

Dealignment, de-legitimation and the implosion of the two-party system in Greece: the earthquake election of 6 May 2012

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Introduction

The global economic crisis that originated in 2008 in the US financial sector spread quickly across the Atlantic bringing a number of European economies to the brink of collapse. The crisis also shifted into the political domain as governments at the periphery of the Eurozone increasingly faced the prospect of insolvency or 'default'. Greece was perhaps one of the countries most severely affected by the economic and political fall-out from the crisis. The repeated joint EU/IMF 'rescue' loans it received marked a desperate attempt by international bodies to stave off a possible default and were accompanied by unprecedented austerity measures and an unpopular debt restructuring deal. Given these dramatic events it was highly likely that voters would seek to vent their frustrations in subsequent elections. Few observers, however, could have predicted the seismic shift that took place in the Greek party system following the crisis.

The dramatic fall in the popularity of PASOK and New Democracy in the May 2009 national election left these two (former) major parties unable to lay claim to a majority of seats in parliament and thus to form a coalition government. This result occurred even with the fifty seat bonus for the top-ranked party that was designed to secure a single-party majority in parliament. The refusal of the Coalition of Radical Left (SYRIZA) and of the Democratic Left to participate in a coalition government meant that Greeks had to return to the polls in June. This time the fifty seat bonus awarded to the first party saw the system move toward a new configuration of two-partyism, with New Democracy and SYRIZA sharing power.

From first glance the two elections appear to constitute textbook cases of economic voting. The economic crisis Greece faced was the most serious it had encountered since the end of the civil war in 1949. The dismal state of the economy provided a backdrop not only for the election but seeped into all aspects of social life and public discourse.. The PASOK government that presided over the explosion of the debt bomb and negotiated the terms of the first bailout deal in 2010, saw its vote share decline dramatically from 44 percent in October 2009 to just over 13 per cent in May 2012 and a further percentage point in June. Much of the decline of PASOK was picked up, not by New Democracy, but by smaller parties of the left,

SYRIZA in particular, which saw its share increase dramatically to 16 per cent in May 2012 and 27 per cent the following month.

On the surface the causal narrative thus appears fairly straightforward. The electorate attributed the blame for the crisis to the main incumbent party and punished it accordingly for its poor economic record. Beyond this immediate outcome, however, given the extreme nature of the economic crisis experienced in Greece there is a question of whether it had deeper system-level effects that resulted in more than just short-term electoral losses for the incumbent. Our argument is that the economic crisis in Greece has acted as a catalyst for the acceleration of longer-term processes in much the same way as the *Tangentopoli* affair¹ triggered the transformation of the Italian party system after 1992. The growing levels of political cynicism and antiparty sentiments, especially among the post-authoritarian generation in Greece, we contend were reinforced by the crisis and turned indifference into open hostility towards the political class, and specifically towards the two major parties (PASOK and New Democracy). This outrage was particularly strong among the younger generation which, largely unconstrained by the affective ties of their parents and grandparents to specific parties, gravitated to newer anti-system variants that were skeptical or even overtly hostile towards parliamentary politics in general.

The widening nature of the debate further underscored its deeper systemic implications. After a few months the debate shifted from the government's plan to deal with the crisis and issues of economic performance to concerns over a loss of national sovereignty and the merits of EU membership. Within the opposition and the heterogeneous protest movement, attention centered on what was seen as the endemic corruption of the political class and alternatives to parliamentary rule. Furthermore, there was a growing preoccupation with immigration control and the protection of national identity and the Greek way of life.

The goal of this article is to examine the argument that the effects of the recent global economic crisis on Greek politics went much deeper than conventional economic voting models would presume, i.e. a shift in voter preferences in a given election to punish those parties responsible. Instead the crisis provoked a serious fracture and significant reconfiguration of the existing party system. We test this

argument by presenting a series of overtime and cross-sectional analyses of voting patterns in the third republic. First we contrast the nearly three decades of party system stability with the post-2009 period to show how a new era of dealignment and fluidity emerged after the economic crisis hit. Specifically we use aggregate and individual-level indicators to highlight the discontinuities in the pre- and post-crisis party system and contextualize these changes within the wider society and Greek political culture. In a second step we probe more deeply into the post-2009 situation and identify the demographic and structural characteristics associated with the dealignment process. Finally we trace the relative impact of a range of issues that dominated the spring 2012 electoral campaign. Here we show how the shift in political discourse from economic performance issues to highly contentious and polarizing socio-cultural issues affected the electoral choice of voters.

The Greek Third Republic and the Stability of Two-Party Rule

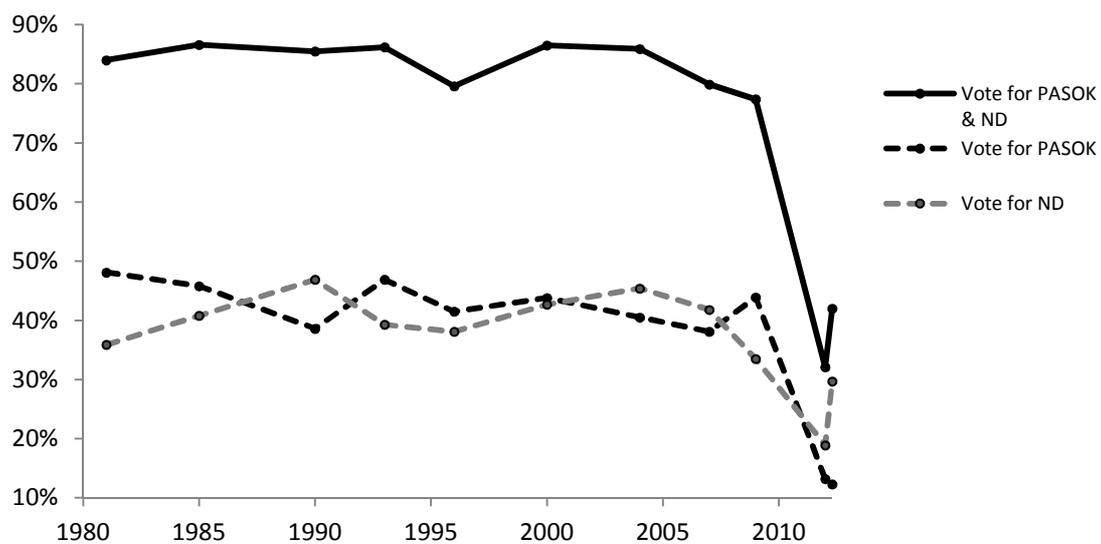
The Third republic established in Greece in 1974 brought to an end a seven year period of dictatorship and against expectations saw the emergence of one of the most stable two-party systems in Europe. Indeed the dominance of the parties led some commentators to label the Third Republic a '*partitocrazia*' (Anthopoulos 2008: 113), in the vein of the Italian First Republic. At its core stood the two major parties – the socialist PASOK and right wing New Democracy – which structured political competition firmly along the left-right axis. Indeed this cleavage has been a defining characteristic of Greek politics for most of the 20th century and has contributed to a sense of continuity in Greek politics despite the changes in political regime and political parties.ⁱⁱ As Gunther (2005: 270) states, only the left-right stance of the parties has served as a significant inhibitor of inter-bloc volatility in Greece.

The steady alternation of the two major parties in government since 1974 was further supported by the extreme majoritarianism engineered into the Greek electoral system and was broken only by two short-lived coalitions in 1989. This stable duopoly allowed for the return of several features of early parliamentary life in Greece in the 19th century. Specifically PASOK and New Democracy operated a modernized version of the patron-client system with party linkages replacing personalized ties. Both parties were dominated by charismatic leaders who relied on populist rhetoric and were run in a top-down fashion. The existing strength of

political identities shaped by past regime crises and buttressed by existing clientelist ties meant that levels of party attachment were high from the early days of the new regime (Featherstone 2005: 229; Haralambis 1989) and led to the formation of highly durable parallel networks of 'left' and 'right' political blocs. In every national election from the 1970s until the start of the twenty first century New Democracy and PASOK gathered well over 80% of the vote. This all came to a dramatic end, however, in the aftermath of the global financial crisis and Greek economic meltdown. The parliamentary elections of 2007 and 2009 saw the combined vote for the two major parties for the first time fall slightly below 80% (79,9% and 77,4% respectively). In 2012, however, it collapsed completely to less than one third.

Figure 1 shows this history of stability and precipitous decline after 2010.

Figure 1. The Collapse of the Stable Two-Party System: PASOK and New Democracy Percentages in National Elections, 1981-2012*



*May and June elections 2012

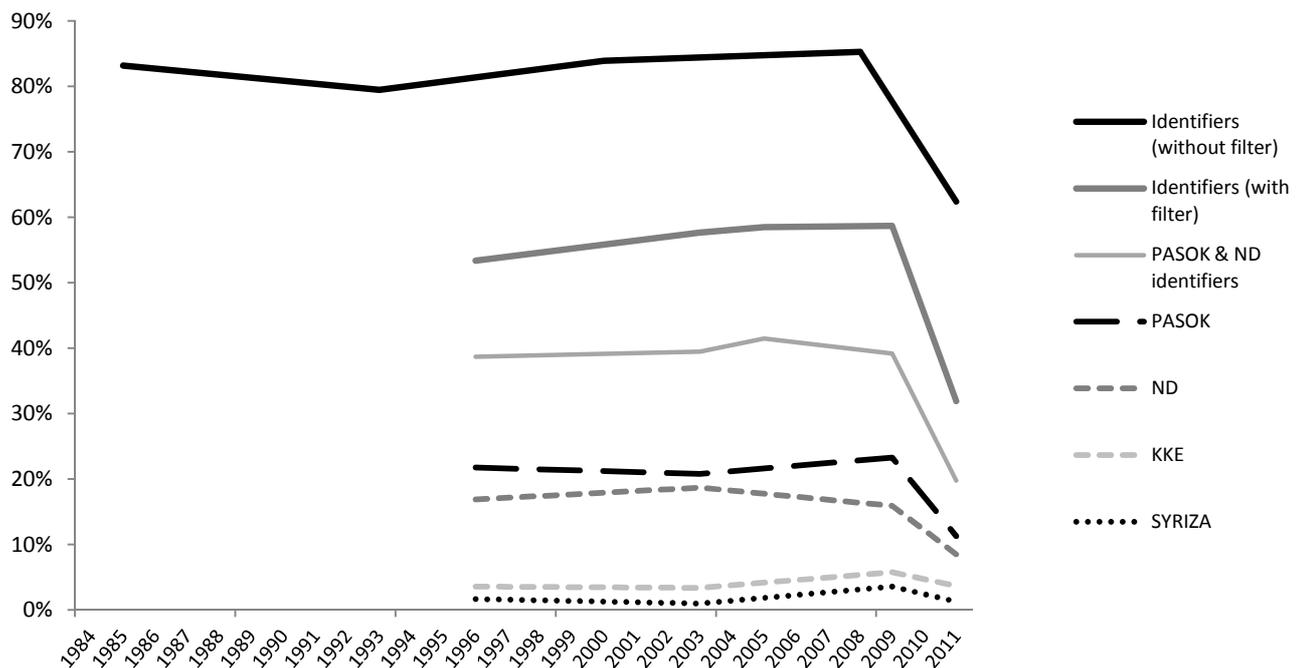
A consequence of the very predictable swing in power between the two main parties led to the creation of a vastly inflated state bureaucracy in which party loyalties superseded administrative considerations. Every change of party in government saw a large number of new appointments for the loyalists of the winning party at both higher and lower levels of the public sector. Constitutional constraints meant that the existing civil servants could not be removed. The result

was that election after election, the size of public sector continued to swell as it sought to accommodate the supporters of both parties. As well as rewarding supporters after an election the patronage system was also used by the incumbent party to recruit new employees into the public sector in advance of the next polling day. This cycle of appointments and the use of the state budget in order to attract votes and facilitate a return to power gave rise to what Sotiropoulos saw as the conventional 'pump priming' economic-electoral cycle with 'a clientelist twist' (Sotiropoulos 2012: 42). Under such an arrangement parties sought to curry favor and win votes through direct changes in individuals' personal and household economic welfare and their professional advancement.

Given this inter-linkage of personal and party fortunes in Greece it is clear that the explosion of the fiscal time bomb did more than undermine confidence in the major parties to manage the economy it severely hampered their ability to perform their traditional patronage functions. Until 2009 it was expected that the party in power would offer job openings to its supporters, even fixed-term or project based ones. However in late 2009 the newly elected PASOK government – under pressure to cut public spending – drastically cut the number of patronage appointments (Sotiropoulos 2012: 44). This failure broke faith with the 'clientelist social contract' that had legitimized and reproduced two-party rule in modern democratic Greece since its foundation and led to a fracturing of the duopoly.

Figure 2 shows this critical juncture and sudden decline in party identification very clearly. The data also reveal that the downward trend is not limited to the two major parties.

Figure 2. Party Identification in Greece, 1985-2011



Note: The questionnaires by EKKE, OPINION and MRB ask respondents their degree of proximity to each party separately, thus tending to show always higher levels of party identifiers and allowing for multiple party identifications. The questionnaires by CNEP and ESS use filter questions, thus allowing for unique party identifications only.

Sources: EKKE 1985, OPINION 1993; CNEP 1996; MRB 2000, 2011; ESS 1, 2, 4, 5

The Undercurrents of Political Culture: De-legitimation as Harbinger of Dealignment

The demise of the two-party system in 2012, as one might expect, did not occur in a vacuum. Despite suffering some ups and downs since its foundation, public trust and confidence in political institutions in the third republic have been relatively high compared with other nations in Southern Europe (Kafetzis 1994; Pantelidou-Malouta 1990). Indeed by 2004, trust in institutions and satisfaction with democracy had reached a peak. This was the year the Olympic Games were held in Greece. The country was moving along the path of integration within the European Union and had experienced several consecutive years of sustained growth. The positive outlook was short lived however. A series of corruption scandals beset the

New Democracy government from 2007 to 2009 and the explosion of the sovereign debt crisis in 2010 saw a complete collapse of citizen confidence in the main executive and institutions of government and parliament.

Figure 3 shows this rising disaffection very clearly by mapping trend data in Greek political attitudes. Here we see how trust in parliament which had always been quite high plummeted to almost single-digit percentages by 2011. Figure 3 also shows the sharp drop in support for the EU within Greece that has taken hold following the debt crisis. Greece has traditionally been one of the most pro-EU countries which is not surprising given the considerable economic benefits accrued from membership. It was equally unsurprising, therefore, that the pro-EU sentiments have eroded in the face of growing perceptions of a German-controlled EU that is imposing harsh fiscal measures on Greece and increasing their financial pain.

A final important trend reported in Figure 3 is that alongside a decline of faith in governing institutions there appears to be increasing disillusionment with the democratic regime *writ large*. Satisfaction with democracy in Greece according to these figures has fallen to historically low levels. While one cannot assume a straightforward trade-off between the level of support for democracy and a preference for authoritarian solutions the question of whether Greece has entered a new era of declining regime legitimacy appears now to have become a serious question for debate. A recent survey among supporters of the recent anti-government protests for instance revealed that less than a quarter of the sample supported the idea that the best way to take decisions is through elected governments and representative democratic institutions (24%); the remainder preferred referendums and people's assemblies or technocrats and strong leaders (58% and 17% respectively) (Georgiadou et al. 2012).

Figure 3. Satisfaction with Democracy and Trust towards Political Institutions and European Union, 1997-2011



Source: Eurobarometer series

Further evidence of this de-legitimation of the Greek regime has emerged with the sudden growth in popular support for the extreme-right *Golden Dawn* party. Having gained a comfortable entry into parliament with around seven percent of the popular vote it has continued to attract around ten per cent of support in public opinion polls in 2013, emerging as the third largest party behind New Democracy and SYRIZA. Despite a belated attempt to dissociate themselves from Nazism, its success provides underscores the view that deeper anti-system views are taking hold within the Greek electorate. The party's rhetoric attacks what it perceives as a corrupt *pseudo-democracy* and it organizes its members into militia-style groups who wear trademark black t-shirts and routinely exercise street-level violence against immigrants, homosexuals and their political opponents. Rather than deterring supporters this combination of anti-democratic rhetoric and violent grass-roots mobilization against both elites and marginalized 'out-groups' appears to have won over a sizeable minority of the Greek electorate.ⁱⁱⁱ The murder of Pavlos Fyssas,

a leftist hip-hop artist in September 2013 led to the arrest of a member of Golden Dawn and the subsequent arrest of its leadership on charges of conspiracy to create a criminal organization. As of January 2014, the leader of Golden Dawn, Nikos Michaloliakos, remains in prison awaiting his trial. The criminal allegations, however, do not appear to have affected the party’s polling strength which has remained stable despite a short-lived drop in October immediately after the murder of Fyssas.

Partisanship Before and After the Onset of the Crisis

As noted earlier, one of the defining features of the Greek Third Republic has been the relatively high levels of party identification it has experienced compared with other Western democracies. The fragmentation of the party system in the post-crisis era we argue constitutes a profound shift in Greek politics and is one that takes us beyond conventional economic voting explanations of electoral outcomes. In taking this wider approach, however, we do not discount or overlook the fact that other more immediate responses to punish incumbents may also have occurred.

The Changing Backdrop of Partisanship

In this section we examine the changing patterns of party identification mapped above in figure 2 more closely and potential explanations for them using a range of data sources from 1985 to 2012 (see Appendix 1). Using these sources we can see that one of the more obvious suspects in promoting this dealignment and fluidity – age – is indeed an important factor in the process. Table 1 shows that party identification has fallen most notably among younger cohorts that were socialized in the post-authoritarian era of the Third Republic. Party identification is typically a psychological attachment that intensifies throughout the life-cycle with repeated voting, (see Campbell et al. 1960; Converse 1969: 143). Thus we would naturally expect to find lower levels of this attitude among younger voters. However, the over-time evidence we assemble from three time points (1985, 1993 and 2011) suggests that non-identification found among younger people in the more recent election is more than simply a life-cycle effect.

Table 1. Age and Party Identification (“close to at least one party”)

18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
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1985	81%	80%	84%	83%	88%	84%
1993	75%	75%	87%	89%	89%	89%
2011	51%	59%	63%	64%	71%	74%

Sources: EKKE1985, OPINION 1993 , MRB 2011

Alongside the decrease in partisanship within the Greek electorate other related symptoms of political malaise can be seen to be gathering pace over the same time period. Accompanying the decline of partisanship is an increase in the proportion of voters that are unwilling place themselves on the ideological left-right axis. Since the return of democracy in the 1970s studies have shown that Greeks were more likely to place themselves on the left-right axis than voters in other new democracies in Southern Europe, i.e. Portugal and Spain (see Freire 2006: 158). The 1985 EKKE study reports that an overwhelming majority (91%) of the sample selected a position on the left-right axis. This declined to around 80 percent by 2000 (MRB 2000) where it continued to hover for the rest of the decade (ESS 1,2,4). By 2011 it had dropped again, with only 74 percent (MRB 2011) declaring a left-right position. While this trend can be seen to some extent as a natural outcome following the consolidation of democracy and normalization in levels of party polarization, the sharp drop after 2010 is nonetheless striking. Furthermore the relationship of age to the disjuncture is clearly notable. In 1985 the youngest two age cohorts (18-24 and 25-34) both displayed similar or higher rates of self-placement compared to other age groups (i.e. above 90%). By 2011 the figures for these cohorts have fallen markedly with only 53 percent of 18-24 year olds and 68 percent of the 25-34 age group seeing themselves as holding a left-right position (MRB 2011).

Correlates of Major Party Identification

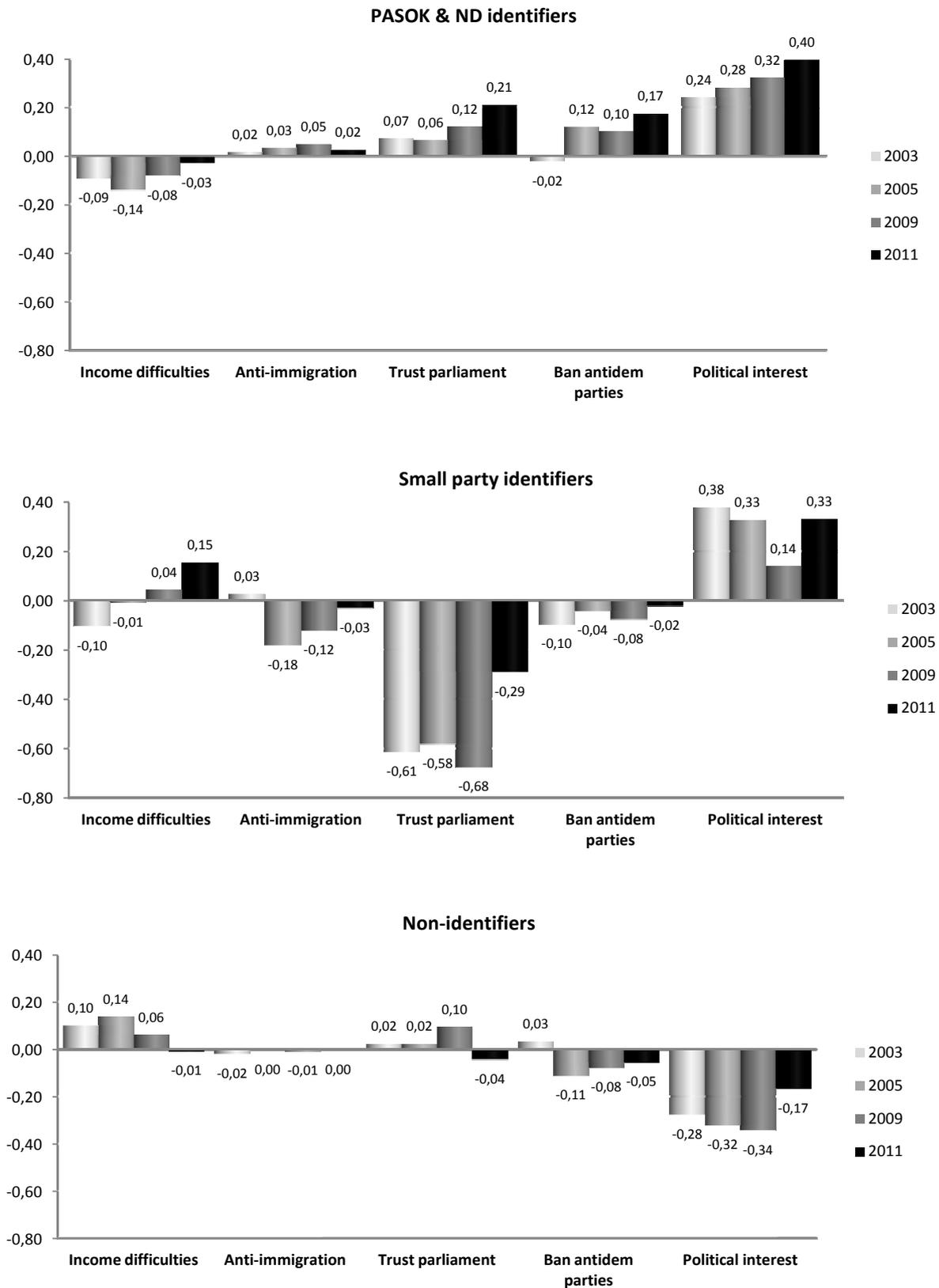
Through multivariate analyses it is possible to develop a more complex understanding of the drivers of the patterns we have observed above in party identification and the relative importance of age. For the period 2003-2011, we use data from rounds 1, 2, 4 and 5 of the European Social Survey. In our multivariate models we include socio-demographic variables, such as sex (female), age, education, employment status (self-employed, unemployed and retired), place of

residence (rural areas), union membership and church attendance. From existing research we know that there are several socio-structural variables that are important in predicting identification with the two major parties. In particular attachments towards both PASOK and New Democracy tend to be formed by members of older cohorts who reside in rural areas and tend to be more religious. (Vernardakis 2011: 160-165; Gunther and Montero 2001). In addition, we include measures of political attitudes such as interest and left-right self-placement (measured as proximity to the center) along with other relevant attitudinal variables repeated across the series such as the evaluation of one's present household economic situation,^{iv} the cultural impact of immigration, trust in parliament^v and preferences concerning legal response to anti-democratic political parties.

We conduct the multinomial logit analyses by survey year with major party identification (PASOK & New Democracy) as the reference category. The full results of the regression analysis are reported in tables 1 – 4 of the Appendix. To more efficiently explore these findings further we looked at the marginal effects of the key variables of interest in each survey on the probability of three outcomes: expressing proximity to either PASOK or New Democracy; expressing proximity to one of the smaller parties, or expressing no proximity to parties whatsoever. Figure 4 reports the change in probabilities in each of the three outcomes caused by an increase of one standard deviation for each attitudinal variable (in each of the four ESS surveys), while holding the other variables at their mean.

The results show that evaluations of the household economic situation have only a weak effect on partisanship for both major and minor parties. Anti-system attitudes are by contrast among the most important attitudinal variables in predicting partisanship among minor party adherents and this holds true across the last decade. Trust in parliament, willingness to accept anti-democratic parties (and of course, the interest in politics) all emerge as the most important discriminating variables between major party identifiers and small party identifiers. Viewed more generally, however, the attitudinal variables do not appear to have a particularly strong impact on partisanship. We turn next to look at the impact of economic concerns on vote choice in 2012.

Figure 4. Predicted proportional change to probability of expressing closeness to parties caused by a one-standard deviation increase in predictor



Source: ESS 1,2,4,5

Note: Effects when other variables are being held constant at mean values

Towards an Explanation of Voting Behavior in the May 2012 Election

The economy clearly weighed heavily on voters' minds in the lead up to the May elections. In March 2012, 91 percent of the public gave negative retrospective evaluations of their household economic situation according to opinion surveys (Public Issue 101). A few weeks before the election almost all (94%) of Greeks believed that 'things are getting worse in the country' (MRB 2012), which was an increase of over 20% compared to the 72% that felt the same way earlier in March 2010 (MRB2010). During the same period, the two most important problems were the economy (47%) and unemployment (24%) (Metron 2012).

Pessimism over the economy had clearly been building for some time. Indeed the election of 2009 in many ways appears to have exhibited some of the classic traits of economic voting in terms of attribution of blame and the direction of swing voting. According to survey data from late 2009 the economy and unemployment were the two most important issues in the minds of voters and 80 percent of voters considered the performance of New Democracy as the incumbent between 2007-2009 as bad or very bad (CSES III). New Democracy received one third of the vote, its worst electoral performance in its history other than its subsequent loss in 2012 and the major opposition party PASOK, reaped the benefits by capturing 44% of the vote, up almost 6% from the 2007 election.

Despite the evidence of its increasing scope and applicability, the study of economic voting in Greece is limited. The work that has been done prior to the crisis shows the relationship between economic conditions and attitudes to governing parties is a complex one. Freire and Costa Lobo (2005) used Eurobarometer data to examine economic voting in Southern Europe between 1985 and 1999. Their analysis concluded that sociotropic and egocentric economic perceptions were significant determinants of voting behaviour in Greece and were more important than social class. However, economic perceptions did not follow the expected direction based on objective economic indicators (GDP growth, inflation and unemployment), except for the correlation between the perceptions of personal finances and GDP annual

variation (Freire and Costa Lobo 2005: 513-514). One of the few exclusive studies of Greece on the question of economic voting shows that economic expectations were mediated by partisanship in the national election of 2004 and the European Parliament election of 2009 (Nezi 2012: 504).

Post-crisis work by Kosmidis (2013) using long-term aggregate data has added a further layer of explanation to the economic voting model in Greece by introducing the impact of international or external actors. After the first 'memorandum' was voted on by parliament in May 2010 he argues that a shift took place in the way that voters assigned responsibility for the state of the economy, from supranational institutions to the national government. The idea that economic voting increases as blame attribution shifts from external agents towards the national government is consistent with the literature. However, within this picture he detects a more complex curvilinear relationship in the Greek case. Specifically, through his time series analysis he reveals that attribution of blame to the national government was actually lower prior to the bail-out by international lenders but then increased once the package was in place. This rather counter-intuitive finding he explains through reference to a 'room to manoeuvre' argument whereby Greek economic conditions deteriorated rapidly causing voters' to pay more attention to the issue and who was responsible. As international institutions started to intervene the government suffered some constraints but maintained a limited room to manoeuvre which voters were aware of.

This was then overtaken by events as international lenders were assigned a larger proportion of the blame. Another and complementary interpretation of this relationship could be that the bailout ceased to represent an exclusively economic policy question but became entangled with the much more politically charged question of national sovereignty. In other words, the increased tendency for assignment of responsibility to the national government for economic policy outcomes at a time when it was more constrained than ever can be explained by the fact that the electorate started assigning blame to the national government for ceding sovereignty in key policy areas and international lenders.

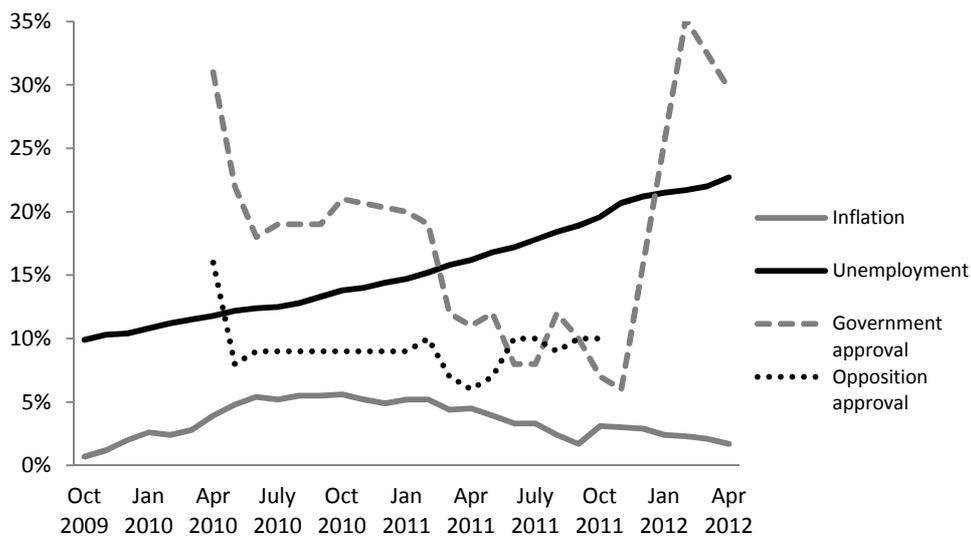
Finally a study using individual-level data by Karyotis and Rüdiger (2013) in late 2010 has challenged these conclusions and added an additional variable into the mix.

Contrary to Kosmidis the authors find that blame attribution exerted no significant impact on vote intention - at least during the early months after the voting of the first bailout deal - while egocentric and prospective sociotropic economic variables, did have some impact. The most crucial variable in determining future voting choice, however, in fact turned out to be acceptance of the government's 'security discourse'. The authors define this as a rhetoric which identifies an 'urgent, existential threat' facing the nation and is generally employed by governments when trying to deflect blame attribution for the imposition of harsh austerity measures, by presenting them as inevitable and necessary for the survival of the national community (Karyotis and Rüdiger 2013: 4-5). In other words, the crucial variable to explain vote choice in the Greek case was not conventional variables related to perceived government performance and attribution of blame, but the extent to which an individual accepted the government's line that the bailout deal was the least worst of available options.

The Impact of the Bailout Deal and Position Issues on Voting Choice

Trend data leading up to the May 2012 election reported in Figure 5 show that the relationship between economic and political evaluations was not a straightforward one. Here we juxtapose standard macroeconomic performance figures against government and opposition approval ratings from the end of 2009 until April 2012.

Figure 5. Inflation, unemployment, government and opposition approval between the 2009 and 2012 elections



Sources: Inflation data from Hellenic Statistic Authority; unemployment data from OECD; Government and opposition approval data from *Public Issue* time-series

The two economic indicators alongside the contraction in GDP (not reported) capture the downward spiral of the Greek economy since the onset of the debt crisis, particularly the rates of unemployment. In 2009 the unemployment rate was in single-digits and within the space of three years it had exceeded 25 percent. During the same period, as expected the approval ratings for the PASOK government experienced an equally steep decline, falling to single-digits. However, interestingly the opposition party fared no better. There was a short spike in government approval following the formation of the coalition government between PASOK and New Democracy and replacement of George Papandreou as head of government by the 'technocrat' Lucas Papademos in 2011. The optimism about the new coalition government under Papademos was very short-lived and soon after government approval ratings entered a steep downward trajectory where they remained until the election in May.

In order to further explore the impact of economic factors on the election outcome we move on to conduct a multivariate analysis which examines their impact relative to the attitudinal and external variables highlighted as important in the extant literature (See Appendix 2 for the survey items' precise question wording and variable construction). Our analysis is based on original data collected in late

April 2012 in which we have a measure of vote choice (as measured by vote intention) in the May 2012 national election. Due in part to low frequencies of individual party choice in our sample we created three aggregated categories of party voting intention as our dependent variable which reflected the key divisions that emerged during the campaign. The first category corresponds to the two former major parties (the incumbent, pro-bailout parties so to speak), the second one to the leftist opposition parties (KKE, SYRIZA and Democratic Left), and the third to rightist opposition parties (Independent Greeks and Golden Dawn).

In terms of the independent variables, none of the datasets available to us contained any of the items that are typically found in National Election Studies that tap into 'valence issues', i.e. items that capture evaluations of the state of the economy and government performance. However, the dataset we used for this section of the analysis did include a rich array of items on issues relating to the EU and immigration and also several items that measured views on the bailout loan and the attached 'memorandum' (i.e. its inevitability, its necessity, its desirability and its long-term prospects). Such questions are arguably just as useful, and possibly even more effective at capturing 'valence' views on the economy in this context. During such an extreme economic downturn these sociotropic or 'meta' level evaluations tend to be uniformly negative and thus their power to discriminate over different outcomes is significantly reduced. Views on the two memoranda that were voted prior to the 2012 elections are more contextualized and condense a range of attitudes relating to government performance and the prospective state of the economy at this particular juncture in Greece's history.

Given the structure of our dependent variable, multinomial logit was used to predict outcomes. The model also includes the conventional socio-demographic predictors as controls (sex, age, education). The full model results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Voting intention, 2012. Multinomial logit with governing coalition parties (PASOK & ND) as reference category (N=130)

Predictors	Left opposition parties ¹			Right opposition parties ²		
	B (std. error)	z	odds ratio	B (std. error)	z	odds ratio
Female	- 1.04(.327)** *	-3.18	.354	-.687(.380) †	-1.81	.503
Age	-.572(.204)**	-2.81	.564	-1.14(.227)***	-5.02	.321
Education	- .483(.141)** *	-3.43	.617	-.226(.174)	-1.30	.797
EU positive	-.656(.208)**	-3.16	.519	-.313(.234)	-1.34	.731
Civil disobedience	- .768(.173)** *	4.43	2.156	.323(.201)	1.61	1.381
Immigration control	- .888(.243)** *	-3.66	.411	.494(.280) †	1.77	1.639
Economic liberalism	-.722(.250)**	-2.89	.486	.136(.289)	.47	1.146
Church-state separation.	- .470(.132)** *	3.57	1.600	.113(.146)	.78	1.120
Bailout positive	- .476(.201)**	-2.37	.621	-.508(.228)**	-2.23	.602
Intercept	9.52(2.20)** *	4.65		3.42(2.47)		
	N=170			N=62		
	Cox & Snell Pseudo-R ² =.50					

†p<.1, *p<0.5; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Source: HelpMeVote

¹ KKE, SYRIZA, Democratic Left

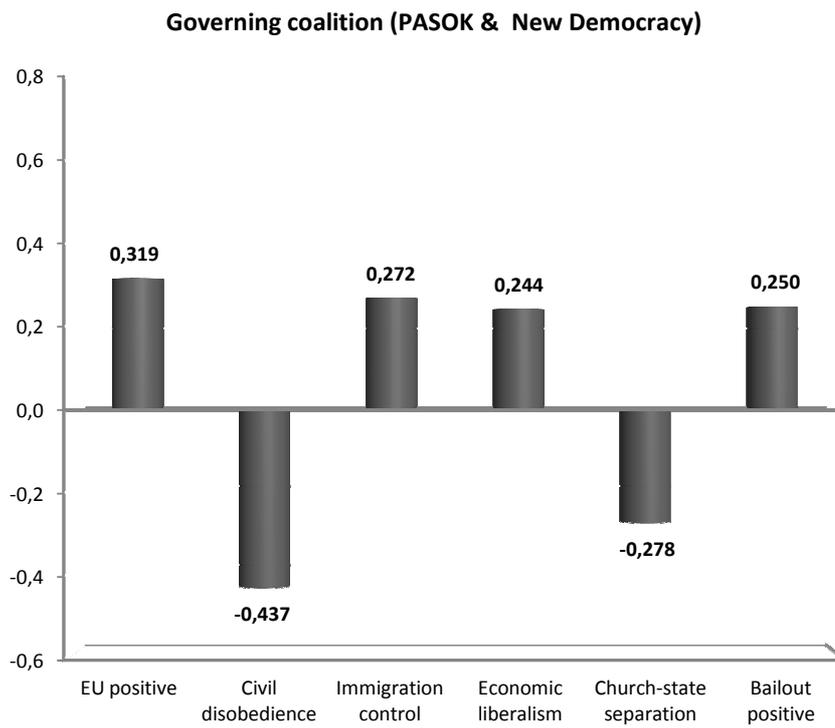
² Independent Greeks, Golden Dawn

As expected the bail-out variable is significant in both models, showing that it was a clear factor in pushing voters away from the two main parties and toward opposition parties on both the right and left. That said, however, another clear finding from the analysis is that there was much more dividing the voters of the major parties and their left wing opposition than there was dividing the former and supporters for the right-wing opposition parties. Other than age and views on the bail-out voters for PASOK and ND shared a similar outlook to those supporting their small right-wing counterparts. Between the larger parties and the smaller leftist parties, however,

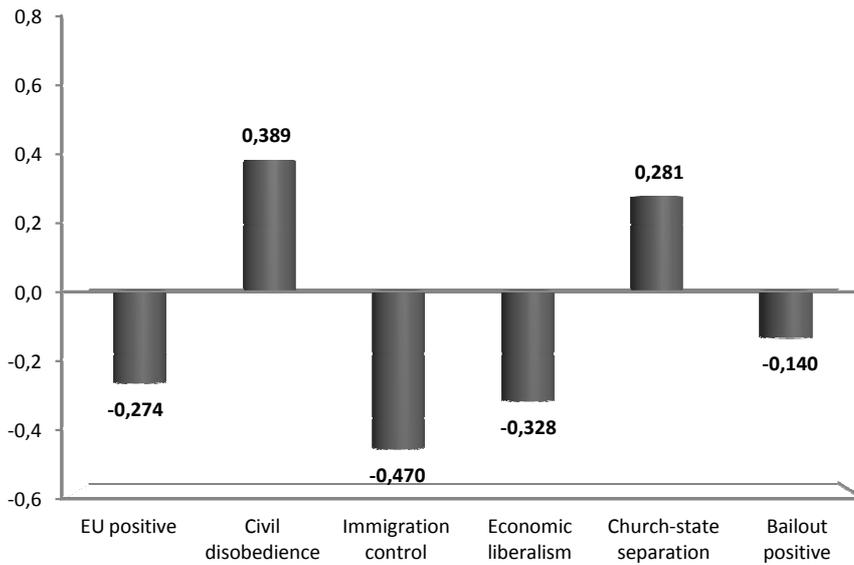
there were clear differences on view of the EU, the handling of protest, immigration controls and economic openness.

Figure 6 presents the marginal effects for the key attitudinal predictors on choice of party bloc.

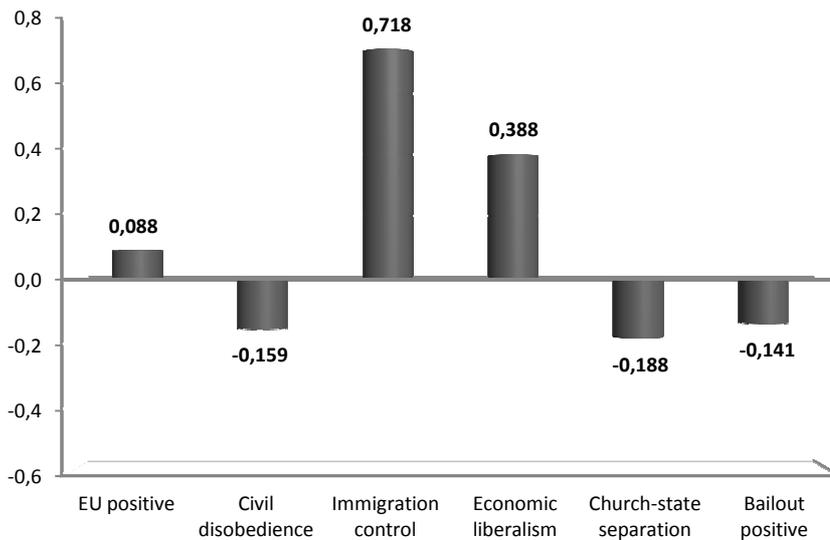
Figure 6. Predicted proportional change to probability of voting for party bloc caused by one-standard deviation increase in the predi



Left opposition (KKE, SYRIZA & Democratic Left)



Right opposition (Independent Greeks & Golden Dawn)



Note: Effects when other variables are being held constant at mean values

Source: HelpMeVote

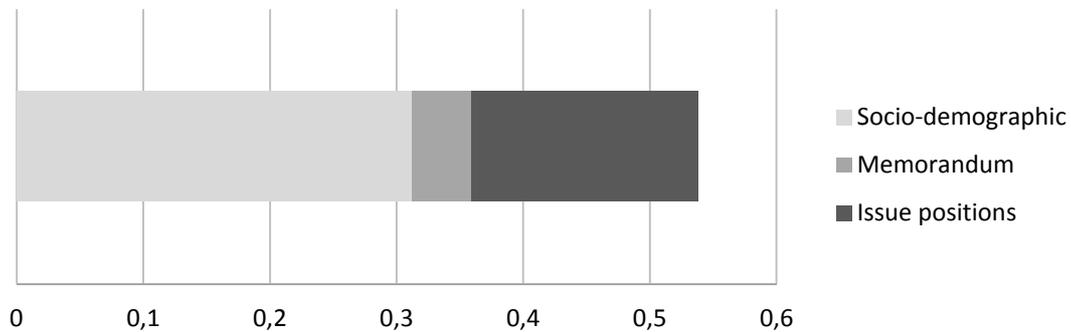
The results are compelling in that they confirm that voters were discriminating among parties based on a range of issues and not simply on economic performance grounds. The variable measuring support for the bailout deal shows that it mattered for voters for all parties and followed the expected direction in that more positive attitudes are associated with support for PASOK and New Democracy while those who are critical are more likely to support the opposition (both left and right).

Beyond support for the bail-out, however, positive attitudes toward external bodies such as the EU and for maintaining internal order actually appear to have an even stronger effect in generating support for the coalition parties.

Positive stances toward immigration control are by far the strongest predictors of support for right-wing opposition party voters, while the reverse holds for voters of left-wing opposition parties. More generally left-wing voters have the most sharply defined profile in comparison to the other two groups of voters. Supporters of left-wing opposition parties were distinguished by their strong opposition to economic liberalism, the EU and the Euro as well as support for civil disobedience and separation of church and state. Aside from immigration, however, only economically liberal positions stand out as increasing the probability of voting for a right-wing opposition party. The results confirm the conclusion drawn from table 2 of the congruence in the voters for the two major parties and for right-wing opposition parties. The only difference between them is over intensity to which the issue of immigration mattered and, of course, the directionality of attitudes toward the bailout deals. Thus it seems that while there are deep ideological divisions separating voters of leftist parties from those supporting the two centrist parties, it is a combination of anti-bailout attitudes and the need for tougher immigration measures that moved voters away from the two major parties and toward the smaller opposition parties of the right.

As a final check on the impact of the memoranda versus other issue positions on the support for the various party blocs we re-ran the multinomial logit with an additional two more memorandum-related questions to create a multi-item measure that captured evaluations of the bailout deals in Greece^{vi}. The incremental changes to the pseudo-R² reported in Figure 7 decisively show that the memorandum and bail-out were less influential in determining the vote for the two former major parties than other non-economic issues. While one might be tempted from these findings to conclude that the economic crisis took a back seat in the 2012 election, this appears to be too simplistic. Instead the results indicate that the main result of the crisis was to re-politicize a number of divisive issues that had themselves been simmering in the background such as questions of relations to the European Union, social peace, as well as national identity and immigration.

Figure 7. Incremental Cox & Snell Pseudo-R² (Reference category: PASOK or ND voting intention)



Discussion and Conclusions

The results of the May 2012 election marked a watershed in the political history of the Greek Third Republic. Support for the two main parties that had dominated politics in the post-authoritarian era crumbled to the point that for the first time in their existence their combined vote share did not exceed a third of those cast. The subsequent June election and the fifty seat bonus awarded to the first party helped to further dislodge the old two-party system and usher in a new configuration. This shift in the political landscape as we have shown here was in part a result of sovereign debt crisis which affected Greece more than any other country in Europe. However, it was also clearly inter-twined with the deepening of other longer term cultural divisions in Greek society and increased cynicism toward elites and established democratic institutions.

The continuing fluidity of the political landscape makes it difficult to offer any predictions about the process of realignment. The move toward a new two-party system could easily be reversed, particularly if the long awaited reform of the electoral system is finally pursued. Specifically, if the new electoral law removes the current 50 seat bonus awarded to the first party and increases the proportionality in the distribution of parliamentary seats, the strategic incentive that pushed so many voters to switch their vote in the election of June (compared to May) in favor of New Democracy or SYRIZA will cease to exist. That said two important and potentially significant outcomes do appear to be detectable at present. The first is the collapse of the mainstream left in the shape of PASOK which appears to have been hit

hardest by recent events. This was no doubt in part because the debt-bomb exploded in its hands. However, the party also failed to undertake the type of public purging of its leadership ranks that its long time right-wing rival New Democracy insisted upon after its defeat in 2009.

The second and perhaps less obvious outcome is the more contentious political climate that has developed since the economic depression. Since 2009 Greece has entered a phase of triangular polarization marked by centrist pro-European forces (represented by the old major parties), anti-austerity forces on the left and xenophobic, anti-bailout forces on the right. The consequence is that political debate appears to have moved away from questions of the performance and competence of parties and their leaders and is increasingly centered on more fundamental and politically polarizing questions. Whether this increasingly fragmented political environment can find a new consensus now remains a key question for future research to investigate.

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Appendix 1 Surveys

No	Title of Survey	Research institution/firm	Abbreviation	Fieldwork	Sample
1	"Four Nations Study" (Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal)	Greek National Center of Social Research (EKKE)	EKKE 1985	06.05.1985-28.5.1985	2000
2	OPINION No OP.09.93.227	Opinion S.A.	OPINION 1993	23.9.1993-8.10.1993	2009
3	Comparative National Elections Project- Round 1	Greek National Center of Social Research (EKKE)	CNEP 1996	09.1996-10.1996	1196 (1 st) 966 (2 nd)
4	MRB "Taseis" (Trends) European Social Survey- Round 1	MRB Hellas Greek National Center of Social Research (EKKE)	MRB 2000 ESS 1	02.2000 29.01.03-15.03.03	2000 2566
5	European Social Survey- Round 2	Greek National Center of Social Research (EKKE)	ESS 2	10.01.05-20.03.05	2406
6	European Social Survey- Round 4	Greek National Center of Social Research (EKKE)	ESS 4	15.07.09-20.11.09	2072
7	Comparative Study of Electoral Systems Module Three	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki- Department of Political Science	CSES III	10.12.2009-18.12.2009	1022
8	MRB survey for Real News	MRB Hellas	MRB 2010	26.03.2010-29.03.2010	1011
9	Public Issue Political Barometer 83	Public Issue S.A.	Public Issue 83	01.10.2010-04.10.2010	1.045
10	European Social Survey- Round 5	Greek National Center of Social Research (EKKE)	ESS 5	06.05.11 to 05.07.11	2715
11	Public Issue Political Barometers 96	Public Issue S.A.	Public Issue 96	I Wave: 03.11.2011 to 04.11.2011 II Wave: : 07.11.2011 to 10.11.2011	484 (1 st) 1206 (2 nd)
12	MRB "Taseis" (Trends)	MRB Hellas	MRB 2011	01.12.2011-08.12.2011	2000
13	Public Issue Political Barometer 101	Public Issue S.A.	Public Issue 101	8-13/3/2012	1.010
14	Metron Forum April 2012	Metron Analysis	Metron 2012	20.03.12 to 06.04.2012	2010
15	Preelectoral Survey: "HelpMeVote"	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki- Department of Political Science	HelpMeVote	23-29 April 2012	1200
16	MRB survey for Real News	MRB Hellas	MRB 2012	07.04.2012 to 10.04.2012	1008

Appendix 2: Question Wording and Variable Construction

Variable construction and question wording for position variables used in multinomial logit

Variable construction	Question wording of selected items
EU positive* (9-point additive scale: min 1 – max 5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "It is better for Greece to be inside the EU than outside" • "The economy of Greece would have better prospects if it were outside the euro"
Civil disobedience* (9-point additive scale: min 1 – max 5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Legislation should be passed to limit public demonstrations" • "I am positive towards acts of civil disobedience and resistance such as the 'I won't pay' movement"
Immigration control* (13-point additive scale: min 1 – max 5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Eligibility rules for granting asylum and citizenship need to become stricter" • "First generation immigrants cannot be fully integrated in society" • "More attention needs to be given to the rights of citizens born in Greece by Greek parents"
Economic liberalism* (13-point additive scale: min 1 – max 5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Lowering tax rates for businesses would facilitate economic growth" • "In order to combat unemployment, there need to be more flexible forms of employment" • "The NHS can become more efficient if it is partially privatized"
Church-state separation*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "There needs to be complete separation of church and state"
Bailout positive* (9-point additive scale: min 1 – max 5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "The memoranda agreed with the 'troika' were necessary to avoid bankruptcy" • "The memoranda accumulate more debt without any tangible benefits"

*Variable name indicates directionality of recoding

Note: All answers for attitudinal questions were given on a five-point scale, 1= *Fully disagree* to 5=*Fully agree*

Source: HelpMeVote

Appendix 3 – Results of ESS Analyses 2003, 2005, 2009 and 2011

Table 1. Multinomial logit with major party identification (PASOK & New Democracy) as reference category (2003)

Predictors	Small party identifiers			Non-identifiers		
	B (std. error)	z	odds ratio	B (std. error)	z	odds ratio
Female	-.215(.211)	-1.019	.806	-.083(.124)	-.669	.920
Age	.088(.083)	1.060	1.092	-.112(.047)*	-2.383	.894
Education	.009(.079)	.114	1.009	.057(.050)	1.140	1.059
Self-employed	.082(.217)	.378	1.086	-.208(.134)	-1.552	.812
Unemployed	.714(.525)	1.360	2.041	.508(.344)	1.477	1.662
Retired	-.283(.302)	-.937	.754	-.114(.174)	-.655	.892
Rural	-.537(.246)*	-2.183	.585	-.505(.135)***	-3.741	.603
	-	-5.186	.640	-.081(.052)	-1.558	.922
	.446(.086)**					
Church attendance	*					
Union membership	.043(.336)	.128	1.044	-.194(.242)	-.802	.824
<i>Left-right self-</i>						
<i>placement</i>						
Extremists	.270(.237)	1.139	.763	-1.14(.232)***	4.914	.319
	-	-6.148	.222		4.391	1.834
	1.50(.244)**			.606(.138)***		
Centrists	*					
	1.04(.758)	1.372	.354	-3.16(.254)***	12.44	23.496
Refusal					1	
Difficulty of coping						
with present	-.084(.120)	-.700	.919	.215(.069)**	3.116	1.239
income						
Culture						
undermined by	-.023(.039)	-.590	.977	-.008(.024)	-.333	.992
immigrants	-	-4.184	.853	-.025(.022)	-1.136	.975
	.159(.038)**					
Trust parliament	*					
Ban antidem.	-.009(.087)	-.103	.991	.007(.056)	.125	1.007
parties						
Political interest	.259(.100)*	2.590	1.296	-.469(.064)***	-7.328	.626
Intercept	.679(.801)	.848		.801(.494)	1.621	
	N=146			N=925		
	Cox & Snell Pseudo-R ² =.351					

†p<.1, *p<0.5; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Source: ESS 1

Table 2. Multinomial logit with major party identification (PASOK & New Democracy) as reference category (2005)

Predictors	Small party identifiers			Non-identifiers		
	B (std. error)	z	odds ratio	B (std. error)	z	odds ratio
Female	-.008 (.228)	-.035	.992	.116(.125)	.928	1.123
Age	-.036(.089)	-.404	.965	-.056(.050)	-1.120	.946
	.012(.081)	.148	1.012		3.438	1.180
Education				.165(.048)***		
Self-employed	-.352(.266)	-1.323	.703	.051(.140)	.364	1.052
Unemployed	.085(.443)	.192	1.088	-.354(.269)	-1.316	.702
Retired	-.526 (.326)	-1.613	.591	-.092(.173)	-.532	.912
Rural	-.465(.271)†	-1.716	.628	-.486(.138)***	-3.522	.615
Church attendance	-.449(.099)***	-4.535	.638	-.132(.056)**	-2.357	.876
Union membership	.664(.242)**	2.744	1.942	.013(.156)	.083	1.014
<i>Left-right self-placement</i>						
Extremists	-.041(.253)	-.162	.960	-.386(.203)†	-1.901	.680
	-1.82(.282)***	-6.454	.162		6.420	2.318
Centrists				.841(.131)***		
	-1.73(1.06)	-1.635	.178		12.57	31.367
Refusals				3.45(.274)***	7	
Difficulty of coping with present income	.192(.132)	1.455	1.211	.292(.073)***	4.000	1.339
Culture undermined by immigrants	-.146(.041)***	-3.561	.864	-.010(.025)	-.400	.990
Trust parliament	-.138(.042)***	-3.286	.871	-.055(.024)**	-2.292	.947
Ban antidem. parties	-.139(.088)	-1.580	0.87	-.291(.051)***	-5.706	.747
Political interest	.218(.113)†	1.929	1.244	-.562(.066)***	-8.515	.570
Intercept	1.45(.870)†	1.671		1.39(.514)**	2.706	
	N=133			N=909		
	Cox & Snell Pseudo-R ² =.364					

†p<.1, *p<0.5; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Source: ESS 2

Table 3. Multinomial logit with major party identification (PASOK & New Democracy) as reference category (2009)

Predictors	Small party identifiers			Non-identifiers		
	B (std. error)	z	odds ratio	B (std. error)	z	odds ratio
Female	.232(.180)	1.289	1.261	-.027(.125)	-.216	.973
Age	-.202(.075)**	-2.693	.817	-.136(.051)**	-2.667	.872
Education	.240(.073)***	3.288	1.271	.019(.052)	.365	1.019
Self-employed	-.291(.211)	-1.379	.748	-.131(.140)	-.936	.877
Unemployed	.155(.415)	.373	1.168	.203(.301)	.674	1.225
Retired	-.190(.328)	-.579	.827	-.147(.203)	-.724	.863
Rural	-.118(.233)	-.506	.889	.031(.150)	.207	1.032
Church attendance	-.247(.083)	-2.976	.781	-.132(.056)**	-2.357	.876
Union membership	.676(.211)**	3.204	1.965	-.329(.171) †	-1.924	.719
<i>Left-right self-placement</i>						
Extremists	.782(.219)***	3.571	2.187	-.254(.227)	-1.119	.776
Centrists	-1.78(.211)***	-8.436	.169	.120(.138)	.870	1.128
Refusal	-1.24(.572)**	-2.164	.290	2.45(.269)***	9.108	11.585
Difficulty of coping with present income	.085(.105)	.810	1.089	.118(.072)	1.639	1.125
Culture undermined by immigrants	-.114(.035)***	-3.257	.893	-.041(.025)	-1.640	.960
Trust parliament	-.241(.038)***	-6.342	.786	-.119(.025)***	-4.760	.888
Ban antidem. parties	-.215(.070)**	-3.071	.807	-.130(.053)**	-2.453	.878
Political interest	.006(.101)	.951	1.006	-.581(.074)***	-7.851	.559
Intercept	2.14(.698)**	3.059		2.76(.508)***	5.433	
	N=248			N=804		
	Cox & Snell Pseudo-R ² =.372					

†p<.1, *p<0.5; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Source: ESS 4

Table 4. Multinomial logit with major party identification (PASOK & New Democracy) as reference category (Summer 2011)

Predictors	Small party identifiers			Non-identifiers		
	B (std. error)	z	odds ratio	B (std. error)	z	odds ratio
Female	-.560(.208)**	-2.692	.571	-.130(.129)	-1.008	.878
Age	.057(.087)	.655	1.059	-.133(.054)**	-2.463	.875
		2.767	1.086	.021(.020)	1.050	1.021
Education	.083(.030)**					
Self-employed	-.001(.226)	-.004	.999	-.238(.139) †	-1.712	.788
Unemployed	.219(.341)	.642	1.245	-.159(.242)	-.657	.853
	-	-3.909	.300	-.378(.178)†	-2.124	.685
	1.20(.308)**					
Retired	*					
Rural	-.293(.235)	-1.247	.746	-.018(.133)	-.135	.982
Church attendance	-.127(.093)	-1.366	.881	.015(.057)	.263	1.015
Union membership	.280(.268)	1.045	1.323	-.495(.186)**	-2.661	.610
<i>Left-right self-placement</i>						
	-	-6.866	.176		4.896	1.928
	1.74(.253)**			.656(.134)***		
Extremists	*					
Centrists	.461(.254)†	1.815	1.815	-.220(.224)	-.982	.803
	.138(.667)	.207	1.148		9.360	54.91
Refusal				4.01(.428)***		
Difficulty of coping with present income		2.744	1.379	-.116(.071)	-1.634	.891
	.321(.117)**					
Culture undermined by immigrants	-.076(.043)†	-1.767	.927	-.081(.028)**	-2.893	.922
Trust parliament	-.196(.046)**	-4.261	.822	-.222(.026)***	-8.538	.801
Ban antidem. parties	-.114(.080)	-1.425	.892	-.183(.053)***	-3.453	.833
Political interest	.086(.100)	.860	1.090	-.418(.065)***	-6.431	.658
	.081(.736)	.110		4.063(.471)**	8.626	
Intercept				*		
	N=174			N=1675		
	Cox & Snell Pseudo-R ² =.338					

†p<.1, *p<0.5; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Source: ESS 5

ⁱ *Tangentopoli* (Italian for bribeville) was the name generally used to refer to the corruption based political system that ruled Italy until the *mani pulite* (clear hands) investigation delivered it a deadly blow in 1992, leading to the demise of the DC and of the Socialist Party (PSI).

ⁱⁱ Only one party from the pre-authoritarian period remained after 1974 – the KKE (Communist party).

ⁱⁱⁱ In fact, after a televised episode of violence carried out by Golden Dawn's MP Elias Kasidiaris against two female MPs of SYRIZA and KKE during a morning talk show, there was a reversal of the party's seeming waning electoral appeal at the time (Ellinas 2013: 17).

^{iv} The question from the ESS main questionnaire that we are using in our analysis is “Which of the descriptions on comes closest to how you feel about your household’s income nowadays? The 11-point sociotropic economic evaluation scale was excluded from our analysis due to the high negative skewness of the distribution in 2011 and lack of sufficient variation in the sample.

^v The only repeated item on the ESS questionnaire which captures orientation towards the European Union is the question concerning trust in the European Parliament. We chose to exclude this variable due to high observed levels of collinearity with the “trust in parliament” variable.

^{vi} The two more memorandum-related questions are: “Much of what is included in the Memoranda ought to have been done long ago” and “it is possible to renegotiate the Memorandum”. The answers were given on a five-point scale, 1= Fully disagree to 5=Fully agree (Source: HelpMeVote)