo-fascist party Golden Dawn (Chryssi Avgi) seems to testify this, albeit in a negative way.

Political pluralism is sometimes difficult to swallow, but it lies at the heart of a parliamentary democracy. This is why the result of the Greek elections is not all bad news. Of course it is sad to witness the electoral advance of an anti-democracy and anti-parliamentary party. But doesn't this prove that parliamentary democracy functions properly and it is not as corrupt and ineffective as its enemies claim?

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## Politics is back on the agenda

One might say many things about the Greek elections of 6 May 2012. Some may be generally acceptable while others are more contestable. To be sure, the Greek party system as we knew it, from the consolidation of democracy in 1974 onwards, will never be the same again. The two main pillars of the Greek political system, centre-right New Democracy (ND) and centre-left Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), which pledged to continue the programme dictated by the 'memorandums', have collapsed; they received about 32% of the vote as they were held responsible for the inefficient and unjust austerity policies imposed during the last two years. On the contrary, the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA) rose to second place (16,78%) with an anti-austerity programme in favour of the middle and lower social strata which were hit hard by the violently imposed policies.

But these elections were something more. They were, in a sense, a victory of the alternative; a victory against the hegemony of 'TINA politics', the politics of one-way technocratic solutions and post-democratic management. Thatcher's famous words, 'there is no alternative', have been the dominant slogan of the elites for quite a while in Greece and Europe, but as it seems they aren't that convincing anymore. Christine Lagarde, managing director of the IMF recently advised the 'responsible' political parties in Greece to 'tell the people the truth', opposing the anti-austerity 'ostentatiously populist' parties which claim an alternative way out of the crisis (April 8, 2012, on CBS). PASOK leader, E. Venizelos in his turn called for the 'defense of truth' against the forces of 'irresponsible populism', asking the people to be patient since the imposed policies of austerity constitute the only path to a better tomorrow. Bound to follow the same policies, the leader of ND, A. Samaras, invited the citizens to 'reoccupy' their cities from illegal immigrants, articulated a rather nationalist and xenophobic discourse, and claimed that his party would aim at 'growth', without however proposing any alternative.

The political project that rose to be the clear winner of the elections was that of SYRIZA, led by Alexis Tsipras. By addressing 'the people', through a progressive populist discourse which articulated a plurality of demands, against the local and European elites and their policies of extreme austerity, Tsipras managed to express and represent a wide range of collective subjects, tripling its power. SYRIZA called for a broad coalition which would include the Greek Communist Party (KKE) and the Democratic Left (DIMAR) and others for the formation of a left government which would cancel the memorandum, raise taxation on big business, put the banks under public control, call a moratorium on debt repayment and scrap salary cuts and emergency taxes. Such claims were stigmatized by the 'memorandum parties' as outrageously populist and unattainable. As a response, a quasi-apocalyptic discourse, characterized by an 'anti-populist' hysteria, was articulated by ND and PASOK to counter those proposals: Greece would face total economic and social destruction, it would exit the eurozone or even the EU, it would default on its debt and the army would have to intervene to protect the banks, the super markets would be emptied by panicked citizens, we would face segregation and geopolitical insecurity, and so on.

But the people in Greece voted without paying much attention to such apocalyptic scenarios and blackmailing dilemmas (e.g. 'memorandum or complete destruction') put forth by the two-party elite and a significant part of the media. It chose to risk an alternative path. Whether one agrees with that path or not, we should nevertheless recognize in this shift of the Greek voters a victory of politics. For the last 10-15 years politics seemed to have lost its primacy over the economy; political decision was replaced by what appeared to be neutralized 'technical' decisions/ 'solutions'. 'Government' was replaced by 'governance', contingency and choice by 'necessity' and so on.

In our European post-democracies – allegedly guided by technocratic virtue, consensus and carefully planned policies which claim to stand above conflicting political projects and beyond right and left – this ‘break’ that the Greek elections marked also signified a return of the people as the (democratic) subject which disrupts ‘politics as usual’, which challenges prevailing norms and exercises its right to choose otherwise. No matter where this path takes us one thing seems certain: politics is back on the agenda and along with it the democratic promise as a project *to come*.

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## **24** **Dafni Diliagka**

### **IMF austerity cannot be applied on a permanent and stable basis in a democratic society**

The IMF, in alliance with the EU, is advising Greece to implement stringent fiscal and monetary policies. Yet, the result of these policies, in addition to the introduction of new emergency taxes, is an extra 5% poverty. Due to high recession, the official employment rate reached a record 22% in February 2012. The protest, disappointment and mistrust towards this policy were expressed through the national elections of 06 May 2012. On the one hand, the conservative party Nea Demokratia and socialist party PASOK that are supporting the bailout agreements did not manage to obtain the absolute majority in the parliament and to form a coalition government. On the other hand, the combined numbers of the anti-bail-out parties would represent an absolute majority. However, due to ideological differences, there is little possibility that the anti-bailout parliamentary parties can form a coalition, which would command a majority in the parliament. What’s more, 19% of the voters voted for parties that did not achieve the 3% threshold that is needed to enter the parliament. In addition, 35% of the population abstained from the elections, which may also be an anti-bailout sentiment.

In my opinion, the result of the national elections, even the fact that no government can be formed, is a sign of democracy. Greece proved to be a democratic society, since Greek people had the opportunity through national elections to express their disapproval towards the IMF’s strict lending policies by voting for political parties that are not supporting a fiscal consolidation policy. Notwithstanding its negative consequences, the fact that the neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn became a parliamentary party is also an expression of democracy, albeit an extreme reaction towards the continuous austerity measures and the high rates of illegal immigration.

Indisputably, therefore, the IMF’s unpopular austerity policy cannot be applied on a stable and permanent basis in a democratic society. In a developed country of the West with a democratic political system that foresees the vote of no confidence and the elections can be held without fraud and in which the majority of the population is well-informed and high-educated, the difficulties of IMF in implementing its strict economic policy is a fact. The Managing Director of the IMF, Christine Lagarde, seems to have understood this, expressing one day after the elections the view that “growth is urgent” and “if growth is worse than expected, they should stock to announced fiscal measures, rather than announced fiscal targets”.

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**A historic moment of meta-matapolitefsi's manifestation**

On Sunday 6th May 2012, the Greek public was called to vote for a new government. The ballots were unable to offer a new government of popular "confidence" that would undertake the mission to "lead the country out of the tunnel of crisis". However, the elections provided scholars with a unique example of Greece's socio-political realities, whilst it offered additional quantitative records for the socio-political impact of economic crisis. Perhaps, we need to remember a comparative political examination by Remmer (1991) who suggested that according to the results of twenty-one elections throughout the period of Latin America's 'Lost Decade', an economic crisis supports high electoral instability. Additionally, Remmer proposed that "the relationship of economic conditions and the electoral instability is mediated by party system structure" (1991, p. 777).

The above could probably offer an empirical answer to the following question: does an economic crisis affect elections and accordingly the political solidity of a party system? The answer, according to Remmer, is yes. However, it is essential to ask the question: what does this mean for the Greek socio-political reality? According to a critical theoretical approach, Robert Cox (1987) in his work entitled *Production, Power, and World Order*, offers a Gramscian response; as economy undertakes a structural makeover in the face of crisis, simultaneously, the political establishment is disconnected from the social groups; as a result, we are witnessing "a crisis of representation" (Cox, 1987, p. 273).

Could it be this theoretical perspective useful to evaluate the results of the Greek parliamentary elections? The results are the following based on the Ministry of Interior: 34.9% abstained from voting, and 19.03% voted a party which is not represented in the parliament issued from the first elections that took place in an environment of economic crisis - both equals 53.93% of the Greek public. Comparatively, the elections of 2009, prior the crisis, resulted in only 29.15% of the Greek public, who were not represented.

According to Cox, it is possible that crisis results in the misrepresentation of the voting public (as one indicator of the Gramscian 'organic crisis'). We could argue that the causes and effects of this crisis are multivariable and complex as well as continuing. The above theories may provide us with a basis of a coherent explanation of Greece's meta-matapolitefsi as was signified by the results of Sunday's elections; a socio-political 'reality' of the 'post-modern condition', perhaps in Lyotard's terms or with a Lacanian perspective of the 'politics versus the political' as Yannis Stavrakakis (1999) interpreted.

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26

**Kostas Theologou & Anastasia Veneti**

## Affecting democratic processes by virtue of petty-minded political design

Are clientele dependencies and consumerism prevailing in post-war Europe and post-civil-war Greece to be denounced for a rapidly forgotten communitarian spirit? Is the established bipartite culture after the 1974 restoration of democracy responsible for the longstanding electorate adherences during these almost four decades? Is, rather, PaSoK after the 1981 'change' from right wing governments to be considered guilty for a carefree political ride of the Greek people until the edge of our political weathering heights? All of the above are valid, perhaps.

And now we came to a self-reflection point of our political insouciance, since the result depicts a wise oracle, however not a Pythian one at all. It offers a fine opportunity to re-evaluate the petty-political self-serving goals of an electoral law which affects the core function of the democratic regime in Greece.

The distribution of the electorate vote reveals the popular demand for a change of the political system, the electoral law included.

It is such a pity that any political mastermind who designed an immoral electoral law serving specific and concrete schemes and circumstances ultimately distresses and profoundly harasses the democratization processes of an entire nation.

The 19% of the Greek electorate voted but cannot be represented by any deputy/party in this Parliament; liberals, Greens, and other political shades cannot be politically voiced within a mature, as it is liked to be said, democracy. But this is not the least, nor the last.

The popular distribution of the votes demands for a multiparty coalition government against the messianic EU/IMF bailout memorandum. Since a coalition government cannot be achieved due to the specific parsimonious arithmetic rules of the electoral law we think that this is a straightforward violation of the state's regime; democracy fails to thrive as an imperative necessity and urgency of Greece nowadays.

What's to be done? An urgent and major constitutional revision accompanied by a brand new electoral law assuming a mere proportionate distribution of the electorate vote would be a way out. Consequently, all of the voters could be voiced by their deputies in the parliament and 'democracy' –as far as any representative regime can be assumed as such- will keep covering the people as a whole in all fairness. However, the issue of cutting down on the number of the Greek deputies (300 in total) is of great significance and should also be urgently dealt with in the same perspective with this constitutional revision; but, this is another morbid affair.

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## An idiosyncratic electoral system

Sunday 6 May was my first time as a voter in a Greek general election. The voting process itself was well organised and efficiently administered. At the time of writing Greece has not yet a functioning government and may not have one until later in the year; that is, until after another general election. The President of Greece must carry out certain constitutional procedures before this can happen but the hazardous delay raises certain issues about the electoral process itself. In many respects it is sui generis, even idiosyncratic.

Firstly, the voter must choose his candidates from one party list and cannot cross lists; in other words the voter cannot choose candidates from two or more parties as in a PR election. This means in effect that his choice of candidates is strictly limited. Voters are forced to choose parties rather than individual parliamentary candidates.

Secondly, according to Greek electoral law the winning party in an election is given an additional 50 parliamentary seats, gratis. This completely skews election results and detaches candidates from their constituencies. It also inhibits inter-party horse trading such as is common in German elections and more recently in British elections. It also undermines the principle of one-man-one-vote since the winning party's number of votes count for more than those of the second and third parties. Some votes – and voters - are more equal than others!

Finally, former Greek prime ministers are not subject to the same electoral process as other candidates. They're given a free ride back to parliament even if they have been defeated in the latter. It could be argued that the British parliament has a similar system in that former prime ministers are selected for the House of Lords. But if those same prime ministers were to opt to become members of the first chamber - the House of Commons - they would have to subject themselves to the normal electoral process. Why is Greece so different from other parliamentary democracies?

In summation, when the new Greek parliament eventually sits it should look again at some of the idiosyncratic electoral practices its predecessors have introduced post-1974. Their removal would lead to a more democratic system based primarily on voters' individual preferences rather than party political loyalties.

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