



## The Age of the Bailout

### Contention, party-system collapse and reconstruction in Greece, 2009-2015

Argyrios Altiparmakis

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to  
obtaining the degree of Doctor of Political and Social Sciences  
of the European University Institute

Florence, June 2019



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**Department of Political and Social Sciences**

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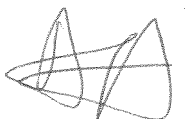
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## Abstract

The Greek epicenter of the Eurozone crisis was violently shaken by one of the deepest economic depressions of the past century. The call for financial assistance by the 2010 Greek government resulted in a series of bailouts whose conditionality and policy requirements deeply divided Greeks for the next eight years. This thesis deals with the dismantling of the Greek party-system during the Eurozone crisis, in conjunction with the volatile outburst of one of the proportionally largest protest campaigns in post-war Europe.

The Greek case is interesting firstly due to its unique outlier status in multiple dimensions, like the depth of economic crisis, the unique mass scale of protest and party-system change. But beyond the case specifics, the thesis uses the Greek case as a unique contemporary vantage point to understand patterns of interaction between large-scale contentious and institutional politics and the mechanisms of abrupt party-system change.

To study contentious institutional interactions, a novel framework is proposed, examining the Greek case through the detailed narration of four contentious episodes, streams of interactions among government, challengers and third parties around contested policy packages, the bailouts. This methodological novelty is complemented by a theoretical framework that conceptualizes the bailout-induced change in structures of policy-making and political competition, and thus the context within which the protest wave unfolded.

The thesis follow the evolution of escalating protest and party-system unraveling through the succession of contentious episodes to detect the mechanisms through which they interact. I draws attention mainly to indirect mechanisms through which social movements influence party-system outcomes, namely elite breakdown and paralysis and the reconfiguration of dimensions of political conflict.

Additionally, the dissertation delimits the effect of social movements mostly on those indirect effects. To complete the story of party-system punctuation, I expose critical elements of agency and structure unrelated to protest, such as the bailout's opportunity structure, shrewd party positioning and the revealing of the mental (mis)calculations of institutional protagonists, which are the other required elements to guide us through the process of Greek party-system implosion.

The final chapters eventually expand on how this punctuation was overcome, this time by reference to the missing contentiousness and the ways Syriza used persuasion, its profile as a new party and its leader's popularity to avoid a repetition of the first cycle of contention, bringing the crisis full circle.

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# 1 Introduction

This thesis is the story of Greek contention, party-system collapse and the links between these two phenomena that emerged during the years the country lived under the bailout regime. That period is bounded by two island visits. In April 2010, on Kastellorizo, the Greek island closest to Turkey, then Prime Minister Papandreou announced Greece had pleaded for financial assistance from its European partners and the IMF. Eight years later, in August 2018, Tsipras—the third Greek prime minister elected after Papandreou and leader of what in 2010 had been a fringe left party—disembarked to Odysseus’ island, in an act of not-so-subtle symbolism, to announce Greece’s exit from the bailout framework.

In the intervening years, the upheaval that engulfed Greece’s economy, society and politics rendered the country almost unrecognizable, scarred by much more than the passage of time. One of the deepest economic slumps of the past century precipitated chaos and turbulence. Squeezed between a society that was on the brink of revolt, foreign creditors demanding more austerity, and the brinkmanship of party elites who tried to leverage the crisis to their advantage, the Greek political system came close to disintegration, while the country’s social movements led one of the most massive and intense contentious campaigns in post-war history. A truly momentous case of economic, attitudinal, contentious and electoral behavior transformation, as will be recounted in detail in chapter 2, it is worth pondering on the reasons and processes that led to it.

Intuitively, and from a bird’s eye view, the economic crisis, the grievances it generated, the protest wave that followed, and the eventual electoral turbulence might appear as a seamless, smooth continuum, a predictable chain of falling dominoes. However, if one moves away from this macroscopic perspective, the perception of a linear and inevitable political collapse starts to fade. Instead, studying the interactions between social movements, parties,

government, foreign actors, and the events that unfolded, a series of critical junctures, processes, and agent choices start to crowd into the picture and disrupt the narrative of linearity and determinism.

Freytag (1900) famously claimed that classical drama follows an arc of exposition: rising action, climax, falling action and denouement. Rather than a continuous chronological stream of (inter)action, I chose to recount the story in a similarly structured manner, as Freytag's scheme closely resembles the evolution of contention and political conflict in Greece during the bailout period. I follow the arc of contention and institutional unraveling by zooming in four specific *contentious episodes* of contested government policy proposals, structured around the sequences of interactions between government, street challengers and other, third parties. Each episode forms a part of an *overarching* campaign corresponding to Freytag's acts. The description of the logic of episode selection and compartmentalization is fully described in chapter 3, covering methodology.

By studying the contentious episodes, the thesis aims to narrate the parallel stories of social movements and institutional life and uncover the mutual processes through which they reinforced each other—leading ultimately to the collapse of the old Greek party system and the composition of a new one. Chapter 4 draws a theoretical sketch of the newly emergent structures that shaped the choices of agents in this period and possible mechanisms of institutional change and interactions between movements and institutions within this frame.

The theoretical chapter complements the episodic structuring of the narrative, detailing the changes in the structure of the Greek policy-making regime and the modes of interactions among elite agents that this structural change reshaped gradually. Paramount in understanding the Greek case is the context of the joint EU-IMF intervention that radically reshaped Greek politics. As I recount in more detail in chapter 4, the policy regime, particularly on fiscal issues but also across the spectrum of policy-making was reshaped by this intervention. The European

creditors who bailed out Greece set as a requirement the inclusion of their technical representatives in Greek policy-making procedure. By wielding the threat of an unruly default over the Greek government, the foreign creditors essentially acquired veto power over Greek policy and became a co-shaping agent in its production, resulting in a regime of multi-level semi-sovereignty, as described in chapter 4.

While this regime of joint policy-making between a country and policy creditors existed also in other indebted EU countries, like Ireland and Portugal, it ended up being much more pervasive and critical in Greece, both due to the deeper nature of the Greek crisis but also because of the way the IMF-EU intervention and new regime meshed with existing patterns of interaction among Greek elite agents. Embedding the bailout in typically conflictual relations between government and opposition and government and unions led to a profound escalation of the conflict around the bailout, rendering the treaty a central division that defined Greek political conflict during the period.

Similarly to other countries that engaged in a bailout of this type in Europe or Latin America, strong social movements emerged that created symbiotic relationships with anti-bailout parties (Stearns and Almeida 2004; Almeida 2017), mostly Syriza, creating a formidable challenge to the mainstream parties and eventually leading to the collapse of the Greek party-system. While this had happened in similar fashion before in Latin American countries (Morgan 2011; Seawright 2012; Lupu 2014), the thesis for the first time documents a similar process in a rich, consolidated democracy in Western Europe, which had been hitherto a relatively tranquil region in terms of party-system stability. Furthermore, unlike the typical accounts of Latin American cases, the thesis focuses more on tracing the process of collapse, to show that beyond the usual explanatory factors of broken linkages, economic crisis and voter anger, the choices of elites and their timing played a critical role on the way the Greek system

completely unraveled, unlike the more contained fragmentation of the other bailed out European party-systems.

Returning to the empirics, the first episode (corresponding to the first bailout), described in chapter 5, serves as the exposition—it is when the issue, the position of the actors, the challenger response and the object of the drama is revealed to all. It is the moment when the equilibrium into which Greek political life had settled for the past thirty years was disturbed and the actors needed to react to changing patterns of political life. It is also the introductory part, the starting point where we must acknowledge and explore the previous paths and state of the main actors as the crisis beckoned, to understand what followed.

The second episode (the mid-term adjustment a year later), described in chapter 6 is the part in which the stakes were raised and events accelerated. It is perhaps the most important episode in terms of contentiousness, but in terms of its effect on the political system it is only the part that set everything up for the climax—as intensity escalated and distrust and dissatisfaction became epidemic, the expansion of conflict triggered by the Greek Indignados unbearably tightened the screws on the Greek government. It is also the instant in which the massiveness and disruptive character of protest thrust the bailout issue into the heart of institutional politics, initiating the process of realignment of the Greek party system toward its bailout and anti-bailout form of political conflict. In the cauldron of the Greek Indignados, new coalitions and grievances were articulated for the first time.

It is only in the second bailout and third episode—starting in October 2011 and ending with the subsequent May 2012 elections and analyzed in chapters 7 and 8—that the whole play reached its climax. While the second bailout episode was not as intense or radical as the mid-term adjustment, it was a tipping point, at which the traditional structure of politics came undone. It is by far the most fast-paced part of the whole drama, the one where events, actions and time accelerate and become compressed. Two governments will quit within it. Within its

timeframe the increasing realization dawns that not only there is massive opposition to the bailouts, but also that the political elite cannot handle and cannot agree on how to handle the crisis. It is then that contentious politics causes ripples and undoes the habitual forms of institutional politics, as the combined pressure from below and abroad proves too much for the Greek political system. The elections of May 2012 follow this episode and signal the path toward the resolution of this play, relieving societal tension and displacing action from the streets onto institutional channels.

The final act, the falling action and denouement, began at the end of Syriza's negotiation with the creditors, in the summer of 2015 and ended with the September 2015 elections—this is covered in chapters 9 and 10. It is a clear anti-climax. In a reversal of the expansion of contestation from the streets to institutional politics in previous episodes, in the last one almost all contention happened *within* institutional politics. Rather than the penalty of disintegration befalling the party implementing a bailout, it was the anti-bailout camp that unraveled during this episode. The streets remained almost entirely quiet and empty. With social movement actors resigned to their fate or consumed with intra-party struggles, the Greek cycle of contention ended at a tragicomic note, with the bulk of resistance to the last bailout carried by the parliament's president, attempting to postpone bailout votes on procedural technicalities. From crowds of half a million contesting austerity, to a lone person threatening to stop the bailouts due to parliamentary impropriety, this is the story of the uniquely thunderous Greek contentious episodes. But before we engage with the specifics, it is good to understand its extraordinary nature, by putting it into comparative perspective.



## 2 Case selection – Supernova Politics

### *Introduction*

Research incorporating a single-country case study is fraught with difficulties of generalization and relevance. Can it teach us anything useful about politics that can also be transposed elsewhere? Can it generate or falsify generalized theories, mechanisms or hypotheses? The answers to these questions depend on the nature of the case. In the present thesis, I propose the study of a case that is an extreme outlier (Lijphart 1971; Eckstein 1975; Seawright and Gerring 2008; Box-Steffensmeier et al. 2009), that of Greece during the Eurozone crisis. What can we learn from such a small country over such a short period?

To answer this question, I borrow from the field of physics—specifically, the concept of the *supernova*. A supernova is the final explosion of a dying star, a relatively rare phenomenon that was last observed with the naked eye in 1604 by Tycho Brahe. The observation of supernovae explosions throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> century helped astronomers realize flaws and inconsistencies in Aristotelian astronomy. Since the advent of modern physics, optical telemetry has been used to study supernovae more extensively, revealing a great deal about the origins of the universe, its composition and appending our beliefs about the laws of matter. This research has enabled us to understand that a large part of existing matter does not follow conventional rules and, correspondingly, that our physical laws apply as approximations to only a small fraction of the universe. The amassed problems caused by dealing with the supernovae phenomena have forced us to refine our theories about the physical world. Our understanding of the world, its processes and mechanisms of function, would be severely constrained if we had not been able to study these rare episodes of exploding stars.

It is not difficult to follow the metaphor. Greece circa 2009–2015 provides a rare opportunity to observe an exploding political system in modern times and within the relatively

tranquil European political landscape. Much like a supernova, Greece is unique among its contemporary peers because of the *intensity* and *acceleration* of events, change in political attitudes and electoral/protest behavior. Compared, for example, with the slow decline of social democracy and the concurrent gradual ascent of the far-right in Western Europe—which has been gathering pace for more than two decades—the disintegration of the Greek party system happened in the blink of an eye, comparatively speaking. PASOK’s collapse—its support falling from 44 to 4 percent in five years—is an almost unprecedented meltdown in the history of modern European democracies. Apart from electoral politics, the Greek case is unique in other ways, ranging from the scale of the economic collapse, the ensuing protests, and the attendant political disillusionment to the intensity and persistence of interaction between governments, their political challengers, and foreign actors. The combination of the depth of recession, the breadth of reaction and the degree of party-system collapse was completely unprecedented in post-war European politics. Several of the phenomena I present in this chapter, including changes in electoral patterns, protest intensity and economic loss, are well outside what was previously considered within the realm of possible outcomes and dwarf developments in similarly afflicted countries of the European Union, like Ireland and Portugal, facing somewhat more shallow crises. Observing the mechanisms through which contentious and party politics evolved and interacted during this profound transformation of the Greek political system therefore offers a window into a rare world, a museum of historical oddities and fringe phenomena that are rarely visible to the naked eye, but could potentially help refine our understanding of party-system change and the interaction of institutional and contentious politics. In the next sections, I try to point out the ways in which this case is particular in terms of intensity and speed, in the economic, political and protest fields. Like Brahe, we must stand ready to turn out telescope toward the dying embers of the Greek explosion, before its fading light disappears altogether.

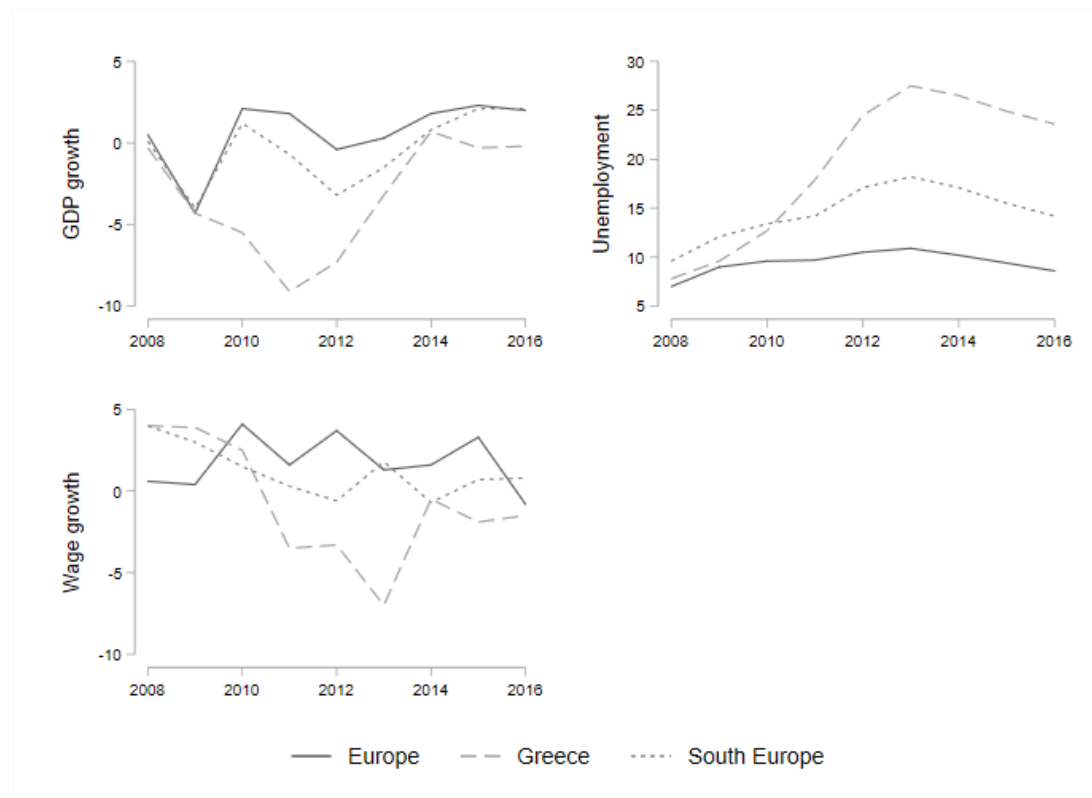


## *The Greek outlier in comparative perspective*

### *Economic collapse*

While the thesis is overwhelmingly focused on the political and contentious arenas, the explosion started with the forced austerity of the bailout program imposed on Greece by the so-called Troika and as such it is fair to begin by detailing the outlier nature of the Greek case from an economic perspective. First, the well-publicized effect on growth, shown on *Figure 2-1*.

*Figure 2-1: EU 28, Southern European and Greek GDP growth, unemployment and hourly labor compensation (wage) growth 2008–2016*



Notes: Southern Europe consists of Italy, Spain and Portugal. Source: Eurostat.

It is apparent that the Greek case stands apart even from other Southern European countries (i.e., Italy, Spain and Portugal). The depth and length of the Greek crisis surpass greatly that experienced by its peers and other bailed-out countries. Greek economic growth started its freefall in 2009, with GDP tumbling by 4.3 percent in that year, a development paling

in comparison to what would follow. The Greek economic malaise was both deeper and more durable than elsewhere. The next three years, the vertiginous collapse would accelerate, to slow down only in 2013, while the first signs of the short-lived recovery appeared in 2014. Meanwhile, the rest of Europe returned to slow but steady growth after 2009, while Southern Europe continued to struggle to grow but to a much lesser degree. After 2014, GDP remained stagnant in Greece, until 2017 when economic activity and growth picked up again. In Europe and the rest of the South, annual growth levels of 2 percent were achieved during the same period. The cumulative effect was a loss of 29 percentage points of GDP between 2008 and 2016 in Greece (with zero economic growth for nine consecutive years), dwarfing the average three percentage points lost in the three other Southern European countries apart from Greece during the same period, and the six percentage points of growth recorded in the European Union overall.

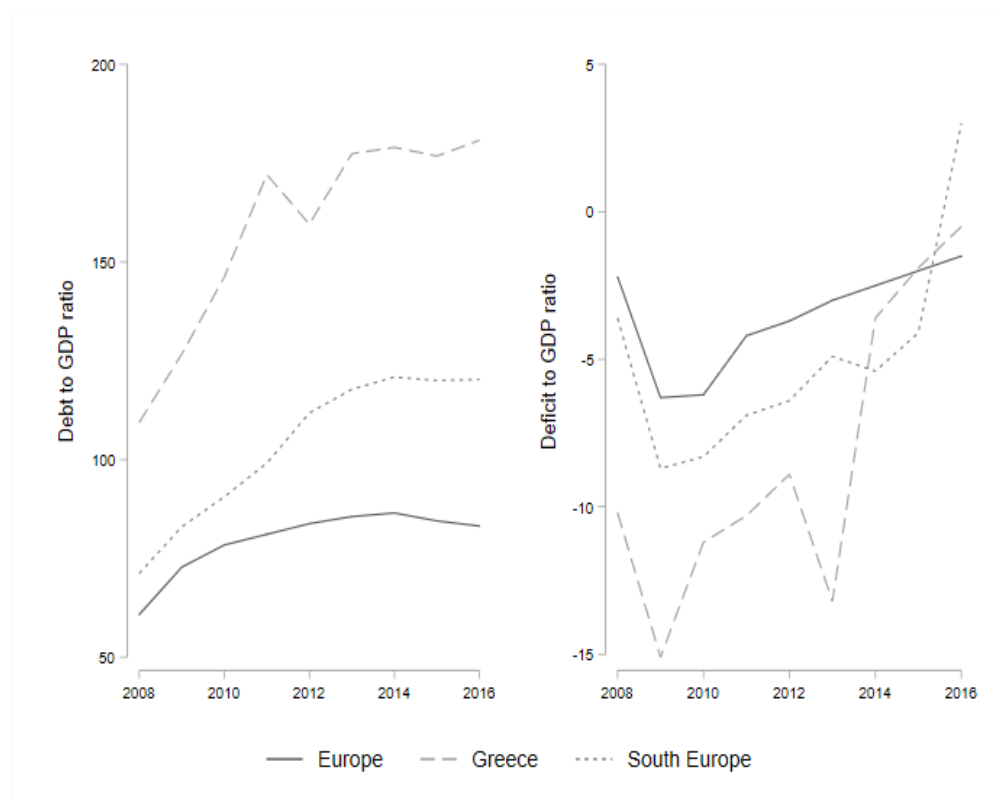
The same holds true of unemployment, also shown in *Figure 2-1*. Only Greek and Spanish unemployment levels surpassed the 20 percent mark in the European Union and persisted there. Greece managed to outlast Spain, retaining its above 20 percent unemployment until 2018, two years after the Spaniards crossed this threshold in reverse. Greek unemployment started rising slightly later than in other Eurozone countries, mostly escaping the adverse effects of the financial crisis, but accelerated its ascent once the bailout era began. The peak of 27.5 percent unemployment in 2013 was the largest in Europe. Other bailed out countries like Portugal, Cyprus and Ireland barely surpassed 16 percent unemployment, a full ten points below the Greek peak. Particularly pernicious was the rise of long-term unemployment, from a rate of 44.6 percent among the unemployed in 2010 to 73.5 in 2014. By that time, three-quarters of the 25 percent who were unemployed had been so for longer than a year.

Another unique aspect of the Greek economic crisis was the wage losses suffered by those “lucky” enough to hold on to a job. In the rest of Europe, only Portugal showed a tendency for relatively slight wage losses for the two years of peak crisis. Economists usually refer to this phenomenon as “sticky wages” (Keynes 1936; Barattieri, Basu, and Gottschalk 2010), signifying the tendency of wage growth to be nominally rigid, i.e. for employers to avoid wage cuts, preferring to fire employees rather than reduce operational costs. In Greece, this empirical pattern did not hold within such a profound crisis; wages fell significantly, aided by the dismantling of collective bargaining and government mandates that overrode collective agreements. The end result was a cumulative 7 percent decline in the level of average wages over this period, juxtaposed against 10 percent growth in the South and 15 percent across the EU as a whole (see *Figure 2-1*). ILO data are even more pessimistic, arguing that in reality, cuts in wages amounted to 25 percent of the 2009 wage level in Greece (Moutos 2015).

This would end up being a particularly bitter aspect of the Greek crisis: unemployment at least gets buffered by the minimal welfare state in Greece; wage loss typically does not. Debt obligations of individuals and rising taxes weighed on them more as they saw their wages come down steadily every year, inducing foreclosures and a huge issue of unpaid loans that still hovers above the Greek banking system.

Finally, the core of the problem—excessive debt and deficit—were only partially addressed by the bailout, as shown in *Figure 2-2*. The headline debt situation has actually become worse, as Greece’s debt has ballooned to almost double the country’s GDP. However, its maturity timeline and repayment schedule are factors that should be taken into account, as the Greek government’s obligations have drifted into the future. Nevertheless, its debt burden is still the largest in Europe, almost 50 points above those of Italy and Portugal, the next largest.

*Figure 2-2: National debt to GDP ratio and deficit to GDP ratio for EU-28, Southern Europe and Greece.*



Source: Eurostat

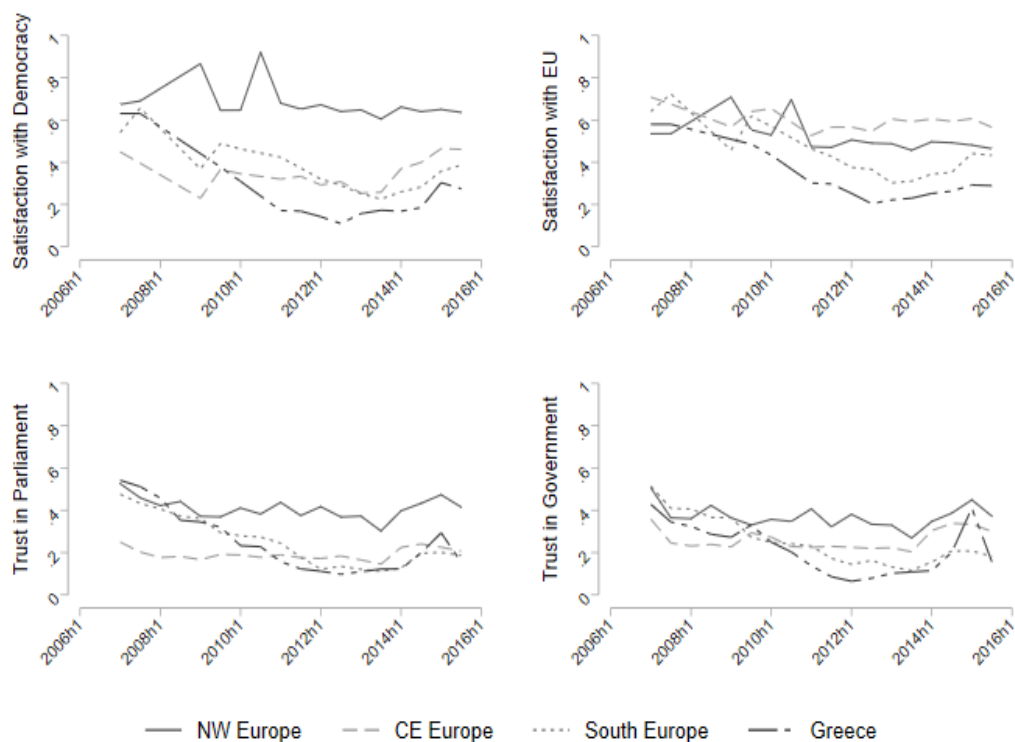
The deficit, the reduction of which was the core objective of the bailout program, decreased by half in the early years and only managed to get within the Maastricht limits of 3 percent after Syriza's second term in government began. Otherwise, it has remained notably higher than in other European countries (even Southern ones)—above 10 percent, on average, since 2013. The excessive spending in the Greek economy would not be corrected for a full five years after the first bailout and then only because the debt repayment schedule was altered in previous years to “backload” debt obligations. If at any time the country were to suspend its Eurozone membership and reintroduce its own currency, it would face the fact that fully 10 percent of government spending cannot not be covered by current resources—even before any further negative consequences from redenomination and the concurrent current account deficit in goods and services, which is significant. The gaping Greek twin deficits, fiscal and current

accounts, have stood as one of the major threats for any Greek government, severely limiting maneuverability.

### *Public opinion and attitudinal indicators*

Economic collapse and the ensuing bailouts were accompanied by extreme dissatisfaction with all facets of the political system. There was a sharp decline of Greeks' trust toward all institutions, national or supranational, as presented in *Figure 2-3*. Decaying economic conditions and expectations, as well as an intense political blame game about how the country got in this mess contributed to diffuse mistrust of institutions, democracy and the EU.

*Figure 2-3: Satisfaction with democracy and the EU, trust in parliament and government in the three major European regions and Greece (2007–2015).*



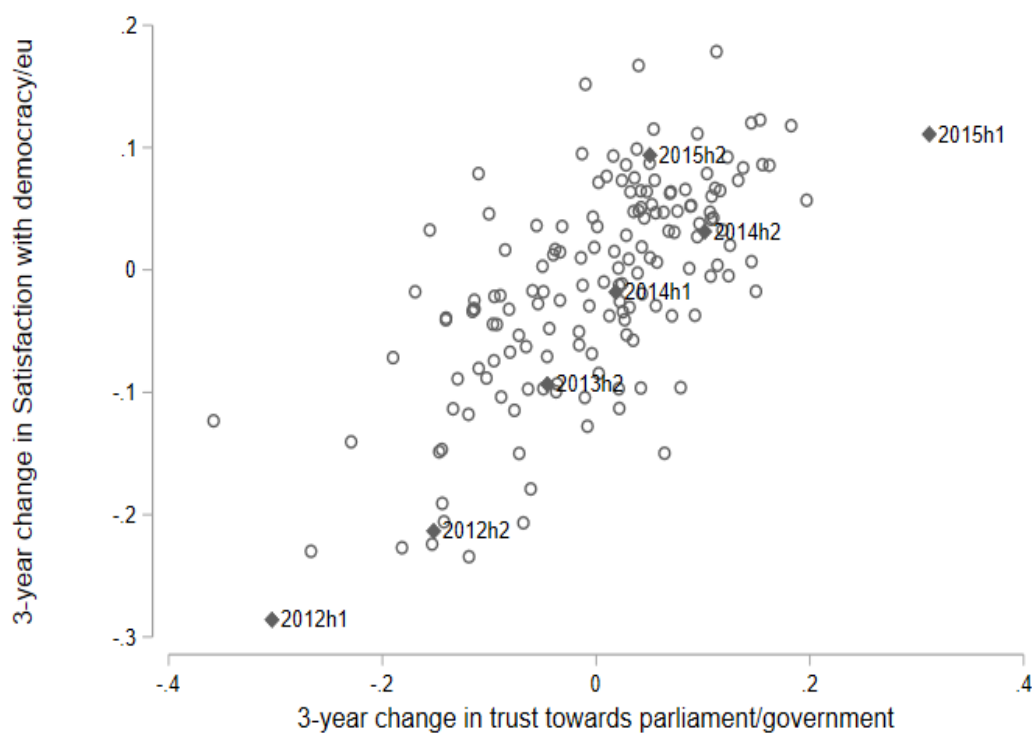
Notes: Half-yearly time unit. Source: Eurobarometer.

The graph shows that Greece, starting from a typical position among EU countries before the crisis, dipped below the average of any other European region during the Eurozone crisis. Greece was not a unique outlier in levels of dissatisfaction and distrust, but the shift was abrupt. From levels fairly typical of the continent, Greece soon recorded dysfunction only seen in the poorest and most corrupt countries of Eastern Europe, such as Bulgaria and Romania, or other crisis-afflicted countries, such as Latvia. It is telling that for the peak period of economic crisis (2010–2013), Greek trust indices rank consistently among the lowest in Europe, while before they were generally around the European average. During this period, on average, only 15 percent of Greeks reported trust in parliament, the fifth-worst record in Europe, behind only Baltic and Balkan countries. Twenty percent were satisfied with democracy, the second worst rating behind Romania. Twenty-seven percent were satisfied with the EU, almost the same as recorded in Portugal, and distant to the third least satisfied member, the UK (41 percent). Trust in government was the lowest across Europe. Only 13 percent trusted the government, compared with a European mean of 33 percent. As for parties, Greeks seemed to have lost entirely their faith in them, a paltry 9 percent retaining some trust in them, compared to an average of 24 percent across Europe.

The outlier nature of Greece is further highlighted by measuring a moving three-year shift of those indicators. Greeks present the largest decline in satisfaction with democracy, as 46 percent shifted from being satisfied to being dissatisfied in the three years between 2008 and the second semester of 2011. They are also marginally first in the drop in satisfaction with the EU, as they experience a shift of 28 percentage points between the first semesters of 2009 and 2012, almost the same as Italians, as both countries satisfaction with the EU conspicuously bottomed out at the same time as a technocratic government ruled over them. Greeks are also second in the change of trust toward their government and parliament, with a 32 percent downwards swing between the first semesters of 2009 and 2012, ranking only after the Cypriots

at the time of their own bailout. Averaging change in the two satisfaction indices and in the trust in parliament and government indices, I provide a scattershot of change during the previous months in *Figure 2-4*, which shows again how unique the fluidity of attitudes was in Greece, melting down in 2012, compared to their values three years before and skyrocketing in 2015 compared to the 2012 valley, as Syriza came to power.

*Figure 2-4: Three-year change of average satisfaction with democracy/EU and trust in parliament/government.*



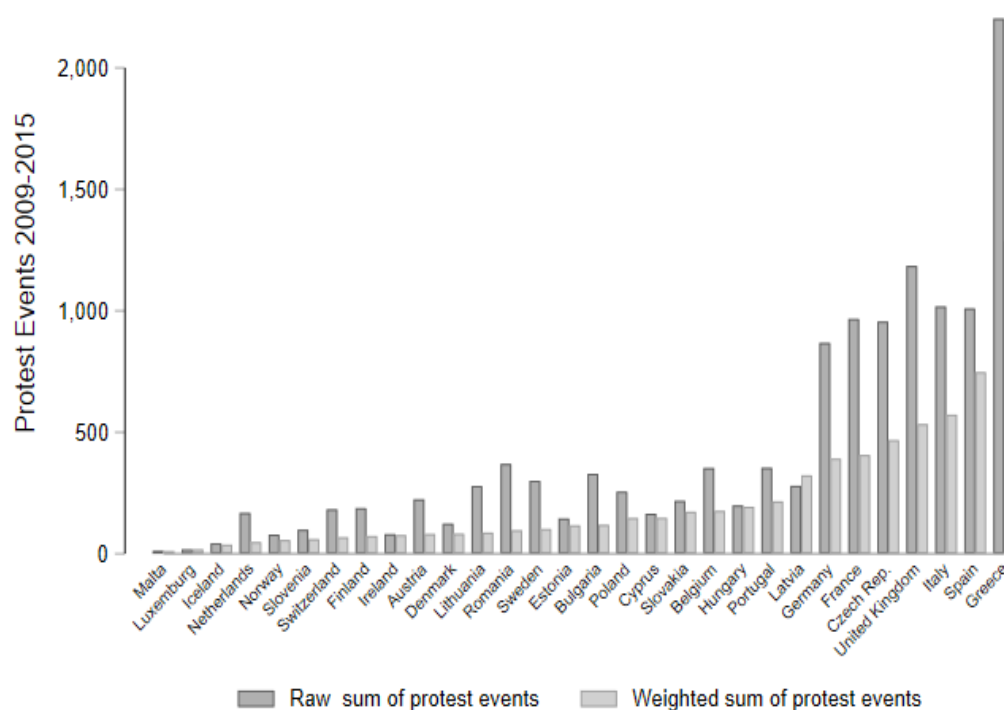
Note: Greek observations are marked as diamonds and labeled according to their semester of measurement.  
Source: Eurobarometer.

#### *Contentiousness and protest: Protest events*

If profound economic collapse and political disillusionment lay at the heart of the Greek case, furious reaction to this decline was an accelerator of political restructuring. Moving from attitudes to behavior, protest—already at high levels prior to the crisis reached even higher peaks of intensity and duration throughout this period—particularly until 2012. The Greeks were often inspired by foreign developments in Spain and the Arab world, but frequently

surpassed the activity of their peers. Our project has collected both overall data concerning protest events throughout the period and concentrated data of protest events related to the bailouts for the four periods of contention I zoom in, the so-called contentious episodes (see chapter 3). On both counts, Greece stands out as a statistically significant outlier. *Figure 2-5* compares protest events, weighted and unweighted,<sup>1</sup> across 30 European countries that formed the basis of our protest event database.

*Figure 2-5: Sum of protest events in European countries, 2009–2015*



Notes: The dark gray column shows unweighted number of events. The light gray shows sum of events weighed by the log of country population, the varying probability of sampling the country in international news agencies and the presence of English-speaking news agencies in any country. Source: POLCON.

The comparison to other EU countries again reveals Greek peculiarity. Greece is evidently the biggest producer of protest across continent, while other bailed-out countries, like Portugal and Ireland or crisis-afflicted ones like Spain, four times the size of Greece and with

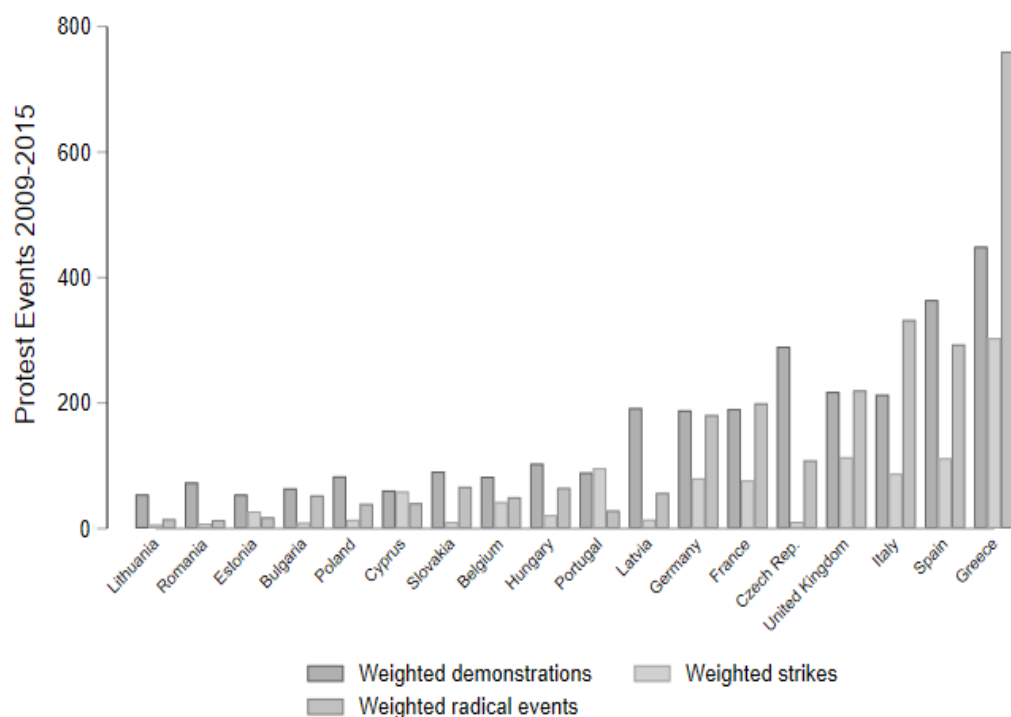
<sup>1</sup> See chapter 3 for weight descriptions.



similar levels of unemployment, trail significantly behind. This contradicts the frequent finding in the literature that the size of a region or country is critical to its protest activity (Biggs 2018; Hibbs 1973; Beissinger 2002). Greece is thus revealed as a deviant case also in terms of the relationship between protest and population size, an anomaly that preceded the crisis however (Hamann, Johnston, and Kelly 2013).

This is a consistent result in almost all major categories of protest action, not some peculiarity due to some action form innovation in the country. As shown in *Figure 2-6*, the Greek case contains the highest weighted number of all of demonstrations, strikes, and radical events.<sup>2</sup>

*Figure 2-6: Weighted number of demonstrations, strikes and radical events*



Note: Only countries with at least 50 weighted actions of any type are included. Source: POLCON.

<sup>2</sup> Radical events signify the sum of confrontational events, including occupations, blockades and violent events, such as riots, the classic form of Greek protest.

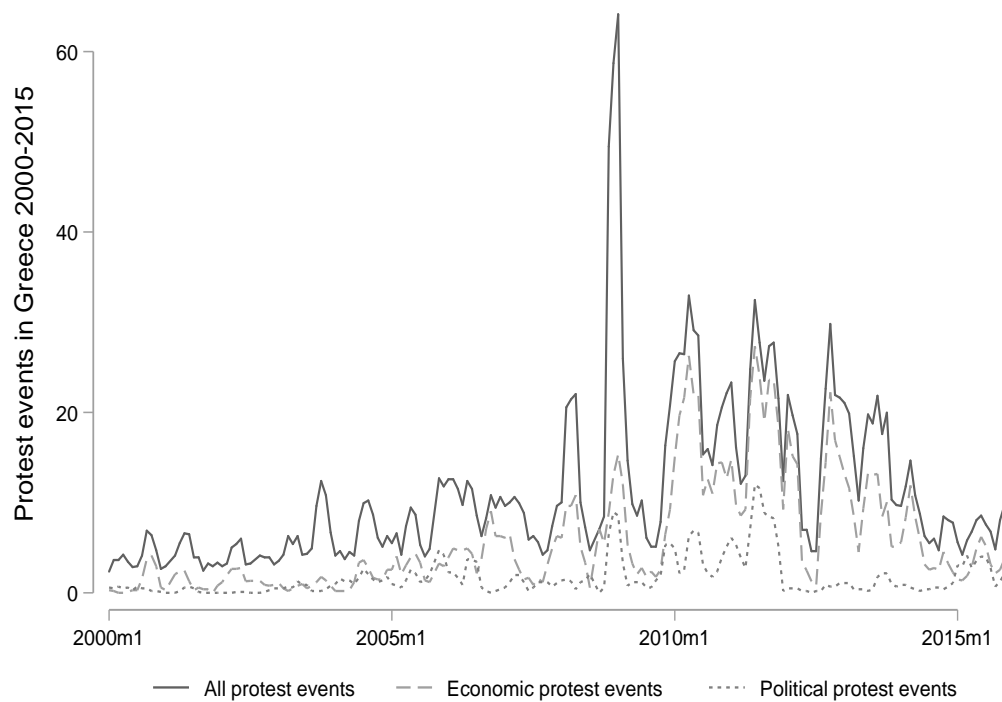
During this period, Greece produced more absolute protest activity than countries with four to eight times its population, such as similarly indignant Spain or Germany. Insisting on the comparison with Spain, it is noteworthy that there were approximately twice as many protest events during this period in Greece than Spain, despite the similar depths of unemployment and political turbulence and the fact that Spain is home to 40 million people compared to the ten millions of Greece.

The unusual intensity of Greek protest has been noted before (Hamann, Johnston, and Kelly 2013; Andronikidou and Kovras 2012), forcing us to justify our focus on this period. *Figure 2-7* portrays the reason, showing that Greek protest was significantly and persistently elevated during the first years of the bailout era. The average number of annual recorded protest events is 130 events for the 2000-2007 period before the crisis, 356 for the 2008-2009 period when the Great Recession broke out<sup>3</sup>, 412 for the 2010-2012 first bailout period and 226 for the 2013-2015 final period, past the 2012 elections, showing a sustained rise in the quantity of protest events during the first three episodes examined in the thesis.

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<sup>3</sup> Additionally, the 2008-2009 average number of daily protests, and the huge surge in 2008 depicted in *Figure 2-7* specifically is mostly non-economic protest, centred on riots erupting as the consequence of the shooting of a young teenager by police in central Athens.

*Figure 2-7: 3-month rolling average of weighted protest events, economic-related and political-related protest events in Greece (2000–2015)*



Source: POLCON.

Greek protest overall between 2009 and 2015 incorporated 18 percent of total European protest, 14 percent of all European demonstrations, and 25 percent of all European strikes and radical protest events, the country taking the gold medal effortlessly in all categories of the protest Olympics<sup>4</sup>. Radical actions were the dominant action form, almost double in size to the number of demonstrations and strikes. This particular action mix was unique across European countries, as no other nation manifested such a penchant for violence.

<sup>4</sup> This refers to weighted categories of events. Unweighted events diminish the relative share of the Greek case in all categories, but by a small margin (typically 1–1.5 percentage points). Its relative standing as first in all protest categories does not change.

### *Contentiousness and protest: Contentious episodes*

My analysis focuses on four contentious episodes (CEP), periods of elevated protest around a disputed policy proposal, in which we trace the sequences of actions and interactions of the government, challengers in the street and other third parties (see chapter 3 for further details about CEP data collection and design). When comparing Greek to other contentious episodes, the Greek episodes again emerge as outliers in terms of not only protest, but also the type of interactions between government and challengers and the role of foreign parties. The first three episodes are the most egregious in this respect. In their intensity, radicalism, duration and breadth they stand apart from most other episodes coded in this dataset. There were more participants in contentious acts, more violent confrontations, more protracted standoffs and more frequent interactions between government, challengers and other parties than almost anywhere else, on a relative and often absolute scale. Events in Greece comprise 20 percent of total events coded in our contentious episodes database, which includes twelve countries. As shown in *Table 2-1*, Greece corresponds to most of the codes in almost all categories.

*Table 2-1: Greek contentious episodes in comparison*

Case	Challenger Mobilization (%) <sup>+</sup>	Strikes/ Demos	Diversity of Actors*	Intrl. Actors	Gvnt. Persistence (%) <sup>**</sup>
Greece	65.6	184	17.2	239	84.8
Average, excl. GR	43.2	32	13.2	37	71.9
Maximum, excl. GR	66.2 (ES)	78 (ES)	17.4 (IE)	69 (HU)	87.4 (ES)
Of Total (Rank)	28.9 (1)	34.6 (1)	- (2/IE)	37.2 (1)	19.0 (1)

+Challenger mobilization is the share of challenger events in which the challenger explicitly mobilizes, rather than threatening to do so.

\*Diversity of challengers is measured by the inverse Simpson index, a measure similar to the effective number of parties, essentially measuring the effective number of actors, based on the counts of their events and the probability that any two events in the dataset are performed by the same actor.

\*\*Government persistence is simply the share of government actions in which the government states that it will stay the course and implement its policy plan.

Greece has the second-most number of codes of government events and the most where the government ignores or represses challengers, despite continued protest. Continuous protest may be an understatement, as Greek protest is overwhelmingly more frequent and possibly massive than in most countries. The plurality of demonstrations and strikes occurred in Greek contentious episodes, along with the vast majority of violent and confrontational protest events. While the government did not concede much, the challengers were also unrelenting; as shown in *Table 2-1*, Greece was home to slightly below 30 percent of European mobilization at the time. Similar to only Spain in these characteristics and massiveness, almost 66 percent of the challenger events are about challenger mobilization, in contrast to other countries where threats, negotiation, concessions, withdrawals and other challenger behavior is more prominent.

The outlier characteristics do not end here. Greece famously became a European battleground during the Eurozone crisis, the epicenter of the fight over austerity. The incidence of coded events by third actors is also at its highest here and the bulk of those events concern statements, reactions and nudges by international actors (i.e., foreign governments, European institutions, the IMF or all of them together as “the Troika”). In fact, other civil society agents, like NGOs, business and professional associations etc. are as likely to appear as challengers in Greece as they are to appear in our codes as third parties. It is the preponderance of international actors that inflates the diversity of actors in Greece.

*Politics: Party-system fragmentation, electoral volatility and party rise and collapse*

The economic crisis, protest surge and attitudinal mood souring culminated in the near-complete restructuring and reformation of the Greek political and party systems. The watershed moment were the elections on 6 May 2012, when the indignation of voters found its expression in the polls. The first 2012 election is one of the most turbulent elections in the post-

war history of Europe, as captured by the measure of electoral volatility. Emanuele (2015) measures electoral volatility in three ways for Western European democracies after the war. The Greek election of 2012 is a clear outlier in all of them, ranking as the most volatile election in post-war Europe in terms of total volatility<sup>5</sup> and the elections of June 2012 and January 2015 are also more turbulent than 90 percent of all 364 post-war elections in Western and Southern Europe from 1946 to 2018. Therefore, before the closing act of the September 2015 elections, three elections in the top 10 percent of most volatile elections over 70 years had been conducted in Greece. The only similar sequence can be found in 1950's France, before the collapse of the Fourth Republic, in a presidential, personalized system of elections in which parties were easily discarded.

Volatility grew both in terms of vote switching between existing parties, as Syriza profited from the collapse of PASOK to go initially from 4 to 16 percent but also in terms of the rise of previously non-existent or fringe parties, particularly in the right end of the political spectrum, where Golden Dawn and ANEL received a combined 18 percent in the May 2012 elections, while New Democracy lost 15 percent of the vote. The meteoric rise and gravitational pull of Syriza and the collapse of PASOK accounts for the volatility in subsequent elections, as Syriza climbed almost by ten percentage points in each of the two next elections, reaching 28 percent a month later, in June 2012, and 36 percent in January 2015, while PASOK halted its decline at 4.7 percent in 2015. New Democracy quickly rebounded after its historic low in May 2012 and gained 11 percentage points of vote share in the month until the June 2012 elections. Meanwhile, new parties kept appearing and disappearing. In 2012, the new party of the center-left, DIMAR, climbed to 6 percent, only to be wiped out of the electoral map in

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<sup>5</sup> Emanuele (2015) counts total volatility as the sum of three different volatility measures, the first caused by switching between parties entering and exiting the party system, the second by switching between existing parties and the third by exchange of votes between fringe parties that do not receive more than 1 percent of the vote. Entry and exit from the party system are also delineated by surpassing or falling below the 1 percent threshold.

2015. Potami, a centrist liberal party, replaced the gap left by DIMAR, appearing out of nowhere in 2015 to get 6 percent of the vote. The fringe party—the Union of Centrists, fueled by the protest vote—finally managed to sneak into parliament in September 2015 after 20 years of existence in the nocturnal television frequencies of Greece.

Fragmentation, then, as captured by the effective number of parties,<sup>6</sup> was a major theme of the Greek party system. The measure jumped from 3.2 effective parties in 2009, when five parties were in parliament, to 9.0 in May 2012—the period of maximum fragmentation—when eight parties entered parliament and two missed the threshold by only 0.1 percent. It then quickly contracted to 5.2 in the following election on June 2012 and fell further to 4.5 in 2015. After this time, it remained stable, as Syriza and New Democracy increased and consolidated their vote shares, even if the number of parties in parliament remained at eight after the latest elections.

The fragmentation of the Greek party system is not unique, as there are countries like Belgium and the Netherlands with a similar number of parties in parliament or effective number of parties at certain points in their post-war history. The outlier status of Greece in this regard lies in the abruptness and velocity of change in the index, which tripled in three years and then halved in a month. The upwards change of 5.79 in the effective number of parties between the 2009 and May 2012 elections is the largest such change in the index in post-war Europe, more than double the next largest one, that of a 2.62 increase in the last Dutch elections of 2017 or the 2.59 increase in the Danish 1973 elections. The only comparable drift takes place in Belgium, which goes from four effective parties in 1965 to nine in 1981 and ten in 1999. This party-inflation process is however due to the “duplication” of parties in Belgium along

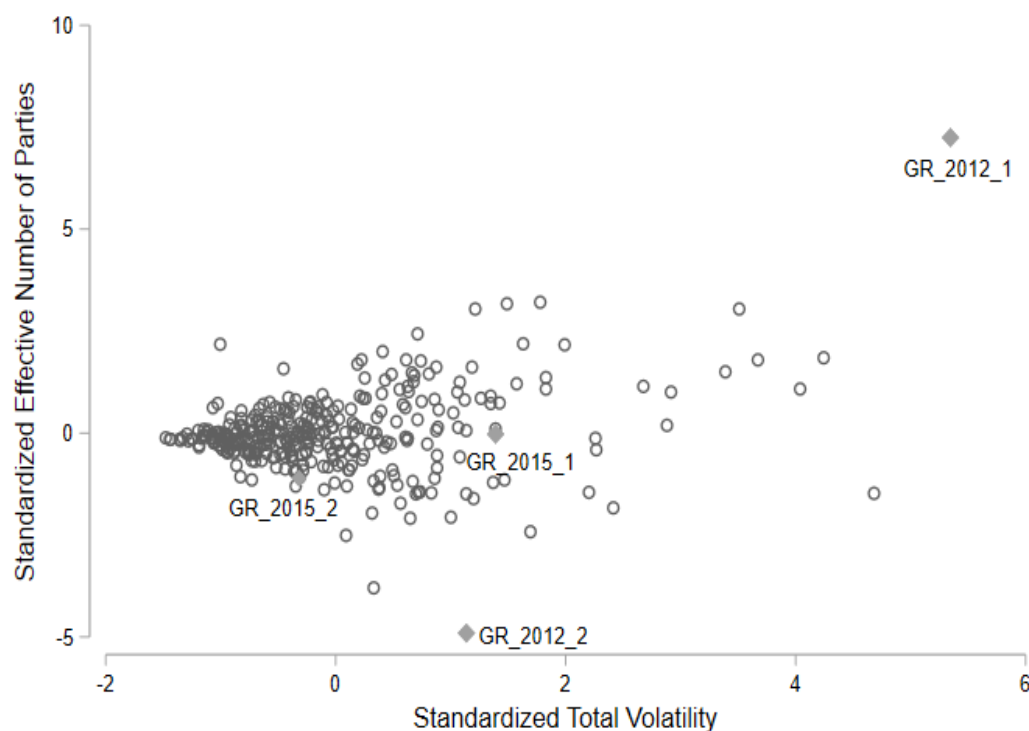
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<sup>6</sup> This is measured based on the vote share of each party for all parties acquiring at least 2 percent of the vote. Measuring it based on parliamentary seats instead would produce smaller changes but would also not correctly portray the electoral fragmentation in Greece and elsewhere, due to the disproportionality of the electoral law. In May 2012, one-fifth of the votes was not represented in parliament.

linguistic lines and unrolled over decades rather than mere years. Similarly, the downwards contraction in the index by 3.75 parties in the subsequent election, only one month after the first 2012 election is the largest contraction recorded in Western Europe, followed by a 2.88 contraction again in the Netherlands in 1977 and then a 1.87 decrease in Italy in 2008.

The exceptional character of the Greek case—particularly the twin elections of 2012—can be seen in *Figure 2-8*, where total electoral volatility and change in effective number of parties are cross-plotted. The May 2012 Greek elections stand as a “black swan”, a true supernova that dwarfs all post-war electoral upheavals.

*Figure 2-8: Standardized total volatility versus change in effective number of parties.*



Notes: Data for 364 Western European elections, 1946–2018. Sources: (Gallagher and Mitchell 2005; Emanuele 2015).

The most similar upsets, combining fragmentation and volatility, were also found in Southern Europe during the Eurozone crisis: Italy (in 2013), Spain (2015) and France (2017). The only other close examples are Italy in 1994 and Denmark in 1973. However, the Greek



explosion in May 2012 was at least one scale of magnitude larger. It is additionally unique due to the sequence of immense fragmentation followed by the fastest consolidation of an electoral system in modern Europe, all within a month and a half.

Furthermore, it should be noted that other countries with a similar number of parties, effective or actual, typically have a proportional electoral system, like in the Netherlands or close to one, like in Belgium. The Greek electoral system in contrast is heavily tilted toward majoritarianism, as the winner of the elections is rewarded with one-sixth of parliamentary seats. This peculiar electoral system is the final piece of Greek exceptionalism. It is a mixed system of representation, which functions as a purely proportional system for the 250 seats and then awards the final 50 to the election winner<sup>7</sup>. The system, while masquerading as a mixed or proportional system is heavily majoritarian. The 50-seat bonus ensures a winner-takes-all mentality, where first position is crucial for forming a government. It is almost mathematically impossible to form a government without the first party, given that the two extremist parties in parliament, the Communist Party (KKE) and Golden Dawn (GD) occupy approximately 40 seats and either they do not want to cooperate with anyone (KKE) or no one wants to cooperate with them (GD).

### *Greek exceptionalism*

All aspects of the Greek phenomenon therefore appear as distinct outliers in recent European history and politics. This is summarized in *Table 2-2* for various measures for most of the phenomena mentioned in this chapter. Economic collapse equivalent to the Great Depression in the 1930s was followed by extreme changes in political attitudes and behavior. People came out on the streets in greatest force than ever before and at certain points we have

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<sup>7</sup> The proportional part applies to the country as a whole, not to electoral districts. District seats are adjusted so that each party receives as many seats as its national share.

recorded more protest events in Greece than for most North-Western European countries combined. Vote behavior changed in the most violent way recorded in post-war Europe. The whole tunnel of causation through which we typically understand political change underwent radical transformation, all the way from the most distal inputs in terms of economics to the outcomes in terms of party-system change.

As such, the Greek case is worth studying for three reasons. First, it constitutes an “extreme case” in multiple ways, one in which we observe several institutional, behavioral and attitudinal measurements occupying the fringes of their distribution, even compared to other countries facing an acute economic crisis (Seawright and Gerring 2008). Such an obvious anomaly is worth studying in its own right. The changes I documented, and most importantly their combination, were far outside the possibility horizon of recent Western European politics before they happened. The cause of this turbulence, the description of the sequence of events is something that can contribute to the understanding of how those extreme values came to be.

*Table 2-2: The place of Greece in the distribution of select measurements (2009–2015).*

Measure	Z-score	Z-score Percentile
Satisfaction with Democracy, 3-year change (2011)	−4.50	99
Satisfaction with EU, 3-year change (2012)	−2.84	99
Trust in parliament, 3-year change (2012)	−2.83	99
Trust in government, 3-year change (2012)	−2.77	99
Log of weighted protest events, 2009–2015	2.08	95
Log of weighted strikes, 2009–2015	1.96	95
Log of weighted violent events, 2009–2015	2.38	98
Complexity of contentious episode sequences	2.25	95
Standardized change in effective number of parties, 2009–2012	7.25	99
Standardized electoral volatility, 2012	5.34	99

Source: Compiled by author

The second reason for studying Greece is the study of accelerated and condensed politics. Akin to revolutionary times, political time in Greece was condensed and change was not only enormous but also incredibly fast. A huge decline in political trust was followed by a forceful surge in the opposite direction when Syriza was elected. The extreme fragmentation in May 2012 was succeeded by sudden condensation in June. Greece is a typical case of accelerated politics, within which much of the social structure that maintains political structures melts away. Political linkages, established routines of parliamentary and government operation, and patterns of protest all gradually or abruptly eroded and were reshaped under the pressure of the economic crisis. This invites us to use the case to study institutional and protest patterns during periods of condensed political time. It also beckons us to ponder the classification of the case. Should we think of Greece as an extreme case, one in which is separated to its modern European peers by a quantitative gap, or as a deviant case, one in which normal mechanisms and processes governing political life are substantially altered?

The reader might contend that the answer is readily available. A deeper, more encompassing economic crisis than elsewhere in Europe caused more intense political responses and turbulence in Greece. It was a perfect storm, one within which economic malaise, a tradition of unruly protest, turbulent politics and nationalist feelings combined to destroy the traditional Greek political and party systems.

But the mere invocation of this combination of circumstances summons the third reason for studying Greece during that time. It is not only to examine peculiar patterns in institutional and protest politics, but also how they combined with each other and how contingency and timing might have led to different counterfactuals. Most scholars of Greek politics, with some notable exceptions (Aslanidis and Marantzidis 2016; Kanellopoulos et al. 2017; Kouki 2018; Kotronaki 2018), treat the electoral and protest arenas as relatively distinct and study them separately or briefly touch on their mutual impact. However, there is a distinct impression that

sustained mobilization was linked to profound electoral change. It is worth asking whether this case can teach us something about the mechanisms of interaction between electoral and protest arenas.

Studying the mechanism of interaction between protest and elections and the dynamics of institutional failure that rendered them ineffective in managing the profound political crisis that befell them, calls into question the certainty that economic determinism was the ultimate causal mechanism. In supernova politics, under the extreme intensity of newfound political pressures, crisis assumes its literal Greek meaning: that of judgment, of decision. Standing at a fork in the road, agents had to choose a direction and I hope to show that an alternative, counterfactual path was possible, one in which Greece did not explode as spectacularly as it did. Economic collapse might have been a necessary condition, but not a sufficient one. Without miscommunication and misunderstanding in the interactions of the main protagonists and bravado and luck from their challengers, as well as a host of opportune circumstances and in general a particular combination of structure, agency and contingency, the Greek star would have probably faded more slowly and smoothly. Having established the outlier character of Greece therefore, I now move to present the data and methodological approach of the thesis that will allow me to dissect the phenomenon, followed by the theoretical concepts required for such an undertaking.

### 3 Methodology and data

#### *Main research questions and methods*

This thesis deploys a multi-method approach, utilizing content analysis, statistical and qualitative methods when appropriate. However, it mainly relies on qualitative methods and the backbone of the thesis is a detailed narrative (George et al. 2005; A. Bennett and Elman 2009), constructed based on our contentious episode database and the theoretical framework presented in the next chapter.

The thesis is largely inductive; it does not explicitly test a theory of social movements or party systems, but aims to understand the sequence of events that allowed for extraordinary outcomes in both categories to occur in Greece. It is therefore the study of a deviant case, as detailed in the previous chapter, the aim being to inductively develop a theoretical framework from the analysis itself, something pursued further in the following chapter.

Evidently, this is a within-case analysis, occupied with the interactions of social movements with institutional, party-system dynamics in Greece in two phases; the long first two bailouts involving the associated protest wave (Tarrow 1989; Koopmans 1993, 2007; Karyotis and Rüdig 2018; Altiparmakis and Lorenzini 2018) and eventual collapse of the Greek party-system in 2012 and the short third bailout and the summer of 2015. Among all the phenomena examined in the case selection chapter, I am most occupied with the three most relevant to political science and the questions that flow from them:

1. Why did the Greek party-system collapse and exhibit such extraordinary volatility in 2012?
2. What was the contribution of contentious action to this collapse?
3. Why did this electoral volatility and social movement activity not resurface in 2015?

To answer these questions, my approach closely resembles process tracing methodologies (George et al. 2005; Box-Steffensmeier et al. 2009; Collier 2011). I develop an

extensive and detailed narrative of Greek contention and party-system developments trying to identify the mechanisms and processes that precipitated the phenomena of party-system collapse, re-stabilization and the mediating role of social protest. In this case, I am mostly interested in recreating the causal dynamics that led to the outcomes of the Greek explosion in mobilization and electoral turbulence and as such the thesis is mostly inductive or “theory-building” (Beach 2017). Existing theories on social movements and their interactions with institutional dynamics will be invoked when examining the theoretical framework, but the thesis is focused mostly on *uncovering* mechanisms and processes, given the extremity and outlier status of the case, rather than *testing* them.

I use a bricolage of evidence and mixed methods, rather than relying on a strict quantitative/qualitative approach. In what follows, I utilize press/textual evidence, quantitative/survey data and secondary literature to pinpoint the path along which the Greek party-system disintegrated at such a rapid pace and to explain the decisions of the protagonists at crucial moments. A centerpiece in this process is tracing the co-evolution of public polling (attitudinal and opinion data) with the flow of events and contentious episodes documented here, trying to locate critical moments—turning points (Abbott 2001) for the Greek party system. Then, I delve deeper into the events of those moments, the protagonists’ choices in them, and the mechanisms that link them to what preceded and what followed.

I break down the overall period of the crisis, from 2009 to 2015, in distinct *episodes*: periods of potentially heightened contention following the announcement of a policy proposal by a government. The narrative is not an unbroken, continuous chronological stream, but is structured around those short periods and the contrast between them. This follows a process-tracing methodology, as the episodes are linked to each other and are not independent observations. The aim of contrasting them is not to draw inferences about the differences or similarities of the different episodes, but to understand the evolution of contentious action and

its effect on institutional politics. I sometimes look for evidence that could help support my arguments in periods outside the timeframe of the episodes, but I mostly contain my narrative within them and the most important institutional events immediately following them.

Unlike more formal or advanced process tracing methodologies however, I do not presuppose the uncovering of *causal* mechanisms and processes that fully account for the Greek case. There is but one case, Greece, and while in one sense I am fortunate that material for it abounds due to extensive coverage, it is still possible that the pieces can be rearranged in different ways and different narratives could surface, perhaps emphasizing other aspects of the crisis and bringing forth alternative syntheses. In this case, theory is to a degree underdetermined by data, and my epistemological approach is inference to the best explanation. If someone can provide a better interpretation of the sequence of events, I am content to cede the point.

Nevertheless, I and a team of researchers have gathered a rich bounty of evidence that helped me navigate the contours of the Greek case: a collection of coded press coverage of the Greek crisis, covering protest events, contentious episodes and elections has been assembled throughout our common project for Greece and other countries. However, due to the international spotlight and the thickness of action, it is in virtually every case richer for Greece. The data marshaled come from heterogeneous sources and have mostly been collected through the POLCON project<sup>8</sup> but also beyond it.

Before I expand on the theoretical framework and expectations of the thesis, I would like to present the project data, even if the curious reader should refer to POLCON project documentation and manuscripts for further detail. Nevertheless, some explanation of what the data represents and how it has been collected is necessary to understand what follows. This is

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<sup>8</sup> POLCON is the codename for the project on “Political Conflict in Europe in the Shadow of the Great Recession”. For further information, see <https://www.eui.eu/Projects/POLCON>.

because the analysis is organized around the sampling of evidence from four databases with parliamentary archives and predominantly press archives.

The contentious episode database, which forms the backbone of the thesis, along with the theoretical framework, is analyzed first. The database tracks the interplay between the actions of the Greek government, its challengers, and third-party actors (domestic and foreign). As such, it acts as a structuring device for the narrative, zooming in periods when highly contentious policies were advanced. The contentious episode database therefore provides detailed evidence about sequences and interactions between the protest and institutional arena. It is complemented by the protest event analysis data (described immediately afterwards), which focuses more on the protest side and covers the entire period studied here, even outside the specific episodes. The protest event analysis data helps confirm our choice of episodes as periods of exceptionally high contention and clarify the nature of protest, as it contains more detail concerning the evolution of protest activity and claims.

Inevitably, as the thesis is concerned with electoral volatility and party-system upheaval, some more detailed evidence about the institutional side is required than that provided by the contentious episode database. I draw on two sources. On the supply side, I use core sentence analysis, focusing on what I consider the most critical elections immediately following our episodes, those of May 2012 and September 2015. The core sentence analysis provides a mapping and overview of political conflict of those elections and allows us to survey how the parties responded, adopted or ignored the contentious action and claims of the studied episodes. Additionally, I draw on demand-side data, mostly survey data from poll companies. This I use to examine how public attitudes and voting choices had been affected and altered by the preceding mobilization and the new bailout framework. Moreover, the project has kept an extensive database of other quantitative macro-data, such as aggregate voting intentions and attitudes toward the government which also are frequently invoked to complete the puzzle.



Furthermore, as contingency features prominently in this thesis, a detailed event database has been utilized to complement and double-check the events recorded in the contentious episode database. I do not present this database extensively, as it is simply a collection of institutional events, important enough to feature on the international press, comprising elections, cabinet reshuffles, resignations, scandals, large protests and policy events. This database has not been used extensively, other than to ascertain that no major events were missed in the narrative.

Finally, the parliamentary archives—and also in particular, those of the press— both online and in print, feature prominently in my effort to triangulate the causes of the Greek party-system collapse. Beyond being the main sources for data collection, I have also drawn, in the fashion of open-ended analysis, on these sources for contextual richness, revisiting them and going through them in depth to understand the motivations and preferences of the protagonists, the context within which they operated, and to acquire a fundamentally richer picture of the sequence of events than those provided by the more barebones databases. Without reading the opinion pages and the day-to-day coverage of events for our episodes, I would not have been able to appreciate the mental calculus of protagonists and this thesis would be desperately shorter, poorer and more brutish.

I proceed with a more detailed description of the most important databases. As noted, the contentious episode one is a structural pillar of the thesis, so this is where I start. I go on to describe definitions of our basic units of analysis, the scope of the data, case and sample selection, and the data format and output.

### *Contentious episodes<sup>9</sup>*

The contentious episode database is premised on our definition of the contentious episode, inspired by Tilly's concept of a "continuous stream of interactions regarding policy-specific proposals between the government and its challengers, involving also some other actors" (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001, 24). The structure of our data is based on the interaction between different stylized actors. We particularly focus on contentious government proposals and the claims made on the government by challengers, as well as the intervention, mediation or support of any side by third actors who do not engage in contentious action.

Episodes, then, are composed of individual actions by one of the three stylized actors: the *government*, the *challengers*, and *third parties* (these will be discussed in greater detail below). These actions are typically triggered by previous actions of some other participants in the episode. We call a sequence a series of actions in which each component action is triggered by a previous action. In adopting this terminology, we follow Tilly (2008, 10), who characterizes episodes very broadly as "bounded sequences of continuous interaction".

Kriesi, Hutter and Bojar (forthcoming) have a two-fold ambition in their conceptualization of contentious episodes; first, to describe the 'middle ground' of contentious performances (Tilly 2008), focusing neither on the micro-level of the event, nor on the macro-level of the episode or the campaign, but on the sequence of events and the unearthing of causal mechanisms and patterns of interactions between participants and claim-makers in contentious performances. Their goal is to rigorously analyze the dynamics of contentious performances and detect recurring patterns in them.

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<sup>9</sup> Most of the description of contentious episodes conceptualization and operationalization is drawn from (Kriesi, Hutter, and Bojar forthcoming).

By necessity, my goals are not entirely shared with them. In my use of the project's contentious episode database, my aim is not so much to uncover formal patterns of interaction and sequences that repeat themselves, but to use the contentious episode interactions in the other way Tilly suggested, as the backbone of a structured narrative: a "vantage point" from which I dive into the *micro-level* of the *event* and the *macro-level* of the *campaign* as the narrative requires. My focus is not so much on the formalized sequence of events, but on the reconstruction of a skeletal narrative that allows deeper qualitative assessment of critical events and broader linkage between episodes, insofar as they arguably constitute a cohesive and sequential *campaign*. The Greek episodes themselves may have been picked as separate instances of an austerity package, but they are intimately connected and chronological as well as narrative progression from one to the next requires mapping the different pathways and plots the Greek drama took or might have taken.

In revisiting the interactions, the progress or regression of contentiousness, the change in action forms and other characteristics of the Greek episodes, I do not seek causal mechanisms on the meso- and episode-centered-level of contentious performances. Instead, I seek to synthesize a narrative that uses the contentious episode data as a springboard. This allows me to compare and connect the episodes as components of an overall campaign, track the expansion of conflict in terms of actors, claims and contentiousness, zoom in to the critical turning points and zoom out, pivoting toward the sketching of medium-term mechanisms and processes that link the institutional and protest arena. I retain the focus on the interactions, but an overly formal treatment would be inopportune.

There is an overwhelmingly dominant mode of interaction in the Greek episodes: conflict, as a government unable to yield clashes headstrong with challengers unwilling to surrender. My focus lies in the progression of this conflict, in the different modes it was expressed and carried. Much like Lichbach (2005), I focus on the "links" of mechanisms, on

the structured historical narrative that supports and allows theorizing about processes and mechanisms. This necessitates a more qualitative treatment, as there is but one country case with five episode and the changing hues and colorations of conflict and the inter-episode progression are not operationalized in our data. This narrative, then, is structured and complemented by our quantitative contentious episode, with additional supplements by protest event data, core sentence analysis, secondary literature, polls and surveys and finally trudging through the newspaper archive. With this in mind, I move on to the description of the elements of our contentious episode database, starting with the actors.

### *Actors*

Each episode starts with the introduction of a policy proposal into the public debate by the government. In our framework, the *government* includes all public authorities linked to the government, i.e. the head of government and other members of the cabinet or the government spokesperson. Usually, the political parties and MPs of the governing coalition are also part of the stylized government. In some cases, however, a party of the governing coalition may be divided on the proposal and this division may have relevant repercussions for the overall conflict. In these cases, the dissenting voices from the governing party may be coded as third parties or even as part of the challenger coalition. This was often the case in Greece, and therefore the categorization of MPs and parties varies based on their behavior throughout an episode. MPs and parties who eventually left the government party or voted against the government proposal were placed in the “challenger” category throughout the episode, even before their dissent became overt. Particularly for the case of the technocratic government, participating parties and MPs were listed as third parties, as they supported (but did not identify with) the government, feeling free to distance themselves from it or make demands to it as if they did not directly belong to it.

The *challengers* include any actors who oppose the government's proposal at least partly outside the routine, institutionalized arenas of interest articulation by means of sustained and coordinated collective action, possibly *on behalf of* other opposing groups, be they unions, parties, a public interest group (NGO) or a social movement organization (SMO). Note that this definition follows the general approach in social movement research and excludes actors who voice their opposition only in routine ways in institutionalized channels, such as the national parliaments or tripartite bodies of interest representation (these actors are considered third parties). Instead, typical street action—protesting, demonstrating, striking, rioting or occupying—is included but also action such as petitions, hunger strikes and other efforts that make a public claim on the government. Additionally, we coded as challengers those institutional actors that deviated from their institutionally expected role by performing dissenting *actions*, involving direct linkages to other challenger groups. For example, the Syriza President of Parliament who filibustered parliamentary proceedings during the vote on the third bailout engaged in institutionally deviant behavior, in support of challengers to that bailout, and hence was classified systematically as a challenger throughout the episode. Additionally, parliamentarians who voted against their party's proposal—a rare fact in the Greek parliamentary routine up to the bailout era—are also included in the challengers' category. Breaking parliamentary norms of government support and supporting challengers' claims meets the criteria for inclusion as challengers.

It must be stressed therefore that undertaking *action* is a pre-requisite for coding someone as a challenger throughout the episode. We do not brand dissenting MPs or other institutional figures as challengers if their dissenting rhetoric is not eventually accompanied by some sort of action within the episode timeline. Similarly, an opposition party that does not engage in some sort of contentious action is not classified as a challenger. Instead, in those cases, actors are either treated as part of the government (in the case of MPs), or as third parties

(in the case of other institutional officials and opposition parties). Actors are therefore not included in a fixed category throughout all episodes, but vary for each episode according to a combination of their relationship to the government and challengers and their action repertoire (or lack of it) in the context of a particular episode. We were however consistent *within* each episode, where the characterization of an actor as challenger or third party depended on his behavior and stayed constant throughout the episode, even when dissenting behavior had not been manifested yet.

The *third parties* in our codes are other actors who intervene and produce interactions with challengers and government, or try to mediate between the two, without engaging in claims-making or contentious action. Typically, European institutions and foreign governments, public and private interest groups form the bulk of this category, along with opposition parties that constrain their dissent to a discursive level.

We additionally break down the actors in different categories according to their more specific institutional characteristics and I further recode some of those categories for challengers specifically for the Greek case, creating a more useful ontology of challenger entities to analyse the Greek case. The three stylized actors are separated into domestic and international actors, within which international actors comprise political–institutional actors (government and government/opposition parties) and private and public interest groups (business/experts/media, NGO/SMO’s, unions). Not all of the extended categories fit perfectly into one of the three stylized group of actors, as actors in the same category can exhibit different relations and behavior toward the government proposal and this relationship and behavior can change over time. The breakdown of the actors into the three basic categories and the seven extended ones is provided in *Table 3-1* for all three stylized actors.

*Table 3-1: Relationship of stylized actors and institutional actor categories for the Greek contentious episodes*

Institutional actor category	Government	Challenger	Third party	Total
International	0.0	0.0	46.2	18.0
Government	97.6	0.4	3.3	26.2
Government parties	2.4	14.4	11.6	10.3
Business, experts, media	0.0	3.2	3.7	2.6
Opposition parties	0.0	12.1	32.1	16.9
NGOs, SMOs	0.0	15.3	1.9	6.2
Unions	0.0	54.7	1.2	19.9
Totals	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	336	472	517	1,325

Source: POLCON.

For challengers specifically, I reorganized the challenger categories to better fit the subtle differences between challenger organizations participating in the Greek campaign. The majority of Greek contentious actions was conducted under the umbrella of union mobilizations, so I felt it was important to differentiate between the levels of union actors, according to their place in the union hierarchy. Greece still possesses a relatively unitary union scene compared to the typical fragmented Southern European scheme, with a pyramid-like structure of low-level unions encompassed under the umbrella of the peak associations, GSEE and ADEDY. These two are the titular representatives of all private and public employees, respectively, even if in reality both unions mostly represent public sector workers (Matsaganis 2007). Low-level unions may operate at the level of the firm—or, more frequently, the sector—and thus represent a specific service or industry (for example, the Public Power Company employees at the firm level or the municipal workers or transport employees at the sectoral level).

I have thus created categories to differentiate between mobilizations of low-level unions (outside the context of a general strike or call of action from the encompassing unions) and mobilizations from the peak associations. Additionally, I created two extra categories for associations of highly-educated service professionals (lawyers, doctors, engineers) and another for associations of licensed professions, i.e. occupations which require a license, sold in an open market or regulated by government provisions to operate (taxi/truck drivers, pharmacists etc.). On top of unions, other types of challengers are parties of the radical left mobilizing in the streets or government rebels, challenging the government predominantly within institutions. Finally, I also have categories for business associations in the rare event they engage in contentious action. The composition of challenger actors per episode, along with mobilization forms, can be seen in *Table 3-2*.

*Table 3-2: Comparison of characteristics of contention across all Greek contentious episodes, challenger actor composition and mobilization types*

Episode	Share of events per actor, type and episode (%)							
Actor Type	Rad. Left	Gov. rebels	Peak assoc.	Base unions	Professionals	Indignados	Total	N
1 <sup>st</sup> Bailout	20.2	3.9	30.8	30.8	14.4	0.0	100.0%	104 (27.6)
Mid-Term	15.5	16.4	15.5	20.7	0.0	31.9	100.0%	116 (30.8)
2 <sup>nd</sup> Bailout	0.0	4.9	10.8	49.0	21.4	13.7	100.0%	102 (27.1)
3 <sup>rd</sup> Bailout	0.0	74.6	10.9	0.0	3.6	10.9	100.0%	55 (14.6)
Average	10.3	18.3	17.8	28.1	10.3	15.1		377 (100)
Mobilization	Strikes	Demonstrations	Confrontational	Violent	Other	Total	Total	
1 <sup>st</sup> Bailout	70.9	16.3	5.4	1.8	5.4	100.0%	55 (23.2)	
Mid-Term	30.4	62.3	1.4	1.4	4.3	100.0%	69 (29.1)	
2 <sup>nd</sup> Bailout	67.3	7.1	8.2	6.1	11.2	100.0%	98 (41.4)	
3 <sup>rd</sup> Bailout	6.7	66.7	0.0	0.0	26.7	100.0%	15 (6.3)	
Average	53.6	29.1	5.0	3.4	7.2		237 (100)	

Source: POLCON.



## *Actions*

Episodes, then, are composed of individual *actions* by one of the three stylized actors. These actions are typically triggered by previous actions of some other participants in the episode, hence creating a chain of *interactions* or *sequences*. In adopting this terminology, we follow (Tilly 2008) who characterizes episodes very broadly as “bounded sequences of continuous interaction”. Typically for Greek episodes, sequences tend to be lengthy and interactive; there is continuous back and forth between governments and challengers, in a ping-pong fashion, due to the high contentiousness of the Greek episodes and the salience of the Greek government’s proposal.

The types of action we code, termed their action repertoire, vary for each actor *substantively* and *procedurally*, depending on the relation of one type to other actors. Substantively, we code the way actions relate action to the government proposal (acceptance/refusal/amendment, etc.) and the procedural way this is handled (mobilization/repression/mediation, etc.). In detail, the actors can procedurally be coded as taking one of the actions presented in *Table 3-3* in the next page (Kriesi, Hutter, and Bojar forthcoming).

An action typology can be constructed from the abovementioned action codes. Specifically, we can examine how often each of the two main actors acts in a conflictive (repression/ignoring for government or mobilization for challengers) or cooperative way (negotiations/concessions from any party) and how often third parties support each side or mediate between them. Whenever substantive and procedural codes are conflicted, we prioritize the relationship indicated by the substantive codes. *Table 3-4* contains the frequency of conflictual and cooperative actions, revealing the almost exclusively conflictive nature of the Greek contentious episodes.

Table 3-3: Detailed action repertoires of the stylized actors

government	challenger	third party
<b>sticking</b>	<b>non-radical</b>	<b>taking sides</b>
<p>procedural</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• try to circumvent legal barriers (e.g., by splitting up the proposal, shifting arenas)</li> </ul> <p>substantive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• unilaterally adopt the proposal</li> <li>• explicitly declare that it sticks to the proposal</li> </ul>	<p><b>procedural</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• constitute itself, a new type of actor is constituted to react to the proposal</li> <li>• threaten to mobilize (usually in the form of protest)</li> <li>• announce mobilization (clear date or setup of organizational infrastructure)</li> <li>• mobilize (non-radically)</li> </ul> <p>substantive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demand proposal withdrawal</li> <li>• demand proposal modification</li> <li>• shifts opposition to a more general level</li> </ul>	<p><b>procedural</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• support the government's action</li> <li>• oppose the challenger's action</li> <li>• oppose the government's action</li> <li>• support the challenger's action</li> </ul> <p>substantive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• support the government's proposal</li> <li>• oppose the challenger's demands</li> <li>• oppose government</li> <li>• support the challengers' demands</li> </ul>
repression	radical	
procedural	procedural	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• repress the challenger</li> <li>• depreciate/denounce/demonize the challenger</li> <li>• explicitly refuse to recognize the challenger as a relevant interlocutor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mobilize radically (demonstration, strikes, confrontation, violence)</li> </ul>	
concession	cooperative	mediation
<p>procedural</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• signal readiness to negotiate with the challenger</li> <li>• negotiate/organize hearings with the challenger</li> <li>• change its composition (e.g. responsible minister resigns)</li> </ul> <p>substantive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• doubt/consider concessions</li> <li>• modify the proposal in line with the demands of the challenger</li> <li>• withdraw the proposal</li> </ul>	<p>procedural</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• stop the action (explicitly declared) (e.g. calls off strike)</li> <li>• signal readiness to negotiate with the government</li> <li>• negotiate with the government</li> <li>• demobilize (disbands organizational infrastructures)</li> </ul> <p>substantive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• declares readiness to accept the proposal</li> <li>• accept the modified proposal</li> <li>• accept the original proposal</li> </ul>	<p>procedural</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mediate between the two (broker a negotiated solution)</li> </ul> <p>substantive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mediate between the two (propose modifications)</li> </ul>

Table 3-4: Action typology: distribution of events' types for Greek contentious episodes

Action (%)	1 <sup>st</sup> Bailout	Mid-Term	2 <sup>nd</sup> Bailout	3 <sup>rd</sup> Bailout	Total
Government, conflictive	22.5	22.3	21.2	20.1	21.6
Third party, pro-government	28.6	16.1	27.9	28.7	25.0
Government, cooperative	2.0	5.6	4.5	1.4	3.6
Third party, mediating	0.0	0.0	3.9	1.4	1.3
Challenger, cooperative	1.7	1.6	1.6	0.5	1.4
Third party, pro-challenger	11.6	18.0	9.9	22.0	14.8
Challenger, conflictive	33.7	36.4	31.1	25.8	32.2
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
N	294	305	312	209	1,120

Source: POLCON.

### *Episode periodization and episode pace*

I occasionally break down particular episodes into “phases” (i.e., different periods within an episode), based on the legislative/institutional procedure and the process of challenger mobilization. For example, I differentiate phases of episodes according to the time a legislative package was first announced to the first time it was introduced in concrete form in parliament or according to periods before the constitution of a special challenger and afterwards, as in the case of the emergence of the Greek Indignados. A critical measure to understand the differences between episode phases is the change in *episode pace* (i.e., the standardized number of events per day), in order to capture subtler changes in the dynamic of each episode.

### *Selection of contentious episodes*

The database originally contained data for Greece as well as eleven countries, four from each European region.<sup>10</sup> The cases were selected as representative of different “worlds” of Europe, in terms of political economy as well as crisis trajectory. As was detailed in chapter 2 on case selection, I focus on Greece because the country is a unique outlier in terms of the

<sup>10</sup> South, Northwest and Central-Eastern Europe.

frequency, size, and contentiousness of events. Within each country, we selected five contentious episodes (i.e., periods of expected contention), which were initiated by a government proposal. The government proposal was expected to initiate contention because it contained either austerity measures in four of the five episodes selected or a significant, contentious institutional change in the other one. We based our assessment on the major instances of potentially contentious legislative initiatives or the frequency with which a policy proposal was mentioned in the international press, the underlying assumption being that only very important proposals would break into the international scene. For each episode, we initiated the coding at the time that the government announced its plans and concluded it at the time the government voted the package. For Greece, the choice was relatively straightforward, because the three bailouts and the mid-term adjustment program were archetypes of “policy proposals at risk” (i.e., policy proposals with mobilizing potential, frequently invoked in the international press). This materialized in three of the four episodes, but not the last one.<sup>11</sup>

#### *Sources of contentious episodes*

The sources to produce the database was the press coverage of the selected period by a quality newspaper, in this instance *Ta Nea* [*Ta Néa*], a centrist newspaper, selected both because it had extensive coverage of government activity and policy change but was also likely to report on protest events. The selection of the articles was unfortunately somewhat heterogeneous; the crisis affected the newspaper as well and its archive went offline toward the end of our data collection. As such, the coded articles for the first, second and fourth episode were selected based on a keyword search of the print edition, containing words such as “austerity [λιτότητα]”, “measures [μέτρα]”, “bailout [μνημόνιο]”, other more topical terms (such as “mid-term adjustment [μεσοπρόθεσμο]” in the second episode, “multi-law bill

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<sup>11</sup> The institutional episode, the closure of ERT, is not covered in this thesis both for reasons of parsimony, but also because it is the least meaningful for the overall bailout narrative.

[πολυνομοσχέδιο]” in the second bailout) and one or two terms capturing protest, such as “strike [απεργία]” or “demonstration [διαδήλωση/συλλαλητήριο]”. In the third episode—the second bailout—as the online archive was no longer available when coding the last two months of the episode, we resorted to downloading the physical copy of the newspaper and going through the entire sections covering politics and society. We suspect there was no particular bias introduced by this choice; we could expect to find more events because we did an exhaustive read of the newspaper for the months of January–February 2012, but this is not reflected in our data, where both protest events and government activities are actually subdued compared to the contentious period of the previous two months.

Finally, in two episodes—the mid-term adjustment episode and the third bailout episodes—we have complemented our article selection by inserting the keywords in the online, rather than the print edition, of the newspaper, for completely different reasons in each case. In the mid-term adjustment episode, during the summer of the Greek Indignados, events were occurring at such a rapid pace that the print edition was missing significant chunks of protest activity due to the delay in reporting and the inability to cover everything. Therefore, we included some further articles from the online edition that were covering protests “live” and were richer in detail. In the third bailout case, we included the online edition search due to the scarcity of events, in order to make sure we did not miss rare instances of contention that could significantly change the outlook of the mobilization effort during that episode. Despite the search in the online edition, the results were meager and the outcome did not produce more than a couple of protest events.

The location and timing of the biggest protest events coincides well with the data presented by Diani and Kousis (2014) in their paper covering “large protest events”, reassuring us that we have not missed any important episodes. Our contentious episode data furthermore align well in terms of timing with our protest event data, collected separately and from other

sources, within which the episodes of contention constitute peaks of protest activity.<sup>12</sup> I move forward to the description of this complementary database that bridges the gaps between our contentious episodes.

### ***Protest event analysis***<sup>13</sup>

The protest event data is taken from the protest event analysis (PEA) conducted during the POLCON project (for further information on the data, coding methods, and natural language processing [NLP] processes, see: Lorenzini, Makarov, and Wueest forthcoming; Kriesi, Hausermann, and Lorenzini forthcoming; Altiparmakis and Lorenzini 2018). The database includes more than 30,000 protest events and covers 30 European countries over a sixteen-year period, from 2000 to 2015. The protest events are retrieved from multiple sources using a semi-automated method. We include ten news agencies that publish English-speaking newswires. PEA is a form of content analysis that allows the systematic collection, quantification and processing of large amounts of information on political protest across time and countries (Hutter 2014). Protest event data usually relies on newspaper coverage as the data source and builds on manual coding. Similarly, in our study we coded news content to measure publicly visible political protest. Because of the breadth and volume of the documents needed to be annotated for all countries and extensive time period, we developed NLP tools to identify newswires reporting about protest events in the countries and during the timeframe

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<sup>12</sup> This means the two databases align well in identifying peaks and valleys in protest. They align less well in their counts of forms of protest, with PEA showing a much higher preponderance of confrontational/violent events than CEP data, in which they are relatively rare (compare *Tables 3-2* and *3-5*). This is due to two particular reasons: PEA is more exhaustive in its definition of protest events, often disaggregating parts of a “single” protest event, such as a riot happening within a strike into multiple protest events. This is important because most violent events occurred within the context of a wider strike/demonstration. Second, PEA captures all protest events, while in the CEP database we only look for protest events related to the proposed policy, reducing the amount of detected protest. As such, I rely much more on the press archive than on the CEP database for detecting violent events.

<sup>13</sup> This section is mostly based on the description of protest event methodology found in (Lorenzini, Makarov, and Wueest forthcoming) as well as complementary documentation in (Kriesi, Hausermann, and Lorenzini Forthcoming; Altiparmakis and Lorenzini 2018).

that we cover, in order to reduce the amount of manual coding work left once articles were selected. In order to use NLP tools to deal with the feasibility challenge, we needed linguistic homogeneity. Hence, to respond to both challenges we chose to retrieve and annotate protest events from reports by ten English language news agencies. For the actual coding, we relied on human coders since the state of automated content analysis does not allow for reliable retrieval of the relevant variables, namely forms of action, issues, actors, numbers of events and numbers of participants.

Regarding the semi-automated method, our tools allow attribution of a probability score of reporting about protest events to each document. We combine two different classifiers (i.e., algorithms that identify documents or words as probable indicators of a protest event): a document classifier using a bag-of-words approach and an anchor classifier using event-mention detection tools. In so doing, we are able to attribute a probability score to each document to evaluate the likelihood that it reports about protest events. Then, we establish the optimal threshold to sample documents that report about protest. This means that we set a level above which we are more likely to find documents reporting about protest events and less likely to find irrelevant documents containing no protest events. This allows us to reduce the amount of time and resources required for manual coding because we are able to provide coders with documents that are very likely to report about protest events. The coders only had to deal with 22 percent of irrelevant documents (while in the whole universe they represented 95 percent).

In the manual coding, the goal was to retrieve information on all politically motivated unconventional actions in the selected countries and time period. To this end, we employed a simplified version of the PEA approach established by Kriesi (1995) and further developed by Hutter (2014). The first step in the manual coding procedure was the identification of relevant documents, that is, documents reporting on protest events that took place in one of the 30 countries that we study for the years 2000–2015.

Once the relevant documents were identified and the events singled out, the coders annotated the following variables for each event:

1. the date of the event (the day, month and year when it took place);
2. the location of the event (if possible not only the country but also the city);
3. the form of action, distinguishing between six main forms – demonstrations, blockades and occupations, strikes, petitions, violent actions and other action forms used as a residual category;
4. the topic of the protest: economic issues (distinguishing between public and private ones); environmental issues; cultural liberalism; cultural conservatism; regionalism; politics; xenophobia; and, again, a residual category covering all other issues; and
5. the actors participating in or organizing the protest event. In this last case, we were interested in the presence of political parties, trade unions, civil society organizations and specific occupational or social groups such as students or pensioners (see *Table 3-5* for details and numbers of events per type of event, issue and participant type).

We also annotated the number of participants. The total number of events for Greece amounts to 3,663. For each of these protest events, we code the exact date of the event (day, month, and year) and the location (city), as well as the types of actors who took part in the event, the issue(s) addressed, and the number of participants, even if this information is not consistently available.



*Table 3-5: Protest event types and number of each protest event type for Greece, 2000–2015.*

Form of action		% of events	
Demonstrations	demonstrations, marches, rallies, camps, meetings, vigils and other non-confrontational gatherings	33.6	
Strikes	industrial action of any kind (incl. work stoppages, pickets)	22.1	
Blockades and related act.	blockades, occupations, sit-ins, camps and other confrontational strategies	9.1	
Petitions	petitions, letters, consumer activism, boycotts, symbolic protests (performances)	3.1	
Violent protests	sabotage, riots, destruction of private or public buildings, bomb or arson attacks, violence against persons, clashes with police, cyber-attacks	27.3	
Other protests	All other action forms	4.8	
Total		100.0	
Issues			
Economy (private)	Economic claims addressed to firms/ employers: dismissal of staff, closure of firm/branch, labor conflict related to pay rise, pay cut etc.	9.5	
Economy (public)	Economic claims addressed to public institutions, e.g. welfare, budget policies, agricultural policies, labor regulation, state regulation of the economy	52.0	
Environment	Environmental protection, nuclear energy, other forms of energy production, infrastructure projects (e.g., transport), animal rights	1.4	
Cultural liberalism	Peace & war, nuclear weapons & military service, women, minority and LGBT rights, international solidarity, anti-racism and migrants rights	11.4	
Regionalism	Separatism, regional independence, protection of regional interests	0.5	
Cultural conservatism	Counter-mobilization to all aspects of cultural liberalism except for anti-racism and migrants' rights (which is in xenophobia)	1.1	
Xenophobia	Right-wing extremism, racist mobilization (against foreigners or ethnic minorities), anti-immigration	2.5	
Political	Representation, corruption, electoral reform, and institutional issues in general	15.8	
Other	All other issues not covered by the previous categories	5.8	
Total		100.0	
Actors			
Political parties	Left	e.g. Social Democrats, Greens, Communists	3.7
	Right	e.g. Liberals, Christian Democrats, Conservatives, etc.	1.0
	Unknown	Unknown or unclear political orientation	0.2
Trade unions	Public	Public sector unions	6.5
	Private	Private sector unions	2.0
	Both	Unions from public and private sectors	6.0
	Unknown	Unions for which sector is unknown	10.0
Social groups	Occupational	Workers, teachers, lawyers, etc.	25.9
	Students		5.5
	Pensioners		8.4
Total			69.2
N			3,663

Source: POLCON.

In the manual part of our coding, we code only half of the documents identified for Greece. In some countries the corpus of data was too big to annotate all of it, so depending on the number of documents we coded either 25, 50 or 100 percent of the documents. Greece belongs to the second category, with an average number of documents and thus half of the sampled documents were manually coded. To correct for the potential bias this sampling choice introduces and for the numbers to be comparable across countries, we adjusted for the different sampling probabilities. Accordingly, event numbers from countries where we drew a 0.50 sample, like Greece, were multiplied by a factor of two.

The unit of observation in our study (i.e., the protest event) is also weighed to take into account biases having to do with country size and sampling probability. Following the example of Beissinger (2002) and Beissinger and Sasse (2014), we decided to adjust the number of events according to the country size. The size of the population has important implications for the level of protest we report for a given country. We tested different ways of weighting for the country size, and it turned out that a natural logarithmic scale worked best. More precisely, we divided the number of events by the logarithm of the size of the country where the events took place. Accounting for population size *per se*, as Beissinger and Sasse (2014) do, is overcorrecting the data. The large countries are “penalized” too much, and protests in smaller countries become so prominent that all small countries are pushed into the upper half of the average rankings. Weighting with a logarithmic population size scale renders this weight less incisive and makes the country rankings look more valid. Unfortunately, this adjustment has the drawback that the numbers cannot be straightforwardly interpreted on an intuitive linear scale. However, there is no magic bullet solution to this weighting issue, and after careful thought we considered that the proposed solution offered the best possible compromise (see *Figure 2-5*).

Finally, countries are also receiving a weight depending on whether a country-dedicated, English-speaking news agency which would be expected to prioritize news from that country and thus inflate documents and consequently protest events from it, has been included in the sampling. This is not the case for Greece, so there is no penalty applied to the country due to the existence of a localized news agency. These adjustments do not materially change the picture for Greece, which is still a unique outlier in terms of protest events.

Comparing our data with other existing protest event data shows that the sources we used only introduced the expected biases, most of which have been dealt with as described. When using international instead of national sources, events that are more newsworthy to an international audience prevail. Therefore, protest events in our dataset were more likely to take place in capitals and to be larger events. Other than this, they do not greatly vary from datasets based on the coding of national sources. Furthermore, we reached high inter-coder reliability in our manual coding (Altiparmakis and Lorenzini 2018; Lorenzini, Makarov, and Wueest forthcoming). The inter-coder agreement score calculated with an F1 score is 0.45 when considering the matching of events based on the same identification of the date, the location, and the type of action. This score is reasonably good and comparable to other similar tests of inter-coder reliability scores (Boschee et al. 2015; Altiparmakis and Lorenzini 2018) .

### ***Core sentence analysis<sup>14</sup>***

#### *Data sources and coding strategy*

To perform the core sentence analysis (CSA), we selected articles from two newspapers per country. For most countries this consisted in a high-circulation tabloid and a quality newspaper. For Southern Europe (and particularly Greece), however, tabloid newspapers do

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<sup>14</sup> The methodological description provided in this section mostly draws from (Dolezal 2008; Dolezal et al. 2012; Lachat 2008) but particularly (Hutter forthcoming).

not feature so prominently in the local media universe and more polarized media systems tend to induce ideological bias in news reporting that needed to be balanced (Hallin and Mancini 2004). We therefore selected two quality newspapers, one leaning toward the center–left, *Ta Nea*, and one leaning toward the center–right, *Kathimerini* [Καθημερινή]. On top of the advantage this created in terms of diversity of political leanings and avoiding bias, it also was a necessary choice as those are the highest circulation newspapers that possess an extensive archive covering the years and electoral campaigns we are interested in. The number of articles per campaign and newspapers are provided in *Table 3-6*.

*Table 3-6: Core sentences per electoral campaign and news source, 2007–2015*

Electoral Campaign	<i>Ta Nea</i> core sentences	<i>Kathimerini</i> core sentences
2007	1,105	958
2009	886	1,294
05/2012	838	835
06/2012	720	887
01/2015	873	941
09/2015	857	1,268
Total	5,189	6,183

Source: POLCON.

Since all elections in Greece during the 2007–2015 period were snap elections, we selected news articles in the period between the announcement of the elections and national election day. The articles selected reported on the electoral contest and national party politics more generally. In general, both newspapers’ news about politics is clearly separated and distinct from editorials and commentaries, which were excluded from the selection. *Ta Nea* typically published a special election section in the newspaper for every campaign that we used as our source of articles. The selection was done by downloading the daily newspaper for each of them and coding every fourth article in the politics/election sections.

We then coded a sample of the selected articles using CSA. Following this type of relational content analysis, each grammatical sentence of an article is reduced to its most basic “core sentence(s)” structure, which contain(s) only the subject, the object, and the direction of the relationship between the two. The core sentence approach was developed by Kleinnijenhuis and colleagues (see e.g., Kleinnijenhuis, de Ridder, and Rietberg 1997). This type of quantitative content analysis allows us to study both issue positions and salience.

There are two types of sentences, actor–issue (a–i) sentences and actor–actor (a–a) sentences. The direction between actors and issues is quantified in actor–issue sentences using a scale ranging from –1 to +1, with three intermediary positions. For example, the grammatical sentence “Party leader A rejects calls for leaving the Eurozone but supports a haircut on the country’s debt” leads to two coded observations (Party A +1 Eurozone membership; Party A +1 haircut). We coded the function, party affiliation, and (if available) name of actors. In actor–actor sentences the logic is exactly the same, but we additionally code a relationship between two parties, and the object (the targeted party and individual if available) while the issue acts as a referent. For every actor–actor sentence we code, we additionally generate two actor–issue sentences from it, one for each party in the actor–actor sentence and the direction attributed to it on the issue by the actor–actor sentence. For example, for the sentence “Party A accuses Party B of flirting with Eurozone exit”, we code three sentences. One actor–actor sentence with Party A as the subject, Party B as the object, a direction of –1 and Eurozone exit as the issue. Additionally, we code two actor–issue sentences, one linking Party A negatively to Eurozone exit and one linking Party B positively to it, according to the original newspaper sentence.

The contentious aspect of this decision is that it allows for some parties to impute or shift the position of other parties that they refer to, in the case they accuse them of positions they do not actually hold. This is a particular concern in Greece, as no one in the country’s mainstream ever appeared to actually be in favor of either the bailout or Eurozone exit,

positions typically projected on parties by their rivals. Nevertheless, this is exactly the reason we code as such, to capture the essential aspects of what political conflict was about and how political space was perceived in the Greek media, rather than accurately depict each party's self-stated position on the issue. We would miss a great deal of how parties confront each other and what the issues actually are if we did not proceed accordingly.

For the present analysis, the actors were grouped according to their party affiliation. The issues were coded in detail (with more than 200 coded categories per election campaign). They were originally aggregated on a more abstract level, into four major issue domains comprising economic, political, cultural and European issues (Kriesi forthcoming). However, considering the Greek context and focus of the thesis, I considered it prudent to regroup many of the baseline issues into a more appropriate classification for the Greek context.

The aim of this recoding was twofold; first, to capture the Greek-specific issue of the bailout as a separate issue, independent of wider economic liberalism and welfare ideals, accompanied by its own sub-issues. Second, to record strategic maneuvering and political conflict by parties on non-policy issues, such as coalition speculation, campaign bickering or valence competition, which I argue were critical at times. For the elections I specifically focus in then, I have regrouped the issues into eight aggregated categories. The sub-issues of each of the eight aggregated categories are also presented in *Table 3-7* and expanded on in the respective chapters.

*Table 3-7: Greek-specific aggregate issue categories for core sentence analysis.*

Categories	Description (a position of +1 stands for...)
<b>Policy Issues</b>	
Bailout	Support for various aspects of the bailout, such as the bailout in general/abstractly, the terms/policies of the bailout, competence in handling/negotiating the bailout opposition to Eurozone exit.
Economic issues	Opposition to an expansion of the welfare state; support of welfare state retrenchment; opposition to tax reforms with a redistributive character; opposition to market regulation, economic protectionism in agriculture and other sectors of the economy; support for deregulation, more competition, and privatization; support for a rigid budgetary policy; reduction of the state deficit and taxes without direct redistributive effects.
Cultural issues	Support for cultural diversity, international cooperation, gender equality, homosexuals; opposition to national traditions and traditional moral values. Opposition to restrictive immigration and integration policies. Opposition to nationalist ideas; support for rights of ethnic minorities (e.g., Roma).
Political issues	Support for institutional reforms to make political system more democratic or transparent; opposition to corruption and political class; fair and equal access to media.
Reforms (vague)	Vague support for mostly administrative/liberalizing reforms aiming to improve the efficiency and functioning of the Greek state. Support for general reforms of the political system without clear direction.
Other	Support for educational reforms, sustainable development, and other intra-party and fringe issues.
<b>Non-policy issues</b>	
Campaign style	Typically actor–actor sentences, denouncement of other parties for running a deceptive, populist, demagogic campaign.
Government formation	Support for coalition politics in general or support for a specific coalition in particular. Support for governmental stability.

### ***Other data***

I would like to conclude this chapter by noting that occasionally I use other data, such as poll and survey data as evidence in my arguments. Aggregate public and survey data—time series for polling intentions, government popularity and occasionally prime ministerial approval ratings—has also been collected by the POLCON project and is used frequently throughout the text. Other than our own collection, for the elections of 2012 (an important part of the narrative), I have often used the individual-level micro-data of the post-electoral ELNES study (Andreadis, Chadjipadelis, and Teperoglou 2016), part of the comparative study of electoral systems (CSES) surveys, which contains more topical and detailed questions about the 2012 context than our own data. Similarly, for the 2015 elections I have used individual-

level data provided by the ProRata polling company (ProRata 2015a, 2015b), as no similar post-electoral data was available for the 2015 election. I often sought to find other attitudes on a specific topic at a specific time not covered by any of the above sources, such as assessments of the bailout. In this regard, Public Issue's<sup>15</sup> large archive of "political barometers" has been an invaluable aid, as it is one of the few polling companies that consistently and sustainably throughout this period provides at least aggregate indices of public opinion attitudes and beliefs on a wide variety of topics, and particularly on the bailout.

Last, but definitely not least, I have extensively relied on the Greek newspaper archive and memoirs as additional pieces of evidence helping me synthesize the narrative of the Greek crisis, frequently citing the press as a source for elites claims and beliefs that I believe would be difficult to capture post-crisis. As I did during the coding process, I overwhelmingly rely on two newspapers, *Ta Nea/Vima* [*Τα Νέα/Βήμα*] consortium and *Kathimerini* [*Καθημερινή*] as my sources for the events that transpired. I utilized their online archives, either in conjunction with keyword searches or simply skimming through the entire newspaper in particularly critical junctions. I have also surveyed a large amount of material from other sources, particularly during the last episode, such as *Elevtherotipia* [*Ελευθεροτυπία*], *Efimerida ton Syntakton* [*Εφημερίδα των Συντακτών*], Syriza's newspaper *Avgi* [*Αυγή*], the Communist Party's newspaper, *Rizospastis* [*ΡΙΖΟΣΠΑΣΤΗΣ*], the international press (*The Guardian*, *The Financial Times* and others) and parliamentary archives, as well as online videos containing the protagonists' speeches. Finally, I often draw evidence from the memoirs of some protagonists, particularly of the two ex-finance ministers (Papakonstantinou 2016; Varoufakis 2017). Despite being cautious due to the potential unreliability of the narrators, they are nevertheless useful complementary evidence for understanding elite perceptions during the crisis.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.publicissue.gr/en/>



## 4 Theory

### *Introduction: Research goals*

Which aspects and elements of the Greek supernova are worth studying and how do we make sense of it as a phenomenon? This chapter draws a hierarchy and taxonomy of a relatively exotic system, one closing on meltdown. My focus is primarily on two arenas and their interaction. The first is the arena of contention and protest, where challengers in the streets—be they parties, SMOs, NGOs or unions—contested the government and European policies. The second is the arena of institutional politics, mostly understood as the party system and the wider system of political conflict, where a host of fringe and new parties challenged the established two-party system in a series of elections.

The main research questions concern these two fields and their interactions. The outcomes described in the case selection chapter that I want to trace comprise the explosion of the Greek party system and the emergence of an unprecedented protest wave during the bailout era, and the ways the one influenced the other. The precedence lies on the former over the latter; the explosion of protest, as I will claim, is a relatively intractable and secondary problem. I will comment on and describe it, but I do not purport to seek explanations strictly for the appearance and swelling of protest. The destabilization and subsequent re-equilibration of the party system, however, was equally momentous but also in my opinion more unpredictable. As such, my focus lies on social movements mostly as inputs— points of pressure that propel change in the party-system—while party-system change is examined predominantly as an output. The agents that mediate between them, their types of behavior, the mechanisms of transmission of change between social movements and institutional politics and the structure within which all those are enveloped are the topics of this chapter and, more generally, the thesis.

Therefore, on the topic of contentious politics, my main goal is descriptive and process-oriented—to describe, in the first place, the evolution of protest activity that enveloped Greece during those six years. I aim to examine four separate instances of mobilization, each associated with the vote of additional austerity measures, and describe the qualitative and quantitative progression of conflict in terms of agents, action forms, claims and numbers of protesters. While doing this, I additionally aim to sketch changes in patterns of mobilization that characterize this sequence of contention. The main research goal vis-à-vis social movements therefore is the description of the protest wave and the rhythm and reason of its evolution.

On the theme of institutional politics, my aims are somewhat more ambitious. First, I want to establish certain links between the protest and institutional arenas. What were the main mechanisms through which social movements inputs mediated to bring about party-system outputs? Or, in other words, how did the profound mobilization contribute to the unique phenomenon of the collapse of Greek mainstream parties and the rise of new challengers? I use the rather moderate language of mediation and contribution here, because I want to move away from what McAdam and Boudet (2012) describe as a “Ptolemaic” view of social movements, where they are always situated in the center of political developments and act as the primary cause of change. Instead, by examining the ways and processes through which social movements affected institutional politics, I aim to delineate both their influence and the limits of that influence. The second focal point of research is therefore examining the mechanisms that linked social movements and institutional politics in the Greek case.

Delimiting the effect of social movements on institutional politics also requires theorizing and analyzing the residual role of other factors and processes, internal to the institutional scene. My third point of emphasis, then, is to understand party-system outcomes, meaning the collapse of the mainstream and the rise and resilience of Syriza particularly in relation to other potential challenger-party candidates. I try to do this throughout the thesis,

noting both the contributions of social movements to the old party system's demise as well as to the rise of Syriza. However, in this chapter I also describe processes inherent to the party system and particularly delve into aspects and developments in political conflict and competition that help me make sense and structure the narrative flow.

As in every case of systemic meltdown, I am compelled to turn to instances of strategic action, critical junctures and ill-fated decisions to explain the tumult of Greek politics. Before I can speak of strategic action and political triangulation though, I need to delineate the structure of the context within which political conflict occurred and within which a given strategy can be evaluated. Thus, in the first part of this chapter, I want to set into place the wider structural changes and features of the period studied here and how they shaped the unfolding of the drama and the choices of the protagonists. Afterwards, in the second part, having laid down the foundational skeleton of the bailout building, I proceed to map some of the critical processes and mechanisms that delivered these epochal outcomes.

The main event of this period, as hinted in the title, is the bailout idea. The "bailout" has become a somewhat nebulous term, associated with austerity, loss of national sovereignty and European bickering. An early clarification is therefore necessary. In strictly technical terms, the bailout consisted in a treaty, within which the Greek government acceded to European and IMF demands for policy changes and for continual supervision of the implementation of those policy changes in exchange for continued funding to avoid the country defaulting on its debt and consequently dropping out of the Eurozone. This treaty had major ramifications for political conflict.

To understand the general pace and logic of the drama, it is imperative to understand how the bailout restructured Greek politics in two dimensions. The first was in terms of policy, as it introduced the insertion of a new actor, the creditors into Greek policy-making. The creditors, referring to the European partners of Greece and the IMF, often taking the form of

the Troika, essentially held a veto power over Greek policy-making and had decisive leverage over the Greek government that risked unpredictable economic calamity if it did not satisfy their demands. This added an additional layer and system of decision-making in the structure of Greek policy and altered the old systems of policy design and implementation, as well as other systems of interaction that combined to reproduce the typical patterns of Greek political competition. This policy regime change altered the way Greek policy was implemented and therefore, eventually, the habitual calculus of protesters, voters, parties and politicians.

The second dimension was in terms of politics. The bailout became an aggregator issue, or what I call a “super issue”, bundling a wide number of claims, political issues and dimensions under its roof. If Greek politics were restructured during this era, it was because the bailout allowed for tactical and strategic manoeuvres within political conflict by Greek parties that were not available during the pre-crisis period. Describing therefore the politics and typology of “super issues” is important for structuring the Greek drama. I therefore start with changes in the structuration of Greek politics and then try to embed the narrative about social movements, their interaction with party systems and party-system outputs within this new structure.

## ***Structure***

### *Structuring contentious episodes: The multi-level regime of semi-sovereignty*

#### **Multi-level semi-sovereignty<sup>16</sup>**

The first major structural change occurring in Greece was the transformation of the policy-making regime, with the introduction of Troika participation and supervision. While

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<sup>16</sup> While the name attributed to the phenomenon is a tribute to Schattschneider (1960), it should not be confused with his description of the US policy process which concerns the power of the popular will in a democracy rather than the power of a government vis-à-vis its creditors.

there is some speculation and theorizing on the interaction between the Greek government and European creditors in the literature (Walter et al. 2018; Tsebelis 2016; Lim, Moutselos, and McKenna 2018), this exchange is treated as an instance (or multiple instances) of international cooperation, even when noting the bargaining lopsidedness or imbalance of bargaining power between the Greek government and foreign creditors. However, this ignores two important things about the interaction. The first is its repetitiveness, as the Greek government(s) and European partners became locked in a never-ending negotiation of ever-new measures, the results of each round shaping the possible outcomes of future ones. The second is its pervasiveness, as the “Troika” of lenders acquired controls over crucial levers of Greek policy, dictated terms on a wide array of issues, sometimes even beyond the more narrow frame of fiscal/technical issues and—mostly—monitored and enforced those terms.

Those two characteristics render the special relationship between Greece and creditors during this period a special type of institutional *regime*, rather than a series of isolated or repeated instances of bargaining. This new regime was materially different from the pre-crisis regime of Eurozone participation. Before the crisis the country cooperated, albeit from a weak position, in common processes of policy-making at the European level that would be diffused and applied to all European states. During the crisis it became a partner in a process that decided policies specific to Greece, to be implemented under strict, Greek-specific again, processes of European and IMF supervision. The indirect, implied punishment for not conforming would have been expulsion from the Eurozone and debt default. The Troika of creditors, carrying the threat of this catastrophic outcome, effectively became a veto player (Tsebelis 2002) in the Greek policy-making process.

The relationship between Greece and its creditor institutions was a new and relatively particular type of relationship. Unlike analogies to colonialism, vassalization and gunboat diplomacy that abounded in parts of the press sympathetic to the Greek plight (Chang 2012;

Elliott 2012; FT view 2015), this new regime lacked the element of force. It had a coercive aspect, due to the imbalance of power (Tsebelis 2016; Lim, Moutselos, and McKenna 2018), but Greece could always escape it by accepting the consequences of default and its application was mostly restricted to fiscal and economic affairs. Nor was it exactly akin to a typical relationship and dynamic between a fiscally despondent government and the IMF.<sup>17</sup> The participation of European governments and supranational institutions inflated the number of agents involved and made reconciliation of agendas and priorities a harder task. Unlike the typical IMF recipe of exchanging short-term pain, in the form of austerity, for long-term gain, as debt relief, in the case of Greece talk of debt relief was off-limits at least until 2011 (Papakonstantinou 2016). Short-term pain was exchanged instead for the promise of avoiding even more acute short-term damage in the event of Eurozone exit. The calculus of policy-making was much more muddled than in a simple case where the IMF acted as the representative agent of its members and handled all negotiations with debtors directly, because Greek needs for economic recuperation had to be at least reconciled with other participating governments' interests, particularly with their preferences relating to their domestic banking systems and EU-level preferences for Eurozone survival.

I call this particular institutional setup a regime of *semi-sovereignty*. Its main features, as seen, were the *intrusion of multiple foreign agents* in the policy-making process, in a relatively *limited* area but in a *pervasive* way, agents that wielded effective *veto power* over policy in Greece. Greece was semi-sovereign in the sense that it could neither design nor implement its own policy without creditor consent. Actual policy decisions were an outcome of complicated compromises and negotiations involving the Greek government and multiple, frequently conflicting, foreign governments and institutions. It was however a limited

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<sup>17</sup> For a more general overview of past IMF programs and analysis of IMF incentives and philosophy, particularly in relation to the recent crisis but also past ones, see (Clift 2018; Pop-Eleches 2009; Vreeland 2018). A more similar case in terms of intervention type is the Portuguese one, described by Moury and Freire (2013).

intervention, as it was mostly applied to fiscal and related issues. Nevertheless, it was pervasive because it did not set only goals for Greece to achieve, but mandated the specific policies Greece needed to implement to achieve said goals. This particular regime was consolidated in the creation of an institution—the Troika—consisting of the technical representatives of the three major institutions involved in the Greek bailout, which had a decisive influence in designing, implementing and monitoring Greek policy. The intrusion of this new, unelected agent on the peak of the policy-making pyramid had wide-ranging ramifications for the politics of Greece.

### *Consequences of the semi-sovereign regime*

#### **Change of agent hierarchy, links and function**

This multi-level, semi-sovereign regime that emerged from the bailout framework was crucial as a structuring device of the politics and events of the following years. Combined with the economic crisis, the new policy regime meant that the framework within which political and governmental agents operated had changed significantly. The usual channels of accountability and representation were altered and a new hierarchy of actors arose. Whereas before, the government stood at the top of a pyramid of decision and policy-making, it now had to navigate the “negotiation process” with creditors, the new apex predator in the food chain. This change rippled throughout the decision-making chain, changing the roles and functions of actors that previously engaged in it, such as MPs and party executives. The government and creditors negotiated under the pressure of markets and the schedule of debt repayment. Their agreements were often reached while Greece was on the precipice of default and required parliamentary approvals in multiple European countries. De facto then, MPs and ministers not involved in the negotiations were relegated to the duties of begrudging confirmation of decisions agreed elsewhere. There was often little or no time to renegotiate the

agreements for the sake of dissenting MPs and the pressure on them to acquiesce was gigantic. This created a new dynamic between MPs and government as well, as MPs, party officials and other representatives of the party in civil society were accustomed to participate or provide some input into the process. This change frayed the links between MPs and government and multiplied the instances of parliamentary mutiny, a relatively rare and isolated phenomenon in Greek political life before the bailout. A similar fraying of links occurred with social partners, unions and civil society, who would either stop being consulted or even when still nominally participating in dialog with the government, would lose their influence over policy-making in the following years (Sotiropoulos 2018).

### **Rigidity**

If the multi-level bailout regime changed the agent hierarchy and function this was in turn accompanied by qualitative changes to the effectiveness and performance of the responsiveness of the policy regime. *Rigidity* in the policy-making regime increased drastically. Whereas before unpopular laws could be withdrawn when met with stiff opposition—as happened with pension and education reform proposals in the 2000s—this was no longer possible within the bailout framework. Nor was there any opportunity to at least moderate the bailout on the margins if social reaction was too severe; the successive confirmation of each agreement by different European Parliaments and institutions meant that it was institutionally extremely difficult to renegotiate any aspects of the bailout once it had been agreed. There was no real ability to “test the waters”, other than leaking some of the measures the Troika proposed in advance and hoping that public opinion would warm to them. Unless they pondered voluntary exit from the framework, the Greek government had to dive in and hope it floated and the Greek citizenry had to adjust to whatever was on offer.



### **Uncertainty: Hidden agenda and obscured competence**

The introduction of the multi-level regime had a final ramification, as predicted by theorists of two-level games (Lehman and McCoy 1992; Putnam 1988):<sup>18</sup> it generated agent uncertainty due to its fundamental structure and the principal-agent problem at its core. The overriding issue was that since the Troika wielded essential veto power over the government, policy decision-making had to be reached through negotiations with the Troika. Due to the non-transparent nature of those negotiations, two fundamental problems of uncertainty developed: first, whether the government, the agent of the principal, the electorate, was negotiating in good faith; and second, whether it was negotiating competently.

The first issue I call the “hidden agenda”. It has already been noted by researchers studying the IMF program initiation (Vreeland 2003; Steinwand and Stone 2008). If the negotiations between government and creditors are not transparent, it is impossible to observe the starting positions and concessions made by each side.<sup>19</sup> As was often the case in those six years, adversaries of the government can accuse it of using the multi-level game as a device to sneak its own agenda through, under the guise of “creditor demands”. Vreeland notes that in the case of Uruguay in the 1990s, there was widespread suspicion that the government had initiated an IMF program not because it needed a loan, but because it wanted cover for reforms it wanted to do anyway. I do not aim to settle the question on whether the reforms proposed were imposed or were simply domestic preferences that appeared under the cover of creditor demands. For my purposes, it suffices to note that this suspicion of foul play with international creditors existed in the Greek case and created uncertainty about the government’s motivation

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<sup>18</sup> The Greek regime of semi-sovereignty can be depicted as a “two-level” game if we imagine the Greek government sandwiched between public opinion/protesters and foreign creditors. In reality, as will be seen in later chapters, there were actually more levels, as MPs, opposition parties and civil society agents engaged in strategic action within the new regime.

<sup>19</sup> Lim, Moutselos and McKenna (2018) try to impute the positions of each side based on their statements and press conferences, but this faces the fundamental problem of assuming that the public preferences of an actor are identical to their private ones, which is the issue at the core of this type of uncertainty.

and effectiveness, particularly when its own ideological profile appeared close to international creditor preferences.

The second is a related issue of “obscured competence”. It hails from the same source, as non-observation of the negotiations renders unclear whether the agent tried earnestly and competently to pursue the interests of the principal or was negligent in this regard. Did the Greek government push the creditors as much as it could or was its effort lacking, causing unnecessary measures to pile up? As Clift (2018), studying the IMF, argues, the Fund and in the case of Greece, the EU, possessed significant fiscal knowledge and technology that could have overwhelmed the Greek negotiators. Simply put, there was a suspicion that the prestige and technical expertise of the Greek government’s interlocutors might have bewildered Greek policy-makers into accepting unfavorable terms. Both issues stem from the structure of the multi-level game, the decisive role of the Troika as policy gatekeeper and agenda-setter and the obscure nature of the process of negotiation with the Greek government.

#### *Structuring contentious episodes: Systems of actors and patterns of interaction*

Within this multi-level framework, new systems of interactions between actors grew, along with old systems of feedback and interactions whose substance changed due to the emergence of the Troika. I next want to present the actors, the systems of actors and the possible conceptual categories of *interactions* which are relevant for this study. The multi-level, semi-sovereign regime that developed in Greece created different *systems* of interaction between actors at different points of the actor hierarchy. I argue there were three main such systems that are critical for understanding the evolution of institutional and protest arenas, which I present below and are also listed in *Table 4-1*. Most of the interactions between actors within those systems are conceptualized as relationships of either cooperation or conflict. I also use types of “reluctant cooperation” to describe interactions within which actors cooperated with their

counterpart in the relationship, but made clear this was not their preference but felt coerced to do so.

*Table 4-1: Systems of interaction and possible types of interactions*

System of interaction	Possible Interaction Patterns			
Negotiated Policy-making system (international)				
Government -> Troika/EU/IMF	Full cooperation	Reluctant cooperation		Antagonism
Legislation implementation system (domestic)				
Opposition -> Government	Consensus	Reluctant consensus		Conflict
MPs -> Government	Support	Reluctant support		Withdrawal of support
Claims-making system (domestic)				
Government -> Challengers	Concession	Negotiations	Ignorance	Repression
Challengers -> Government	Passivity	Negotiation	Mobilization	Confrontation

Notes: “Reluctant” types of support, cooperation or consensus signify a relationship which is predicated on involuntary cooperation, i.e. agents disagree with what they are doing but do it because they feel compelled to do so (i.e., there is a disjunction between beliefs and deeds).

A first system is defined by the interaction between Greek parties, government and creditors/Troika—the system of *negotiated policy-making*. There are important distinctions between the different Troika parts and levels, but from the perspective of Greek domestic developments, I can satisfactorily treat them as a unified actor. The most important development is the constitution of such a system which did not exist before and comes into force during the first episode, as the creditors intervene more forcefully in Greek politics. Within this system, the Troika interacted mostly with the Greek government. Their relations can be placed on a spectrum between cooperation and conflict, with the typical pattern of behavior being reluctant cooperation, an endless series of negotiations back and forth about the proposed measures and the eventual begrudging acceptance of a package from the Greek government.

A second system of domestic institutional debate and *legislative implementation* laid in the middle of the multi-level regime, incorporating the Greek government, parties and MPs. This system's main pillar of interaction is the government–opposition dynamic relating to the bailout. This can take a conflictual or cooperative form, either supporting the government in relation to the bailouts or opposing it. Until late 2011, it only took conflictual forms, as government and opposition were locked into perpetual antagonism. For the third episode, I characterize their relationship as one of “reluctant consensus”, to capture the element of coerced co-existence between the two mainstream parties under foreign pressure. Within this domestic institutional system there is a second sub-system of interactions, namely between government and its supporting MPs. This is a relationship that can vary between full support, the typical type of interaction prior to the crisis, to reluctant support, when rhetorical disagreement with government proposals is combined with behavioral conformism (voting support in parliament) and, finally, breaking the whip, when MPs no longer support the party they were elected with and withdraw their support.

The third system—that of claims-making—lies at the bottom of the multi-level regime, comprising the relations between government and challengers. This system was tracked by our contentious episode database. While it existed before, its operation intensified and its demands and reach amplified during the crisis. The first aspect of this system is the type of interaction between government and challengers from the government's side (i.e., whether the government represses, ignores, negotiates with or concedes to the challengers). All those different types of interactions are present in the Greek episodes, but the first two are by far the most dominant. The second aspect is the type of interactions flowing from the challengers toward the government and focuses on the action repertoire and claims-making format of the challengers. The most typical way for the challengers to make a claim on the government is via a strike or a demonstration (i.e., mobilization and in the case of riots, confrontation), but there were many

varieties of this, which will be explained in more detail when the focus shifts to social movements.

Having described this universe of significant systems for Greek politics, I now want to focus on a major mechanism for dysfunction that will be invoked frequently in the first chapters of the narrative. As the crisis produced new demands and raised the stakes of political competition and contention, agents were called to reply to the new exigencies of the situation. The interaction between new systems (Troika–government) and the fraying or intensification of old ones (challengers–government, government–MPs) necessitated a response from other systems, i.e. a decision on how opposition–government and potential challenger–government relationships should be affected. To this crisis juncture, agents typically responded with a particular pattern of action and interaction, which, in homage to Clark (2013) who inspired me to think along these lines, I call sleepwalking: they pretended nothing had changed.

*The structure of agency: Conflicting organizations in a multi-level regime*

Clark studied the interactions between the multi-level structure of European regimes just before the break of the First World War, trying to create a narrative and counterfactual history of how such a catastrophic outcome came to pass. While Clark does not explicitly produce a theory of structure and agency, I want here to propose that the two main issues or processes of dysfunction he describes are as central to his narrative as they are in mine and as such I want to expand upon them before I begin with the narrative in earnest.

The first issue is both methodological and substantively important. It is the (mis)perception of crisis actors as relatively monolithic organizations bending to a relatively well-defined hierarchy. Much of the narrative in subsequent chapters will be clarified once the organizations which are typically treated as concrete black boxes—such as “the Greek government” or “New Democracy”, for example—are understood instead as complex and

internally structured entities whose leaders tried to balance and equilibrate contradictory forces, constraints and demands. The challenge is thus first methodological, for the researcher to avoid falling into popular narratives of the crisis which pit “the Greek government” against “the Troika” as homogeneous entities. While this might be adequate for a political–economic macro-history of the crisis, it would not suffice to unearth the detailed pathway that produced the Greek conundrum.

This point is also important, however, to understand the succession of events, as the protagonists themselves often ignored the internal complexity, division and structure of other actors. For both these reasons, it is necessary to analyze the internal proceedings of most actors, who were oriented internally as much as externally, trying to keep their domestic fronts peaceful and quiet, while concurrently advancing their organizational strategy. Neither the creditors, nor the Greek government, Greek parties or civil society organizations were agents with a well-defined chain of command that could efficiently impose the leadership’s will within them. Instead, the hold of leaderships on their organizations ebbed and flowed, sometimes weaker, sometimes stronger. The frequent ignorance and dismissal by other actors of this internal pluralism and conflict was a prime motor of the Greek drama, as agents posed demands on each other which they could not accept without ruffling feathers within their organization. This propelled the tension between different actors and raised the stakes as time passed, as I will show in the first three episodes. The multi-level regime and the crisis stakes provided an environmental and contextual challenge, a shock that required coordination and consensus between various organizations, which however had their own internal dramas and hence vacillated on their course of action. Explanations for the protagonists’ often seemingly bizarre or paradoxical behavior rest on the fact that parties, unions and social organizations were a mosaic of different tendencies within which various power centers were operating and their actions were a result of the aggregation of contravening forces. The failure and success of

organizations, like parties and challengers, throughout the crisis is profoundly linked to how successfully they navigated their internal dramas.

I dedicate much time and many words to the analysis of the internal life of the protagonists of the Greek crisis in the subsequent chapters. My informal assumptions about the effect of this internal pluralism are two. First, that internal turmoil contributed to the overall drama because agendas and priorities of different agents became misaligned significantly. As noted, the introduction of the multi-level regime and associated systems of policy-making resulted in a profound tension between big-picture objectives, such as saving the country from default, and partial, organizational objectives, such as satisfying party and union grassroots organizations and keeping party executives and parliamentarians in line. Much has been made, for example, of the tension on the creditors' side between the objective of reinvigorating the Greek economy and the objective of keeping the Eurozone from unraveling. Similar tensions between contradicting objectives, manifested themselves in the internal life of organizations in the domestic politics of Greece as well. Along with the multiplication of agents due to this new structure, each with his own pressing schedule, objectives and balancing acts, the probability and potential for conflict and accidents multiplied.

#### **Sleepwalking: Habitual and asynchronous action**

The second assumption about the effects of internal pluralism are that it helped, at least initially, in the reproduction of habitual patterns of behavior when faced with extraordinary circumstances which necessitate a change of course. Clark's (2013) notion of sleepwalking lies in the repetition of diplomatic and military patterns by different organizations within European foreign policy-making regimes even as the contextual risk was rising, and catastrophe loomed. The same is true in my narrative; as the crisis deepened and a catastrophic default lay just

across the horizon, the main patterns of interaction within several systems described remained stable, responding with inertia to heightened demands, claims and stakes.

I should note that when talking about habitual behavior, I am not necessarily implying a non-reflective mechanism of individual behavior, which has been explored much in the political behavior literature, particularly pertaining to elections (Weber 1978; Baldwin 1988; Gerber, Green, and Shachar 2003; Bechtel, Hangartner, and Schmid 2018). Instead, I am proposing a mechanism of organizational inertia, of habitual patterns reproduced at the level of collective action.<sup>20</sup> I will not explain this pattern with reference to (a lack of) reflection on the part of organizations' leadership, but to organizational constraints, priorities and perceptions instead. Leaders reflected on what they should do and realized the urgency of the situation but did not deviate from their usual patterns of behavior. This was because they were constrained internally by the dynamics of their organization or because they possibly identified a priority, such as winning elections or protecting their sectoral interests, which they considered more important than accommodating the needs of this new situation. Furthermore, their understanding of the crisis and its inherent risks and prospects were often at odds with what we now know in retrospect. This is why I include this section, which clearly deals with agency here because: a) this pattern of agency was based on structural patterns that persisted prior to the crisis and; b) became pivotal because of the rise of new structural systems of interaction and the changes in the old ones. I often refer to contingent events as critical in the evolution of the drama, but the reality is that risky contingencies were often a product of a highly fragile

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<sup>20</sup> There is an interesting parallel to the much richer literature on organizational inertia amidst environmental change for firms (Hannan and Freeman 1984; Ruef 1997; Scott 2015; Stieglitz, Knudsen, and Becker 2016). I must stress, however, that the analogy can take us only so far because parties are very different entities than firms. Most importantly for my purposes, firms manage themselves and firm failure is a catastrophic outcome for everyone involved. Parties, when in government, manage the country and country and party failure are two distinct outcomes, one of which does not necessarily follow the other. As such, parties—in managing something external to themselves—are distinct from firms in their incentives. Nevertheless, the organizational inertia phenomenon applying to firms has many parallels to features of party organization.



structure, within which different actors had little appreciation or understanding for the problems of others.

Whatever the motivation of actors to persist with habitual action (i.e., sleepwalking), the assumption is that in the face of extraordinary events, government–opposition and challenger–government interactions remained initially stable and anchored in pre-crisis patterns. I try to show in the chapters comprising the narrative that this initial continuity in the face of elevated risk and possible catastrophe were crucial on shaping final outcomes. I do not argue that initial reproduction of habitual patterns persisted throughout the entire period. They eventually changed, but initial inertia was pivotal. And when change did occur, it did so in a haphazard way. The combination of the new structure, constraints of internal pluralism, contingent events and behavioral sleepwalking resulted in the asynchronicity of actors and change in the systems of interaction. By asynchronicity here I define a partial change in patterns of interaction among the main agents in certain of the identified systems that lags behind or is not reflected adequately by corresponding interaction changes in the other systems. To provide an example, changes in the Troika–government system only altered the functioning of government–opposition systems of interaction almost two years after the former occurred.

Why is this an important concept and problem? It is, after all, highly probable in any constellation of systems where different organizations interact. However, in this case asynchronicity was particularly perilous because the crisis evolved rapidly, public opinion attitudes deteriorated equally fast, and opportunities to find solutions to thorny crisis issues were lost as agents persisted in reproducing established patterns of behavior. Additionally, as agendas and priorities clashed, partial change in some systems and not in others caused the appearance and expression of demands between agents at inopportune times. For example, in the third episode, I show how change in the MP–government system, coupled with reproduction of government–Troika patterns of behavior, caused a huge strain on the

government–opposition dynamic, a critical juncture for explaining the eventual collapse of the party system.

This will be more fleshed out as I unveil the narrative in more detail and I provide evidence of the cracks that appeared in Greek politics due to the functioning of this combination of structure and behavior. For now, I provide an episodic map of the timeline of change of each of the systems of interaction in *Table 4-2*, which the reader can use as an informational shortcut for understanding structural change throughout the narrative.

*Table 4-2: Evolution of types of interactions throughout the main Greek episodes of policy-making and contention*

Episode / Interactions	1 <sup>st</sup> bailout	Mid-term adjustment	2 <sup>nd</sup> bailout	3 <sup>rd</sup> bailout
Government–Troika	Full cooperation	Reluctant cooperation	Reluctant cooperation	Antagonism–Reluctant cooperation
Government–Opposition	Conflict	Conflict	Consensus	Consensus
MPs–government	Support	Reluctant support	Withdrawal of support	Withdrawal of support
Government–Challengers	Repression	Repression–Negotiation	Repression–Negotiation	Ignorance
Challengers–Government	Mobilization–Confrontation	Mobilization–Confrontation	Mobilization–Confrontation	Passivity

Note: When two types are present for an episode, the order of appearance in the table signifies the temporal order in which those relations evolved during the specific episode.

In general, interactions permeated by a perception of other agents as monolithic and as reproducing habitual demands and claims, blinded actors to concerns of timing and internal complexity. The calculus of action became harder as actors needed to coordinate faster than ever, while knowing very little about each other and not having the time (or interest) to find out. As a new policy-making system of Troika–government relationships was installed—and as the crisis deepened and the stakes became higher—the rest of the systems described here did not adjust their patterns appropriately and in a timely fashion, but only in a delayed, piecemeal way. Most of the habitual patterns of interaction persisted until overwhelming force coerced

their change. Every system eventually went through change, but my argument is that they did so in a haphazard, non-coordinated way, which serves as a prime explanatory device for understanding the depth and potential for dysfunction during the Greek crisis.

*Structuring contentious episodes: The politics of “super issues”*

The third structuring element of the bailout age is the nature of the bailout and its function as a “super issue”. To understand the idea behind the super issue concept, I need to discuss beforehand dominant theories of political competition. We often understand political competition as structured around “issues”, programmatic differences between parties constituting the central aspect of electoral politics (Kitschelt 2000; Kriesi et al. 2008; Rovny and Whitefield 2019). This programmatic type of conflict was originally envisioned, heavily reliant on the US paradigm, as revolving around a unidimensional (Downs 1957) axis of conflict, pitting “left” against “right” or “liberals” against “conservatives”. Subsequent research, particularly on European political conflict, has focused on multi-dimensional structures of political competition (Kitschelt 1994; Kriesi et al. 2008, 2012; Beramendi et al. 2015), noting the distinction between “economic” issues of redistribution, taxation and welfare state, corresponding to traditional notions of left and right and emerging cultural issues such as immigration and LGBT rights.

A frequent question in political competition studies is how multiple dimensions, align with each other and how they combine to structure political competition. The distinction between cultural and economic dimensions of political conflict, and potentially even European-related themes, (Kitschelt 1994; Kitschelt and McGann 1997; Marks et al. 2006; Beramendi et al. 2015) has been prevalent in many North-Western European countries and has been manifested in the existence of parties expressing different permutations of social and economic positions. In other cases, these dimensions often tend to converge into a single dimension,

combining economic liberalism and social conservatism on the one side and economic interventionism and social liberalism on the other side, forming the “traditional” depictions of “right” and “left” respectively (Bakker, Jolly, and Polk 2012; Rovny and Polk 2018). Greece has been traditionally seen as such a country, polarized on a single dimension of right and left (or anti-right) (Moschonas 1994; Tsatsanis 2009; Bakker, Jolly, and Polk 2012; Voulgaris and Nikolakopoulos 2014; Dinas 2017).

There is an important distinction between the cases where multi-dimensionality is reflected in party-system structure and others where multiple dimensions are compressed into an overarching, unidimensional axis of contention. The meaning of left in the unidimensional cases is not analytically the same thing as economic liberalism; the “left” is a signifier of a bundle of positions in multiple dimensions (Kitschelt and Rehm 2014), which can vary according to context. Accepting this would produce a three-level ontology of programmatic conflict. At the bottom level, there are particular policy issues and proposals: tax proposals, immigration quotas, demands for welfare provision, specific civil rights etc. In the middle-level, those can be combined within wider themes and positions within those themes; there are analytically distinct cultural, economic, European issue *dimensions*, aggregating particular bottom-level issues, upon which political conflict can *potentially* focus. These correspond to polar positions of economically statist/liberal or socialist–capitalist axes, cultural positions of conservatism and liberalism, Europhile and Eurosceptic antagonism etc., depending on the number and type of dimensions defined. Then, while not analytically/theoretically necessary, there can be higher-level empirical constellations of dimensions (i.e., bundles), such as persistent combinations of economic liberalism and social conservatism, manifested in multiple facets of politics: public opinion attitudes, party positions and government coalitions. “Left” and “right” are in the case of unidimensional countries such bundles or “super-dimensions” (Kitschelt and Rehm 2018, 64). While it is not necessary that parties stick to these

patterns and combinations, it is an empirical pattern that they often do, occasionally prioritizing one or another of its constituent dimensions depending on the context.

Having sketched this issue ontology, I can now return to the bailout. Much of the narrative cannot be understood if we do not ask the questions: What type of thing was the bailout? How did it become politicized and perceived in political competition? I argue that the violent nature of the Greek party system's unraveling is linked to the answer to these questions.

This question is under-theorized, as most of the literature on the Greek crisis explicitly or implicitly labeled the bailout an added dimension or even a new cleavage of political competition (Dinas and Rori 2013; Voulgaris and Nikolakopoulos 2014; Teperoglou and Tsatsanis 2014). For much of the thesis, I will also treat the bailout as an additional dimension that cross-cuts vertically upon the old divide between left and right. However, where does the bailout belong in the ontology I sketched?

On the one hand, one could argue that the bailout is a bottom-level issue or multiple ones, breaking down the various austerity measures required of Greece to meet creditor demands. However, that would miss the way the issue was utilized and perceived in political discourse as a unitary theme, something that will become evident in the empirical chapters. In fact, the uttering of the "bailout" word had long-ranging connotations and extensions. The bailout was straddling at least three distinct issue dimensions. The first was economic, centered on the debate around austerity and neoliberalism. Then there was a cultural dimension, pitting sovereignty and nationalism against European intervention and participation. Finally, we see a political dimensions, focused on recrimination and accountability about the pathway to the crisis and competence and democratic procedure in its handling. As such, I argue that the bailout was an issue akin to the old left and right bundles of Greek politics: an issue aggregating multiple dimensions of policy and politics, spanning almost the entire map of political space.

But there is a crucial difference to the bundles we customarily label as “left” and “right”. Those are referring to and mediated by a complex web of values and ideas. Predispositions toward openness, values of solidarity and equality and ideas of universalism form the link and translate between the specific policy issues and the left and right bundles. Because the mapping is mostly performed mentally and there is a wide variety of principles and values involved prioritized in multiple ways by different individuals, this allows space for endless reinterpretation and experimentation. The “left” cannot be all things, but a large number of different permutations and issue combinations can be claimed as belonging to the “left”. The “left” or “right” has no single, fixed material, point of reference but several abstract, ideal ones. Left and right are universal ideas exactly because of their malleability and fungible behavior. The bailout as an aggregate issue is different. It makes no sense to be anti-bailout in China for example. Even as it expanded and incorporated several dimensions of politics, the bailout always had a reference to the concrete action of signing a treaty (or three), the Memoranda of Understanding between the Greek government and foreign creditors. The position and labels concerning this issue could not be reinterpreted and claimed freely; being anti-bailout was not only an issue of combining values and ideas in specific ways, even if that element existed too. It also always reflected back on a particular document existing on the material world, with the signatures of specific people and parties on it.

By the term “super issue”, then, I define certain issues that function as de facto constellations of multiple issue dimensions (i.e., are aggregate, high-level bundles), but *also* have a fixed point of reference in the material world.<sup>21</sup> Much of the potency of the issue stems

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<sup>21</sup> Other examples of super issues abound. Brexit is one, having a binary nature (in or out of the EU), bundling several other correlated attitudes and beliefs under its roof and affixed to a specific policy, namely departure from the EU. Arguably, Greek history a century ago provides another example, as the dispute around the nature of the polity created a polarizing divide among the populace which bundled different attitudes and beliefs in two camps and had a sharp binary nature: either with Venizelos, then prime minister, or against him. The politics of Greece for 25 years revolved around this divide, affixed to the person of Venizelos, from the moment of his ascension to the chair of prime minister to the moment of his death (Mavrogordatos 2015). In *Dynamics of Contention*, McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001, 167–69) also describe anti-slavery in the US as a very similar

from this root. The bailout spanned an entire battery of dimensions of political conflict, capable of also expanding into new ones, rendering the issue salient, focal and able to engulf ever-wider elements of political competition. Concurrently, because of its fixed point of reference, evasion, position blurring (Rovny 2013) or shirking accountability were not easily deployable strategies for parties in power. The bailout, by virtue of its specific, material reference *pinned one down*: a party leader's signature was either on the document or it was not. The reasons and the connotations of signing or not signing could span multiple dimensions, hence the flexibility; but the act of signing or not signing was transparent, hence parties could not “blur” the side to which they belonged. The reference was opaque, but the referent action transparent. Parties in power were forced to answer a dichotomous question: to sign the bailout or not, knowing that the act of signing it would not be contained on implementing what was on paper, but would trigger wider political, cultural and economic associations about their motivations and positions within the political space. Concurrently, due to the binary nature of this question, this should be expected to have repercussions on the polarization of political conflict as well, I theme I return to promptly. In *Table 4-3*, I have developed a typology of “issues” structuring political conflict that reflect the thoughts laid out above.<sup>22</sup>

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type of issue, anchored on the legislative status of slavery but able to bridge a variety of different dimensions under its ceiling. They see this as a process of “identity shift” of the US Northerners and Westerners, while I tend to focus on the structural potential of the issue itself to cause this process of expanding identities.

<sup>22</sup> I should warn however that these are not “fixed” categories, where each issue can be neatly and permanently assigned to them. The work of “political entrepreneurs” (De Vries and Hobolt 2012) or other factors, such as social movements in this thesis, often contributes to the jump of an issue from a more banal policy issue into a wider super issue. I will show that reaction to the bailout was at first mostly conceived within the economic dimension, but subsequently and gradually acquired other connotations.

*Table 4-3: The bailout and issue categorization*

Dimensional multiplicity / abstractness	Multiple Issue Dimensions	One-dimensional
Concrete/material referent	Super Issue (Bailout)	Policy issue (Gun control)
Abstract/ideal referent	Programmatic Bundle (Socialism, Right etc.)	Dimension (Cultural liberalism)

Note: The horizontal column differentiates between issue categories that straddle multiple dimensions and those that are located predominantly in a single dimension. The vertical column represents the dichotomy between bundles or issues whose points of reference are abstract ideas and values and those who have a material reference, be that an event, legislation or person.

The most important take away about “super issues” like the bailout is that they can be fluid, like other bundles, gravitationally tugging, combining and bending other dimensions. However, they must also be consistent regarding their fixed referent; being anti-bailout cannot be reconciled with signing a bailout treaty. A concrete, specific action flows from being pro- or anti-bailout, while no action necessarily flows from declaring that I am left or right. The potency of super issues stems exactly from these dual traits of width and specificity.

There is a limitation, however. Their potential is finite and transient; unlike left–right conflict, such an issue has an expiration date, when, in this case, the treaty and legislation they are linked to expires or is annulled. Their echoes may be heard for a long time, but their potency should be expected to gradually diminish. In this way, they are something entirely distinct to a cleavage, an enduring line of conflict characterized by organization and institutionalization (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Bartolini and Mair 1990). In fact, I would argue, super issues are their functional opposites; where cleavages stabilize and reproduce patterns of political conflict, super issues are ephemeral, potent wedges that act as extreme disruptors of such patterns. I explain this by reference to their particular characteristics.

### *The consequences of the emergence of super issues*

#### **Binarity and polarization**



As it is defined here, a super issue is binary regarding the referent—in this case, the bailout. While gradations of attitudes toward the bailout did exist, the issue was fundamentally one of acceptance or rejection of the entire framework of the bailout policy regime. The bailout could perhaps be ameliorated or changed at the margins, but there was a fundamental question of whether Greece should accept negotiating domestic policy with foreign creditors or simply head for Eurozone exit and reclaim “sovereignty”. Because of the voluntary nature of the submission of the Greek government to the semi-sovereign regime, there was always an option of undoing that submission, by electing someone who would not yield to creditors. Interacting with the uncertainties created by the multi-level regime, there was even a question on whether the bailout framework was altogether necessary, or perhaps the Europeans and IMF could be goaded toward a more respectable procedure and terms, if only the Greek government behaved strategically.<sup>23</sup>

The combination of the multi-dimensionality, binarity and uncertainty created a process that shaped enduring polarization; as the bailout became a dominant super issue, it aggregated multiple dimensions of political life under its shadow and hence became an alternative way of structuring political conflict. Its binary nature, through the mediation of political actors, social movements and parties alike, contributed to the creation of two distinct, sternly opposed camps. Finally, the uncertainty created by the bailout regime tended to perpetuate this polarization, because it was unclear whether any camp was right, as both their arguments were essentially hypothetical counterfactuals; the propositions that if Greece rejected the bailout and struck it

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<sup>23</sup> It is therefore important to not conflate anti-bailout and anti-EU rhetoric positions. Annulling the bailout while staying in the EU was one of the imagined possible outcomes compatible with the permutations of the anti-bailout discourse. The “bailout” was structured around austerity, policy supervision and joint decision-making with the Troika, which might have been institutionally linked to Eurozone participation, but was distinct. A different default avoidance mechanism of Greece within the EU was always a theoretical possibility. While the anti-bailout issue could incorporate an anti-EU dimension, the two were not identical or necessarily linked.

out, things would have gone better or worse. In the absence of lived experience<sup>24</sup> of the counterfactual, the issue could be sustained as long as the bailout persisted.

### **Party-system disruption and party fluidity**

As with any other issue newly introduced onto the agenda, the bailout had the potential to disrupt the traditional patterns of political competition. This is a rather banal statement: when a new issue or dimension emerges in a political system in equilibrium, as Greece seemed to be before the crisis, we should expect the party system to become disrupted, as multi-dimensional systems are inherently more unstable than mono-dimensional ones. This has been theorized and empirically described for many cases of political competition (Downs 1957; Riker et al. 1986; Kitschelt 1988; Kriesi et al. 2008; Beramendi et al. 2015). As noted, this is true for the Greek case too, as the bailout has been shown to have contributed to the fragmentation of the party system as it became an added dimension of political conflict (Dinas and Rori 2013; Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou 2013; Verney 2014; Voulgaris and Nikolakopoulos 2014; Tsatsanis, Freire, and Tsirbas 2014; Tsatsanis and Teperoglou 2016). So far, this is a relatively trivial and well-researched point.

I suggest, however, that one of the reasons this disequilibrium was reached so rapidly and forcefully in Greece was the nature of the bailout as a super issue. Exactly because it is a concrete issue that has linkages to multiple dimensions, it has the potential to act as a floating signifier<sup>25</sup> (i.e., there can be multiple meanings attached to the signifier—in our case, the bailout). This, in turn, has repercussions for political competition, as an extra potency and

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<sup>24</sup> Or maybe near-experience sufficed, as I will argue in chapters 9 & 10.

<sup>25</sup> I prefer the term “floating” rather than “empty signifier”, which is often used in populist studies (Laclau 2005). This is because floating signifier better captures the idea that the semantic relationships between the signifier (the bailout) and the interpretations attached to it are multiple and floating—but not “empty”—as there are limits to the meanings one is able to attach to it, due to the fixed reference of the bailout. Even more importantly, some dimensions are off-limits to the bailout as a super issue: the bailout cannot incorporate dimensions of conflict over cultural liberalism, for example, because it has nothing to do with it. This is another limitation of super issues. They are fungible, but not endlessly so, their expansion requiring conceptual closeness with their actual referent.

polarization already described, which are not for political system structured around other types of political divides. Another repercussion is the potential for strategic exploitation of the super issue by parties and its symbolic power.

The second set of repercussion revolves around the *flexibility* and *evasiveness* this structure allows for parties. This reflects the other side of the signifier–signified relationship, now focusing on the multiple meanings of the word “bailout”, and is common to super issues, to populism and to broader issue categories such as left–right divisions. Because there are multiple meanings to be attached to the phrase of being “against the bailout”, this affords parties the twin luxuries of flexibility and evasiveness. They can nimbly switch—through hints, implications or discourse—between different dimensions of the signifier (flexibility), without the need to ever denote the exact significance they attach to it (evasiveness). As said, they need to choose a camp, revealed by their choice with regards to the bailout treaty signing, but once that is done, their discourse can be nimble and elusive. In this way, they can reap the reward of addressing a much larger audience than they would normally be able to within the confines of the old one-dimensional, left–right system.

This brings us to the last peculiarity of a political system structured around a super issue, that of party *fluidity*. What I mean by this term is that parties which were discursively evasive about the semantic properties of their attitude toward the bailout could themselves become floating signifiers for voters. Parties can invoke the bailout in the abstract, as a floating bundle of issues and therefore be evasive about the specificities. Voters could project any of those things back onto those parties, unless they specify which aspects of the bailout they are (usually) contesting or (less frequently) supporting. But from the perspective of the parties, not specifying what they mean, being vague and evasive, is the optimal strategy to gain as many votes as possible. In other words, exploiting multi-faceted indignation against the bailout works best if you do not specify which facet you are responding to. The invocation of the bailout

becomes equivalent to that of a wink, where the gesture is specific, but the meaning elusive. In return, the party itself becomes a bit of a mystery; they winked, but what did they mean by that?

Again, none of this is entirely novel, as ambiguity and ambivalence on the part of parties is a common tactic to win votes and muddle political competition (Rovny 2013). But my argument is that this ambiguity is particularly productive in the case of a super issue, because due to its other characteristic—that of an affixed reference—ambivalence does not necessarily create dilution. There is an expansive but ultimately finite list of concrete dimensions and sub-issues to which the parties are referring to when positioning themselves against or in favor of the bailout—and all lead back to the signed document. A party on the anti- or pro-bailout side is anchored to something concrete and its capacity for ambivalence is limited by this fact. In contrast, a party obfuscating or being blurry on a left–right unidimensional system of political conflict, runs the risk of voters treating it negatively (Enelow and Hinich 1981; Bartels 1986). Being anti-bailout, on the other hand, has the benefit that you can be vague about many things, but ultimately specific about the one thing that matters for a block of voters. A system structured around this type of constrained ambivalence is ultimately much more fragile to strategic actions on the part of new and/or fringe parties. I will try to show how Syriza in particular benefited in this case, by focusing on the bailout and *only* on the bailout relative to other challengers, taking advantage of the issue’s floating status, rendering itself a floating, fluid entity in the process.

In sum, the peculiar or distinct nature of the bailout (and of super issues in general) lies in their special characteristics as issues creating a relationship between a specific, actual signifier and multiple signified interpretations. They combine both the sharpness and precision of programmatic polarization over specific policy issues *and* the symbolic force of wider conflicts that encapsulate multiple dimensions, albeit at the cost of having a limited lifespan,

tied to the signifier one. Political competition and contestation structured around super issues should therefore be expected to become combustible and polarizing, having the potential to expand into different issue dimensions while retaining the strong sharpness of the divide.

### ***Patterns, processes, mechanisms, and outcomes***

I have now outlined what I consider to be the major novelties in the structure of the bailout era. With the structural skeleton founding the Greek context presented, it is now time to look more specifically at the phenomena which form the core of the thesis: the rapid and volatile appearance and disappearance of social movements; the fast-tracked collapse of mainstream parties, the equally impressive rise of the challengers and the resilience of Syriza as the dominant challenger; and the interactive links between those two developments, linking social movements and institutional, party-system dynamics. In this section, I want to focus on two things: first, the theoretical concepts, patterns and processes underpinning my exposition of the Greek case and; second, alternative theories and logics that could explain its evolution.

#### *Social movement patterns: The protest wave*

The description of the pattern of appearance and disappearance of social movements in Greece closely resembles the form of a protest wave, as developed by social movement scholars (Tarrow 1989, 1994; Koopmans 1993, 2007). The protest wave concept can be summarized as the appearance of heightened and sustained protest activity on a national scale, followed by the transformation of this protest wave either into institutionalized or radicalized forms of claims-making and its eventual contraction and dissipation in the streets. I argue and demonstrate that what occurred in Greece is an exemplary case of a protest wave, even going as far as having shades of similarity to the Italian situation of the 1960s described by Tarrow (1989). The description of this protest wave and its three phases—namely its rise, transformation and eventual contraction—will be a focal point of the following chapters. With regards to the

appearance of social protest, my aim is not so much to provide a causal account of its appearance and growth, but to show that existing theories and concepts are sufficient for understanding what occurred in Greece and proceed instead to focus on links between protest wave and institutional dynamics.

The theoretical richness of existing social movement studies is most apparent when tracing the causes of mobilization for the Greek case, a task both trivial and intractable. It is trivial because the Greek crisis is a perfect storm, an instance where every theory of social movement mobilization can be considered to be vindicated. It is intractable because everything is collinear; every condition considered sufficient or necessary for mobilization to occur was present and hence, it is almost impossible to adjudicate between them. Instead, we should look at the compounding of those conditions to understand the volume and frequency of the mobilization.

The standard theoretical and empirical accounts of how social movements rise focus on three alternatives. The linkage of social movements to social grievances (McAdam 1982; Kerbo 1982; Opp 1988; Snow et al. 1998), their ability to draw on the resources of well-organized challengers (McCarthy and Zald 1977) and the political opportunity structure (POS), related to institutional aspects, like division of the elites, openness or closeness of the system and other features and contingencies that allow social movements to launch a forceful challenge to the government (Kriesi et al. 1992; Kriesi 1995; Tarrow 1994; McAdam 1996; Koopmans 2007; McAdam and Tarrow 2010).

All of them were present in Greece circa 2010–2015. As already noted in the case selection chapter, the fall of GDP, wage decline and unemployment spread were momentous in the Greek case. Subjective indicators of grievances, such as economic expectations and economic sentiment, nosedived steeply to negative territory. Grievances against the political system also became widespread, as will be seen, particularly during and after 2011. Resources

were equally bountiful. Greece was an unusually unruly country even before the crisis, with unions launching record numbers of general strikes, frequent rioting and a vibrant protest culture in general, indicating the existence of a well-oiled protest machine (Hamann, Johnston, and Kelly 2013; Andronikidou and Kovras 2012). Unions might have been covering a relatively low proportion of the workforce but were concentrated heavily in the well-organized public sector (Matsaganis 2007), had regular access and influence over the government (Sotiropoulos 2018), and enjoyed robust experience of strike and demonstration organization, placing them in a position to readily produce mobilization when the crisis hit.

While the theme of opportunity structures is slippery (Gamson and Meyer 1996; Giugni 2009) and often suffers from conceptual stretching, the bailout as a super issue and the lapse toward semi-sovereignty can be considered strong institutional contingencies that triggered elite division and fostered mobilization. In line with Kriesi (2007), the shift to semi-sovereignty produced changes in the POS, as new dominant actors, like the Troika, remained out of reach of protesters, leaving the system much more closed, as pressure groups, civil society and political elites lost significant access to their policy-making influence. “Integrative” strategies—as Kriesi labels them—were no longer available, shifting the focus toward repression, which, as we shall see in later chapters, became the dominant government response to social movements. Additionally, due to the multiplication of actors involved in the semi-sovereign regime, disagreements over the appropriate course of action became endemic, opening up political opportunities that Greek actors were able to exploit (Kotronaki 2018; Kouki 2018).

As we have shown elsewhere (Altiparmakis and Lorenzini 2018), as the legislative activity became compressed and concentrated on specific key deadlines, bailout legislation voting days became a focal point (Schelling 1980), a magnetic pole attracting protest and

providing a clear time period within which challengers could organize an escalating campaign against the new austerity packages.

Overall, I do not aim to either adjudicate between these theories or to clearly delineate their relative contribution to protest. For my purposes, it suffices to accept the assumption that on the eve of the bailout period, the shock triggered by the onset of the crisis, the application of austerity and the disruption it brought on the Greek elites and their accustomed ways of policy-making should be seen as predictably likely to cause a high incidence of protest because *all* conditions that are theorized to facilitate protests were present. From then on, the Greek protest stage contained all the typical ingredients that—according to Koopmans (2007)—characterize a protest cycle/wave (i.e., the expansion of protest, diffusion on a national scale, and innovation of action forms, demands and frames that precipitated the intensification of protest and its increased effectiveness).

This was followed by demobilization, which largely occurred after the twin 2012 elections, as the mass movements and rallies of the first bailout period ended. I describe below what I believe to be the main mechanisms of demobilization, as they will become relevant to explaining the surprising non-reappearance of protest in 2015. As such, demobilization here should not only be understood as the end of mobilization, but also its subsequent non-reappearance.

The first such mechanism is fairly obvious and well-researched, that of institutionalization, ending a cycle of protest (Tarrow 1993),<sup>26</sup> or as I call it in the respective chapter, the *assignment* of social movement goals to institutional agents, particularly Syriza

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<sup>26</sup> Tarrow also mentions radicalization as another such mechanism. As protesters become marginalized and their action less consequential, they sometimes defect from social movements to join fringe terrorist groups, etc. There was some of this in Greece, but it was truly marginal and failed to become relevant to the institutional arena. Moreover, advances in police surveillance and crime science meant new terrorist groups were usually caught soon after they took action. For these reasons, I do not really cover this, even if low-key terrorist action was constant throughout the period.



(Kotronaki 2018). Tarrow describes how this happened in Italy in the 1970s, as spontaneous movement members that had participated in the mobilizations of 1968–1969 became gradually absorbed into the mainstream parties in Italy. The same was an important mechanism of demobilization in bailout Greece, as many movement participants gradually and more rapidly after 2012 gravitated toward participation in Syriza. This trend involved the institutionalization of radical protest and the radicalization of institutional conflict, as Syriza (the official opposition) set a new, more radical agenda, while at the same time absorbing resources and activists, limiting street action. Karyotis and Rüdig (2018) note how the few post-2012 mobilizations shifted from a broader agenda and participant profile toward style and claims of contention closely resembling Syriza rhetoric and ideas, providing an empirical hint about the ongoing institutionalization process.

The second mechanism is frustration and exhaustion, operating through the lack of responsiveness, repression and electoral defeat. Many of the participants of the previous years' movements became frustrated as the government ignored their demands and claims despite the unparalleled mobilization of those years and actively repressed them as riot police frequently and violently disrupted even peaceful protest. Additionally, despite the volume of mobilization, the disruption it caused, and the electoral upheaval that followed the anti-bailout movement, it was eventually defeated in the polls in June 2012, as the pro-bailout coalition secured another government term.

The final mechanism is localization and specialization and has been already noted as a tendency for Greece post-2012 by several scholars (Kotronaki 2018; Kouki 2018; Porta et al. 2017). It is linked to both previous mechanisms, as institutionalized or frustrated protesters turned their attention elsewhere, to struggles more aligned with their new partisan links or movements that had a higher probability of success. The mechanism involves either the displacement of protest activity toward local struggles, evident in the case of the mobilization

against goldmines in Northern Greece, waste facilities in Attica or toward more specialized movement objectives, such as the closure of the public broadcaster, the anti-toll movement and the movements against auctions of foreclosed homes.

Again, I do not aim to compare the effect of those different mechanisms or weigh their partial contribution to demobilization. Since I am mostly interested in a more “macro” perspective of the Greek crisis, I merely want to show that the protest wave effectively ended and withered at some point after the 2012 elections—never to recover—and that some of these trends I have discussed were responsible. The more important question I want to grapple with is how the protest wave interacted with the institutional drama of the time and how it contributed to the unraveling of the party system in the subsequent elections. I therefore now turn to sketch the theoretical framework of how protest and institutional dynamics interacted in this case.

#### *Processes of interaction between social movements and the institutional arena*

##### **Expansion of political conflict**

In between mobilization and demobilization, the most interesting development related to social movements in Greece in the bailout age, something I spend a great deal of time narrating in this thesis, was the expansion of protest themes and claims from a narrow economic dimension toward more multi-dimensional claims that incorporate political and nationalist themes. This is somewhat akin to one of the ways McAdam and Tarrow (2010) observe that movements interfere in the institutional scene (i.e., by introducing innovations and discursive patterns into it), innovations that are then taken up by political entrepreneurs. Aslanidis and Marantzidis (2016) have also suggested this as a mechanism underlying the effect of social movements on political discourse in the Greek case. I aspire to demonstrate something slightly more extensive in scale and somewhat different in nature; that social movements partially

introduced—but mostly solidified and foregrounded—an entire theme of the bailout years, that of the indignation against the political class and elites.<sup>27</sup> I have already noted that the bailout as a super issue can expand the dimensions it covers. In the thesis, I present the ways in which this thematic expansion of the bailout occurred through the intervention of social movements. Rather than only the action of political entrepreneurs (De Vries and Hobolt 2012; Aslanidis and Marantzidis 2016), the addition of dimensions of political conflict (Rovny and Whitefield 2019) was also forced on the bailout super issue by social movements. To express it as a non-formal<sup>28</sup> hypothesis: The first effect of social movements in Greece in the bailout era was to expand the anti-bailout issue to include anti-political/anti-elitist claims and cement those as constitutive elements of the “anti-bailout” issue position.

This was quite significant because it was not the addition of a wedge issue, but the expansion of the bailout super issue, imbuing the bailout with the potential to re-align and perturb the contemporary political conflict equilibrium. The bailout was one of those sporadic instances in which mass social movements invaded the political agenda and reinterpreted it, expanding the political conflict (Schattschneider 1960). If the concept of anti-bailout changed from a narrower economic interpretation to a wider one, including opposition to political elites and tinges of nationalist calls for sovereignty, the result was that the way political conflict was perceived, and parties categorized, changed as well. Categories of left and right became less relevant, while the separation between “old” parties and practices (the parties responsible for the crisis and their practices that led to it), and “new” ones (untainted by government) acquired a clearer and more concrete meaning. When mainstream parties were forced, by the upper-level system of European negotiations, to take a position on the bailout, at the same time the meaning

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<sup>27</sup> This is similar to Bremer et al.’s (forthcoming) hypothesis that social movements function as a “signal” of political grievances and blame attribution.

<sup>28</sup> Non-formal in the sense that I do not “test” the hypothesis in a quantitative way, but I purport to show that it is corroborated by my narrative of events.

of the bailout, with the help of protest, became associated with a wider list of grievances that enabled the expansion of the coalition of the aggrieved to incorporate a wider circle than the typical leftist, unionized audience.

The process of expanding political conflict was not only evident on expanding protest claims to incorporate indignation at the political class but was also manifest in the expansion of protest forms into more radical actions and particularly into the personal hounding of political agents seen as responsible for the bailout situation. Political conflict was therefore expanded both in the sense of the dimensions that the bailout issue incorporated but also in the sense of increasing radicalization of action and civil society disobedience and disruption, which directly contributed to the next studied mechanism of interaction between protest and institutional politics.

#### **Elite breakdown/resignation**

This second mechanism is elite breakdown. The division of elites, a similar theme, is one of the most common mechanisms identified in the literature of how social movements influence institutional dynamics, typically an integral part of POS literature (Kriesi et al. 1992; McAdam et al. 1996; Giugni 2009). Elite division is usually understood however as a more active process, with the focus being on the actual splintering and factionalism within elite organizations; for example McAdam and Tarrow (2013) provide the example of a split in parties or split in a class coalition. The elite breakdown I describe in Greece has at least two parts, bearing some resemblance but not an exact match to the processes described by other scholars.

The first and more predictable part is elite division by reference to the non-political elite (i.e., civil society elite organizations, such as business associations, unions headed by government party members, media and even the Church), all of them at some point exhibiting

significant fractures in their relationship to the government and its bailout course. This contributed to the pressure exercised on the government and expanded the wave of protest against it by piling the resources, organizational capacity and influence of powerful civil actors against the government. This factor is strongly reminiscent of Skocpol's (1979) scheme of social revolution, in which ruling political classes could not reconcile domestic displeasure from their elite allies with mounting international pressure to change the policy regime and direction of the country. Elite civil society of Greece similarly had an (at best) ambivalent relationship to the bailout project and often contributed to street opposition to it.

The other—and by far the most crucial—part lies in the legislative-procedural system. It concerns the relationship between government and supporting MPs. As I note in *Table 4-2*, this is a relationship that degraded over time, as increasingly more MPs became less tied to government parties and manifested centrifugal tendencies. The rupture was not solely one between the ruling elite and other elites, as in Skocpol (1979) but one *within* the political class itself, more akin to Goldstone's (1998) tale of the collapse of the USSR, where elites gradually lost faith in their project. What I want to claim and try to demonstrate throughout the subsequent chapters is not so much division in the sense of factionalism and splits over the direction of the government's policy. Rather it is a sort of breakdown—a paralysis—an inability of the government to discipline its MPs and motivate them to stay the course, as well as a spectacle of increasing resignation in the face of mounting pressure from international actors and social movements, especially as the latter expand their repertoire and start targeting MPs personally. This is more common in more tumultuous rebellions where the ruling elite is not only pressured from below and above, but parts of it often cannot continue to rule in the face of overwhelming indignation and either join the social movements or paralyze in the face of social opposition (Sewell 1996; Skocpol 1979). Tilly and Goldstone (2001) describe this as a “classic revolutionary spiral”, albeit events in Greece were somewhat less linear than their

description, as breakdown of the party-system occurred throughout multiple episodes rather than as a product of a linear escalation of protest. Sewell (1996) provides the example of certain French aristocrats having a conversion moment and denouncing their privileges in public view. While not so theatrical, Greek political elites, under bailout pressure, came to abscond their responsibilities. Again, this is expressed as a hypothesis: The second effect of social movements was inducing demotivation and resignation on members of parliament, further fraying their relationship with the government.

#### **Historical event: Outcome and process node**

The third way through which movements interacted with institutional politics is the emergence of what Sewell (1996) terms as the “historical event”. For Sewell, a historical event is one that reconfigures existing structures, persists/endures from eruption to structural transformation, and involves particular conjunctures and cultural changes as well. I claim that this is a useful concept to apply to the events of October 2011, starting with the signing of yet another agreement and containing the protest reaction to this development, the collapse of the Papandreou government, and the emergence of the Papademos government. This chain of events spanned approximately 15 days at the beginning of the third episode in my list. The event occurred as the culmination of the tensions created by the structural changes and the processes of interaction described before, aided by unexpected, contingent events in the realm of protest with great symbolic power, the events around the military parade of October 2011. The combination of all those, interpreted (or misinterpreted) by the protagonists, led to government collapse and a durable transformation of the patterns of interaction between mainstream parties (government–opposition dynamics) and a shorter-term transformation of the interaction pattern between government and MPs. As such, this event is in a way an outcome rather than a process, but it is an outcome that is a central node in the overall arc that led to the collapse of the party system. Without the transformations in the systems of

interactions it unleashed, it would have been difficult to replicate the final outcome of Greek party-system collapse in 2012.

One of Sewell's problem with his concept of the historical event was how to set its temporal boundaries and what made the event as significant or important in contextual terms. In line with his answer, I suggest that events around October 2011 act as a tipping point because of the fundamental change in structures precipitated after the events that transpired there. As noted, government-opposition and government-MP habitual patterns were disrupted and the submergence of the traditional two-party system only began in earnest there. As McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001) argue, the event chosen might have not been "accidental or primordial", but the culmination of longstanding processes and conflict. Nevertheless, event and process continuity should not mask structural rupture; it is important to utilize the historical event concept because the October 2011 episode is the moment in which glacial structures suddenly melt and the window of opportunity for challenging the status quo opens up, forcing the narrative to turn toward the individuals-protagonists and discern their motivations and preferences (Kriesi 2007, 80). The historical event delineates the boundary between the time of "sleepwalking", when habitual patterns of domestic Greek politics persisted despite increasing contextual pressure and the new period of emergency crisis management, in which those patterns were disrupted.

#### **Against direct effects and Ptolemaic social movements**

By noting those mechanisms of interaction between protest and institutional dynamics, I aspire to contest two themes present in social movement literature. The first is that the most important mechanisms of interaction of social movements with institutional politics that I consider critical for my story are *indirect* mechanisms of interaction. Most of the studies of the effect of the Greek social movements on institutional developments during this period focus

on the list of mechanisms proposed by McAdam and Tarrow (2013), which are direct ways in which a social movement may influence institutional developments. Aslanidis and Marantzidis (2016), for example, describe the innovative discursive elements present in the Greek Indignados and how Syriza adopted some of those themes to explain why PASOK collapsed and Syriza grew. Kotronaki (2018) focuses on the mechanism of the direct influx of members of the social movements into Syriza, especially after the Indignados and the “active campaigning” of movements for Syriza. As I try to explain in the following chapters, I think that while these phenomena existed, they were not particularly critical. The influx of members to Syriza are not temporally concurrent with the rise of movements, nor the party’s rise in the polls. The deployment of populist themes by Syriza existed but was not dominant in party discourse, as I analyze in the chapters about elections. Nor was it critical to the party’s success. Moreover, there has not been much precise, mechanism-based analysis of the contribution of social movements to the collapse of the old regime irrelevant of Syriza’s rise, other than assuming that the Greek Indignados (and the protest wave generally) dealt a critical blow to the old party system.

Instead, I delineate a gradual, accumulating process where increasing pressure on the street and the economic weight of the crisis, slowly rendered the political elite paralyzed, finding itself at an impasse, many MPs merely gazing at the impending wave that they feared would engulf them passively. Within this context, I locate the critical role of movements in their ability to create fragility and plant seeds of doubt and hesitancy in the hearts and minds of political elites. With reference to *Table 4-2*, their critical role was in the gradual and accumulative fraying of the MP–government–MP–party link. To put it in different terms, movements helped weaken the relationships between middle- and upper-management in politics and dissolve iron-bound relationships into paper-thin ones. Then they helped set the paper on fire, which unleashed a chain reaction that eventually reduced the old party system



into ash. Movements' main contribution then was not a direct campaign of support toward a party or the dissolution of another, or yet the transfusion of discursive novelties, but their contribution to the creation of a system of *structural fragility*, vulnerable to unexpected shocks, contingencies and errors of agency. The effect of the social movement was indirect, transmitted from the bottom up throughout the hierarchy of actors developed in the newly founded multi-level system.

Second, I claim that even a mobilization that grand was not at the center of institutional restructuration but required a host of auxiliary phenomena to reach the concrete outcome of party-system collapse. As such, I argue—with McAdam and Boudet (2012, 2)—against a “Ptolemaic” view of social movements as the proximate cause of institutional restructuration. Social movements were neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for the collapse of the Greek party system. This could have happened anyway or, more importantly, it might *not* have happened, despite the mobilization, if elite actors had chosen different paths. Absent the movements, another party could have grown in the place of Syriza, as it almost happened multiple times. With the same movements manifesting, the Syriza expansion could have been halted if PASOK, New Democracy and European elites had selected a different course of action.

As I try to demonstrate, what social movements did—through the mechanism of conflict expansion and by their sheer existence—was to help direct the flow of institutional developments toward a particular channel, that of Syriza. The movements did not determine the broad result (collapse, perseverance or something in between), but helped to co-determine the form of the final outcome—Syriza's rise—when the die was cast for the old party system. Syriza's expansion was aided by the party's participation and uncritical support toward social movements (Spourdalakis 2014). As I try to demonstrate in chapters 5 to 8, they were an important factor for the rise of the particular party, but not the only one. When the political

system imploded, Syriza's participation and support toward movements rendered the party well-placed to take advantage of the blow-up, but there was nothing predetermining that it would do so and absent its own actions, it would not have.

### *Party-system processes and outcomes*

#### **Punctuated equilibrium**

I therefore move beyond contentiousness in this thesis and examine wider causes of party-system collapse, party rise or the absence of those phenomena in subsequent episodes. While social movements are placed at the center of the narrative, they are not placed at the center of the causal mechanisms examined here—merely at its start. There were a series of other factors that influenced party rise and party collapse and I want to briefly offer an overview of the combined process and theoretical concepts behind party-system disruption and re-stabilization.

I start with the characterization of the overall pattern of institutional collapse and restoration detected. I previously described the macro-pattern of social mobilization as that of a protest wave. Analogously, to describe the macro-pattern of institutional change I draw from the fields of public policy and, originally, biology (Baumgartner et al. 2009; Gould and Eldredge 1977), to characterize the overall process of party-system change as following a pattern of *punctuated equilibrium*. The idea of punctuated equilibrium is that complex systems do not necessarily evolve in a gradual way but change abruptly and dramatically. Either under the pressure of long-term environmental factors that surpass certain critical thresholds, or a sudden shock, one state of stable equilibrium is suddenly disturbed, creating extensive turbulence and adjustment for a relatively short period, after which equilibrium is newly restored.

I explain why I believe the Greek case to be an example of a punctuated equilibrium in more detail at the epilogue, when I complete the circumnavigation of the crisis period. Scholars up to now have extensively focused on the extraordinary degree of change present in the Greek case and justifiably so, emphasizing the instances of peak disruption (Dinas and Rori 2013; Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou 2013; Teperoglou and Tsatsanis 2014; Voulgaris and Nikolakopoulos 2014; Katsanidou and Otjes 2016). But looking at snapshots of change throughout the crisis, isolating incidents of maximum turbulence conceals a long-term pattern of punctuated equilibrium; that the Greek institutional and contentious arenas were greatly disturbed between 2010 and 2015, but at the end of this period a new equilibrium and stability was restored and much of political conflict and party-system dynamics had returned to their prior states. The main arch of this thesis and its parallel to a dramatic play are based on the similarity between the structure of a dramatic play and the concept of punctuated equilibrium; the idea that a disruption occurred, to which the protagonists reacted in dramatic ways, leading to a rise in action, a confrontation and ultimately a sort of resolution.

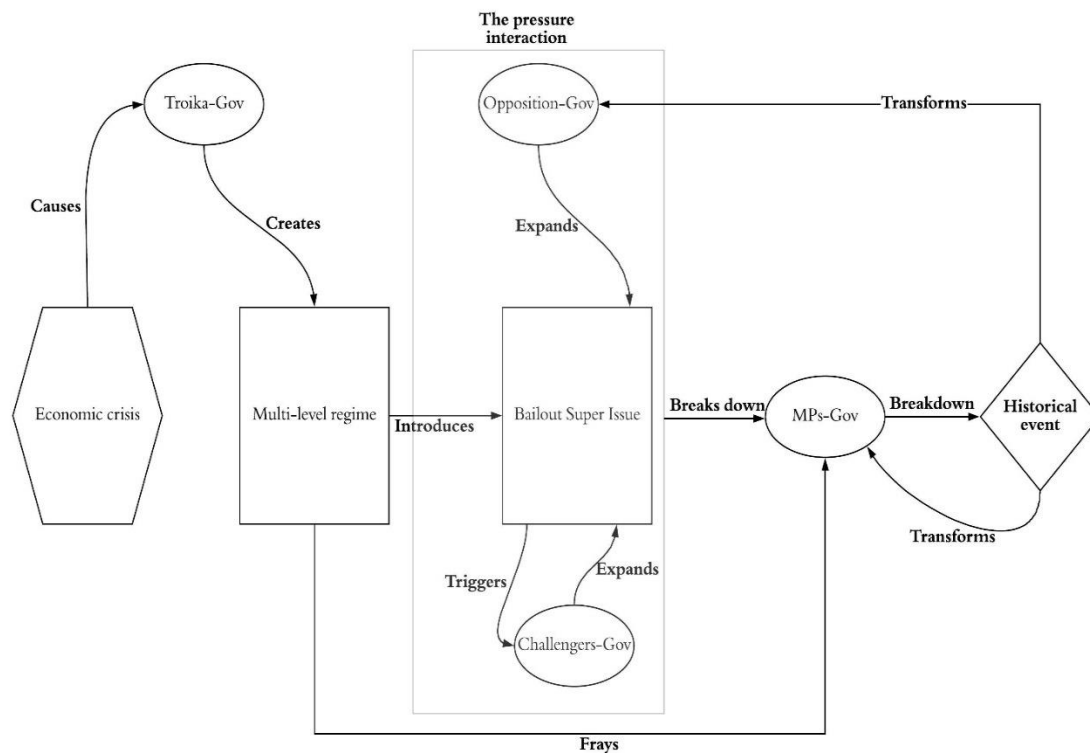
#### **The pathway to punctuation: the overall process**

I have now presented all the basic concepts and mechanisms required to draw the pathway of Greek politics from the initiation of the bailout process to party-system collapse. The process, leading to the historical event, is graphically depicted in *Figure 4-1* and I will try to describe it here utilizing the conceptual tools outlined in this chapter and then expand on the aftershock of this event.

The first step was the creation of a new, hierarchical interaction between the Greek government and the Troika, the triumvirate of creditors. Once this relationship was constituted formally at the end of what will be our first episode, it created the multi-level semi-sovereign regime and introduced the bailout issue within Greek political competition, the structural

elements of our tale. The introduction of the salient bailout issue in turn, triggered habitual patterns of contention and political competition (i.e., what I have labeled “sleepwalking” patterns of response). The substantive content of this was contentious action by government challengers in the streets and amplified conflict between government and opposition within parliament.

*Figure 4-1: Diagram of the Greek politics restructuring process up to the historical event*



Note: Circles represent systems, squares represent structural elements, lines represent processes and diamonds represent outcomes. The economic/debt crisis, the root cause is represented by a trapezoid. The central box, titled “the pressure interaction” means to convey that it was the feedback between the interactions among the elements within the box that led to the breakdown in the MPs–government relationship and the subsequent government collapse.

The accumulation of protest activity and the widening of the circle of protest participants, along with the aid of the intransigent opposition, helped expand protest claims and imbue the bailout with additional significations; in this process, the bailout super issue was constituted and expanded into additional dimensions, incorporating economic, political and nationalist significations. The overwhelming pressure created by the expansion of the issue into

multiple dimensions, the rise in polarization in the government–opposition system, the multiplication and radicalization of protest forms in the challenger–government system (what is inside the central box in *Figure 4-1*) and the pressure from abroad in the Troika–government system which also frayed relationships between MPs and government, combined to produce a “historical event” around the beginning of the third episode, in October–November 2011. The immediate consequence of this event was the collapse of the Papandreou government, but its more far-reaching consequences were the long-term transformation of government–opposition (and cabinet formation dynamics) and the short-term transformation of government–MP dynamics.

#### **Party collapse: Convergence and establishment reification**

In turn, those transformations initiated the processes that would eventually lead to party system collapse. The disruption of government–opposition dynamics resulted in the grand coalition under a technocratic government and the practical yet troubled convergence of the two mainstream parties. The dilution of the roles of government and opposition and the common policy consensus of the two parties was one mechanism through which voters’ centrifugal tendencies from the two-party system accelerated. As the opposition no longer offered a distinct policy position compared to the government and in fact had been coerced to abandon its opposition to the bailout, its electoral descent began and what could have been a relatively banal alternation in power into a mainstream party rout.

In general, the collapse of the Greek party system seems to follow the scheme proposed by Roberts (2013), who linked the collapse of Latin America party systems and the ensuing “pink tide” to government–opposition dynamics. Roberts claims that there is a close correlation between the government–opposition dynamics and resulting emergence of left-wing radicals in the political scenes of Latin American countries. Where left-wing governments presided

over an austerity-focused, IMF-led program in Latin America, the party system was eroded, and a radical left party soon emerged. Where the left-wing mainstream party was in opposition and alignment between programmatic beliefs and government actions was less distorted, the party system stood relatively intact. Programmatic incongruence and dilution of differences between the left-wing government and right-wing opposition are the forces that drive forward Roberts' theory and a similar tale is shared by Lupu (2014).

Superficially, this appears similar to what occurred in Greece, predicting the surge of support for a radical left formation and the collapse of the two mainstream parties. However, as I try to demonstrate in the 2012 election chapter, Roberts's programmatic de-alignment fits well as a necessary criterion of party collapse but not as a sufficient one. Before I delve into that, I have to stress that the two phases of two-party system collapse, and the rise of challengers are two analytically and empirically distinct outcomes, which need to be treated separately. The collapse of the two mainstream parties could have led to multiple counterfactuals, such as even more disperse fragmentation, with no dominant challenger, or perhaps the rise of an alternative challenger rather than Syriza.

In the subsequent chapters, I note that the phenomenon of the systemic downwards spiral of bipartisanship begins much earlier than the rise of Syriza. In fact, it coincides with the life of the technocratic government. While the details will be sketched in the relevant chapters, I want to outline the other critical factors other than mainstream party convergence. First, the fraying of relationships between government/party leaders and their MPs unleashed a completely novel tension within the political elite, out of which smaller and new parties formed and benefited. But most importantly, I believe that the fact that the expanded scope of the bailout super issue, now incorporating political themes beyond the narrow economic ones, were now fully reflected in institutional divides served as a catalyst for the electoral nosedive of the mainstream parties.

Let me unpack this. As protest helped gradually expand the scope of the bailout issue, the sense that the “old” parties of government had mishandled the country’s affairs became endemic, reflected in low trust in the political system. However, the bailout issue’s two dimensions, economic and political, were for a long time not aligned and reflected in the electoral scene: “old” parties of government (i.e., New Democracy) were against the economic aspects of the bailout, allowing a wider menu of choices and dimensional combinations for voters. When however, both parties of government adopted a pro-bailout stance and even more, expelled everyone who took an opposite stance, the two dimensions of the bailout issue became aligned. On the one side, stood untainted, “new” parties against the bailout. On the other, there were “old” government parties who supported the bailout; the concept of the “establishment”, which is often utilized as a fungible and nebulous accusation, became reified. It was filled with specific content and associated with tangible dispositions and behaviors; to be the establishment was to support the bailout, vote for it and have participated in past governments that led to it. I therefore believe that it is only after the technocratic government took power that Roberts’ theory holds purchase, as the dynamics he describes fully manifest themselves, with the entire two-party system perceived as a homogeneous entity, the establishment, while the behavior of its representatives provided the necessary feedback to continually confirm this perception. Without this intermediate step and particularly without its exact timing, I suggest that it is possible that party-system collapse could have been avoided.

#### **Party rise: Syriza’s ascent and the race of challengers**

The mainstream parties’ reluctant cooperation, as I call it, was in turn exploited strategically by other challengers. Smaller and new parties found an opportunity to claim grander portions of recently vacated positions in the electoral competition and exploit the distrust toward mainstream parties. Syriza was one of the candidates for filling the void left by PASOK but was not pre-determined to do so. Going from the mainstream party collapse to

Syriza's rise requires some small but critical additions: focusing on the party's strategic exploitation of the multiple dimensions of the bailout issue (see part on party fluidity) and a detailed description of how the party positioned itself in the new political space and placed itself in a position to maximize its benefit from the protest wave. As already suggested by Spourdalakis (2014) and Tsakatika (2016), studying those strategic decisions can reveal the final parts of the process that led to the transformation of the Greek party system. While the details will be described in the relevant chapters, the reader should keep in mind that the rise of the radical left party was not as deterministic as, for example, Roberts' theory would suggest. Without some luck inherited from past decision and some bravado and successful strategic decision-making within the confines of the new political competition, Syriza's rise might have not materialized. I have tried to outline the structural apparatus in sufficient detail, also so that during narrative exposition I can show that the structure was not a straitjacket that forced a particular path, but a structuring map highlighting many different pathways, some taken, some not.

#### **Party resilience and personalization of political conflict in semi-sovereign regimes**

Having described the process leading to the rise of Syriza and the collapse of the old political system, I move on to the theory underpinning the last research question (i.e., Syriza's resilience). The structure that generated party-system collapse in 2012 was left mostly intact and could have been expected to reproduce the same outcomes in 2015, when a new bailout was signed. Instead, Syriza would rather bloodlessly navigate the new bailout at that time, cruise to re-election and the new type of bipolarism would survive relatively unscathed the introduction of a new bailout.



In the final two chapters, I will try to sketch what I consider to be the way the bailout period came to a close and the bailout “super issue” ceased to be the structuring device of Greek politics. Within the next few paragraphs, I want to outline the theory underpinning it. I have already noted how the multi-level structure caused fundamental uncertainty within the principal-agent relationship between the government and electorate responsively. I argue within the last chapter that Tsipras and Syriza managed to circumvent these problems due to two factors: first, the successful manipulation of contingency by Syriza’s leadership, controlling the flow and pace of events unlike what PASOK did. Second, the trust deposited on the person of Tsipras, which helped essentially reduce the scope of the bailout super issue. While PASOK voters progressively distrusted the party and doubted the skills of Papandreou, Tsipras enjoyed sufficient trust from Syriza’s relatively newly established electorate and successfully managed to focus the election on his person and the “newness” of Syriza, the party’s non-involvement in past governments and their corruption. Shorn of its political dimension, the bailout was reduced to an issue strictly bounded within the economic dimension, unable to produce the same connotations and associations as the previous time around.

In short, my theory about the reasons that 2015 did not repeat the patterns of 2012 is that entire pieces of that process were absent in 2015. The lull in protest, followed by increasing protester institutionalization did not allow for any mechanism of protest-based expansion of political conflict. Nor was that very likely, as Syriza had not amassed the deposits of anger and wrath directed at PASOK/ND after 30 years of government (mis)management. The government–opposition dynamic was also different from 2012, as the opposition did not get coerced into offering its consensus, but voluntarily did so. Essentially, what has been depicted as the boxed process in *Figure 4-1* was completely absent. The alignment of dimensions of the bailout that I argue was critical for systemic collapse in 2012, came undone in 2015. The fraying of the MP–government link and withdrawal of MP support was repeated in this

instance, but without the feedback of the protest mechanism and public opinion distrust toward Syriza, as in the case of mainstream parties in 2012, it was hollow and ineffective.

Instead, the election of September 2015, after Syriza's capitulation, manifested increasing signs of personalization, i.e. a tendency to focus on individuals and particularly Tsipras rather than on programmatic issue-competition (Wattenberg 2002; Karvonen 2010; Garzia 2011; Aelst, Sheaffer, and Stanyer 2012). As I claim in the last chapter of the thesis, resignation about the fate of the bailout and the acknowledgment that the new regime was here to stay after Syriza's failure, changed the voter calculus and nudged part of the formerly indignant electorate to reconcile itself with choosing the most suitable negotiator of the bailout process with the Troika. Rather than a question about the bailout itself, the dominant issue in those elections became candidate competency in handling Troika negotiations. The turnaround occurred as Greek voters came in close contact with the counterfactual of departing from the bailout regime and a plurality of them became convinced that Syriza had exhausted all options short of leaving the Eurozone. As a clear majority did not want this outcome, they turned their attention to other issues, like valence competition, hence increasing personalization, and cleaning up the old "political class". In such a contest, the combination of latent trust toward Tsipras by most Syriza voters, the absence of the political dimension of the bailout issue, increasing personalization and the displacement of programmatic conflict stabilized the new party system, ending the age of bailouts. But before we reach the conclusion, let's begin at the start, a few days after PASOK celebrated its triumphant return to government in 2009.

## 5 The first bailout – Sleepwalking

### *Prelude: The 2009 elections and the short road to the bailout*

Georgios Papandreou was almost unable to move on his way to PASOK's headquarters on 4 October 2009. Jubilant crowds engulfed him, blocking his path (NET 2009), celebrating a record margin of victory over their traditional center-right rivals, New Democracy. PASOK had reached almost 44 percent, a share of the electorate unseen since the early 2000s, while New Democracy had sunk to 33 percent, a historical low. After five years in opposition and two failed attempts at winning an election, Georgios Papandreou had finally become prime minister, like his father and grandfather, replacing Kostas Karamanlis, the nephew of another prime minister. The famously dynastic politics of Greece entered their third generation, relatively unperturbed by the global financial crisis.

These elections of 2009 serve as the starting point of my narrative, because they contain the first seeds of the impending implosion of Greek politics. The origin of the crisis itself can be traced to various points in history, depending on the research question. For my purposes, tracing the process of party-system explosion, it makes sense to start with the elections of 2009.

The electoral campaign of 2009 foreshadowed some of the major themes that would arise during the bailout age. The debates about austerity and stimulus and about structural reform and privatization were already a central theme of conflict. Concurrently, the demand of political renewal, for abandoning decades of patterns of corruption was also present. The overall distribution of political conflict among different issues, according to our core sentence analysis, is broken down in *Table 5-1*. The table shows that the economic and political dimensions of political conflict dominated, as they captured 70 percent of all political space. Additionally, it was the last election in which the two mainstream parties seized most of the

attention: 79 percent of all press coverage referred to the two mainstream parties, directly corresponding with their electoral shares.

*Table 5-1: The composition of issues and sub-issues of political conflict in Greece for the 2009 elections: percentages.*

Aggregated Issue Dimensions	Sub-Issues ( % )	Aggregate Issue share ( % )
Economic	Economic liberalism	24.9
	Welfare	12.1
	Economic reform (vague)	7.4
Political	Democratic Renewal	10.4
	Democratic Reforms	8.2
	Anti-corruption	8.0
Cultural	Cultural Liberalism & Immigration	4.6
	“National Issues” (FYROM, Cyprus)	4.6
Others	Environment	5.4
	Others	14.5
Total		100.0
N	1,730	100.0

The precise content of political conflict along those two dimensions mostly concerned the proposed economic reform/austerity package by the incumbent Karamanlis government on the economic dimension and the scandals it was involved on the political dimension. Sensing that the country was heading toward a hard fiscal landing, Karamanlis had proposed a relatively mild (in retrospect) austerity package to contain the excess. However, in December, a new nomination process for President of the Republic was due to be held in parliament and Karamanlis did not have the parliamentary super-majority (180 out of 300 seats) required to elect a successor. In the event that no candidate collected 180 votes, an election had to be held promptly. Unwilling to advance an austerity package just months before the opposition forced an election, by boycotting the presidential nomination process, as the government lacked the needed super-majority,, he rolled the dice on early elections for 4 October 2009, citing the need

to get popular approval for his plan of fiscal tightening (*Kathimerini* 2009; Triadafillou and Terzis 2009).

PASOK's resounding victory in those elections was almost a pre-determined fact, particularly after it had recorded substantial gains in the 2009 European elections. The record margin by which it won the national elections has often been credited to Papandreou's promise that "the money is there [λεφτά υπάρχουν]" (Nedos 2014), taken somewhat out of context (i.e., the claim that in 2009, the state had sufficient resources to avoid implementing Karamanlis' proposed austerity measures). Indeed, Papandreou—speaking from the International Expo in Thessaloniki just one month before the elections—promised wage raises, subsidies for employee-paid labor taxes and new efforts to fight tax evasion (Zoulas 2009a). This commitment to economic stimulus and growth was clearly linked in his speech to the condition of future success in weeding out clientelism and corruption and improving governance structures<sup>29</sup>.

That was the substance of the second point of contention on the part of PASOK and most of the rest of the parties, which blamed New Democracy for handling public affairs in corrupt and non-transparent ways. For the past year, constant publicity about a lopsided land swap transaction between the state and the Vatopedi monastery had surrounded New Democracy with an aura of scandal and corruption. The land swap saw highly coveted real estate facilities handed to the Church in exchange for a lake of debatable value in the Vatopedi monastery premises (Lewis 2010). This affair had caused the resignation of two ministers, a parliamentary probe, and a distinct impression that—at the outset of the crisis of 2008—a large part of the Greek elite was sheltered from it and was continuing to exchange "favors" with each other uninhibited. A cabal of church and state elites (mostly old men) were supposedly earning

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<sup>29</sup> For the potential strength and eventual limits of clientelism as an explanation of electoral strength in Greece, see also (Matakos and Xefteris 2016).

riches while the younger generation was expected to survive on meager monthly wages of 700 euros with pitiful prospects of social mobility (Giannarou 2007; Dede 2008). New Democracy, in proposing austerity at the same time as the infamous Vatopedi scandal was dominating the news (purportedly leaving the state 100 million euros poorer), evidently failed to endear itself to the electorate.

Overall, the elections of 2009 were fought on the terrain of transforming Greece from a stagnant country, mired in corruption and waste, into a modern European country, bestowing upon it a transparent and well-governed state. Indeed, Papandreou reconfirmed that these remained the priorities even later on, as the crisis unfolded:

*[M]y immediate response [to the debt inflation] was—in addition to putting our fiscal house in order—to make deep structural reforms to effectively reorganize the Greek state, following these key principles: clearer transparency, more efficiency, greater accountability (Papandreou 2015, 241).*

Green growth (another of Papandreou's signature promises), public sector reforms, and governance improvements would save enough wasted millions to avoid painful austerity. The first step in that direction was for PASOK to set up a reliable accounting machinery, able to reliably track public finances. Upon coming to power, it would seek to re-establish Greece's fiscal position on firm grounding.

Suspecting that New Democracy was obscuring the deficit to cover up for chronic and wasteful mismanagement, Papakonstantinou, the finance minister, upon arriving in office, held consecutive meetings with various Hellenic Statistical Agency (ELSTAT) and Bank of Greece officials to discover that this was indeed the case (Papakonstantinou 2016, 24–27). The actual deficit reached just under a startlingly 12 percent, approximately double what New Democracy

had admitted. The ensuing dispute about this claim was a first important node in the evolution of the government–opposition dynamic. In an extensive journalistic account of the deficit announcement written in *Kathimerini*, the PASOK leadership attempted to frame the situation as one where New Democracy had bequeathed chaos, pinning the blame for the required fiscal correction on them. This instinctively pushed New Democracy toward a reaction of denial (Palaologos, Ellis, and Varvitsioti 2014). Up to today, Papakonstantinou’s predecessor continues to insist that the deficit had been mistakenly inflated by transferring liabilities forward from subsequent years (Papathanasiou 2016).

The announcement of the bloated deficit also rattled Greece’s European peers. They were despondent, fearful that a Lehman Brothers type of collapse would repeat—this time in a sovereign state with even worse repercussions. Yet they were also frustrated that yet another auditing exercise had revealed discrepancies in Greek accounts. The previous auditing undertaken by New Democracy—and revelations about the accounting trickery Greece had used to enter the Eurozone (Balzli 2010)—had greatly shaken their faith in Greek statistics, which now evaporated completely (Palaologos, Ellis, and Varvitsioti 2014). After admonishing the Greek government, it was jointly decided to proceed with a program of wage freezes and/or small cuts in public sector bonuses in the hope that the market response to the deficit news would be muted. However, at the same time, a series of consecutive downgrades of the government’s credit rating from S&P, Moody’s, and Finch accentuated the impression of an economy in freefall. Debt markets never quieted, leading Greece’s bond yield into a frenzied ascent. There were continuous efforts by the Greek government to probe European governments for a decisive solution to the problem, but the spread of mistrust toward Greece as a whole, the change in government notwithstanding, and the reluctance of Europeans to treat Greece as a symptom of a wider systemic problem that would require significant EU institutional reform led to a deterioration of Greece’s ability to sustain its debt.

Papakonstantinou (2016) himself recalls in detail the sequence of international meetings, credit rating downgrades and market reactions that created a negative feedback loop that—coupled with Greek and European indecisiveness—eventually brought Greece close to bankruptcy.

The minutiae of this mostly international and economic spiral are not the focus of this thesis. Instead, this prologue’s purpose is to stress three important notes. First, the deterioration of the debt situation and the rapid emptying of Greek coffers led to a realization that more drastic measures were required and hence the first austerity package was considered and announced once our first episode begins. Second, themes of political conflict that would dominate political life in the following years were already nascent in the prelude prior to the actual bailout. The demand for “new” politics, for a more transparent, cleaner, leaner country and opposition to austerity were all integral elements of PASOK’s discourse even prior to the bailout. The seeds that would later topple the mainstream party system had been planted by PASOK and New Democracy themselves. The concepts of “new” and “old” would acquire new meanings throughout the crisis, but the idea that something needed to be renewed in Greek political life was already spreading in 2009.

Finally, the pathway from the elections to the first austerity package reveals the first instance of the behavioral pattern I have called “sleepwalking”. European peers of the Greek government, reluctant to engage in wide institutional reform after the Lisbon Treaty debacle, were unwilling to treat this situation as anything other than a country needing to get its fiscal house in order. Rather, they were content to *not* treat this emergency and hope that markets would soon move their focus elsewhere<sup>30</sup>.

In Greece as well, the dynamics of the government–opposition system and the behavior of its constituent parts, the mainstream parties, did not change when faced with the impending

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<sup>30</sup> See also the accounts of Papandreou (2015) and Papakonstantinou (2016) about European leaders’ reluctance to engage profoundly with the prospect of a Greek rescue before 2010.



economic calamity. The government found an opportunity to use the inflated debt as an instrument to score points over the outgoing opposition, shifting the blame to others for the incoming fiscal contraction, as governments had always done in the past. The opposition, fuming at what they considered PASOK's efforts to force them to shoulder the austerity bill, caved in and began forming their conflictual stance toward crisis measures, in fact denying for a while that there was a problem *at all*. At the same time, the government cabinet split. Many ministers, led by Katseli, the Minister of Economy, were convinced that they should honor their pre-electoral commitments (Palaiologos, Ellis, and Varvitsioti 2014), despite the fiscal derailment, and focus on structural reforms and containment of wasteful spending, corruption and tax evasion rather than actual austerity. Under the pressure from international bond markets and a strict repayment schedule, the other half of the cabinet, led by Papakonstantinou, eventually got the upper hand and on February 2010 the first contentious episode began as the government announced its first austerity package.

### ***The first episode of contention***

#### *Timeline of events: 2 February–6 May 2010<sup>31</sup>*

On 2 February 2010 the government announced a series of wage freezes and pension-age reforms to ease fiscal pressure, hoping to quell bond market unrest. In the first days of February, the immediate response came by small unions of civil service branches, like customs workers, which announced strikes. Shortly after, ADEDY, the public sector union, and PAME, the Communist Party of Greece's (KKE) union front, held a strike on 10 February, while

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<sup>31</sup> I utilize the contentious episode data, coded as a sequence of actions by government, challengers and third parties, to reconstruct the timeline of events in narrative form. As all episodes, this one is structured around the interactions of the government with challengers and third parties, initiated by the government's legislative proposal. We could in fact split this episode in three, because there were three distinct austerity packages. However, because they immediately succeed each other, we decided to package everything in a single episode.

GSEE, the (nominally) private employees' union, joined the fray on 24 February, calling for a general strike. Both protests gathered tens of thousands of protesters.<sup>32</sup> The top-level union mobilization was followed by sporadic strikes from isolated civil sector unions for the next two weeks, as market worries had not subsided and the government was considering a wider austerity package.

As the yields on Greek bonds kept climbing, on 3 March the government amended its original package to implement deeper austerity measures, voting immediately for some new wage cuts and VAT, income and payroll tax increases on 5 March. Already at this point, riot police began its soon-to-be frequent clashes with blocks of protesters. On 11 March, the unions reacted with a joint general strike this time and a well-attended demonstration, numbering approximately 100,000–200,000 protesters. As these protests were concluding, the frequent Greek pattern of anarchist group skirmishing with police reoccurred. In both instances, the government was congratulated by international actors—notably the EU institutions and member state governments—on its boldness and chastised by the opposition parties in parliament. The KKE and Syriza denounced austerity as the erroneous implementation of capitalist/neoliberal orthodoxy. For its part, New Democracy considered the measures unnecessary, as it accused PASOK of magnifying Greece's problem by statistical forgery and attracting unwanted attention to the country.

The locus of events was displaced on the international scene for the following month. Within Greece, small civil sector unions, and associations of professions threatened with liberalization, continued to react to the government, but the pace of protest slowed. Up to the 11 March general strike, there were 1.24 protest events on average per day, dropping to 1.12

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<sup>32</sup> The numbers of protesters have been sourced from the contentious episode and protest event databases, press archives or supplemented by Diani and Kousis' (2014) database of large protest events when other quotes were unavailable. Unfortunately, participant numbers for smaller protests are not reliably available in any of these databases/sources to create an encompassing timeline of the trends in quantity of participants.

in the period until 23 April. Most importantly, apart from an attempt by ADEDY to launch a general strike that devolved into a simple march, most of these events were scattered, uncoordinated strikes from low-level unions.

Internationally, as Papandreou's cuts failed to convince markets, it increasingly became clear that a European or international bailout would be necessary. The Greek government, Europeans and opposition spent a month concurrently exploring this possibility, only to ultimately equivocate. European governments had to overcome their fear of the moral hazard of bailing out Greece and navigate institutional constraints such as the no-bailout clause (article 125) in the Lisbon Treaty that forbade EU governments from assuming each other's debts. By mid-April, when it was evident that default would be imminent without aid, talks intensified, until finally, an agreement was reached between Greece and its creditors.

On 23 April, on the remote island of Kastellorizo, in front of an idle, tranquil port, Papandreou gave a televised pronouncement (Papandreou 2010) declaring that he had asked Greece's European peers for a bailout. The "support mechanism" that EU officials and the IMF had concocted in a hurry over the previous month was activated. The government had to concede what it had been trying to avoid ever since the fateful announcement of the excess deficit, as it had spent months arguing that the previous bouts of austerity would avoid the need to resort to the IMF (*The Economist* 2009; Elevtherotipia 2010). It adopted an extensive expansion of austerity, including increases in VAT and real estate taxes, replacing two employee wages and of two monthly pension installments with much smaller subsidies and direct wage cuts for public sector workers. There was an immediate upsurge of protest for the remainder of the episode, with contentious action rising to an average 3.6 events per day, as unions, parties of the left and newly-appearing organizations engaged in a flurry of strikes and demonstrations ahead of the bailout vote, challenging that fateful decision.

The passage of the bailout on 6 May 2010 ended the first episode. It followed the same script as the two previous packages: praise by the Europeans, condemnation by the opposition, another large, 48-hour general strike and demonstrations by top-level unions on 5–6 May that would again draw hundreds of thousands of protesters in front of parliament at Syntagma (Constitution) square. Additionally, protests were organized throughout the country, with smaller but rarer demonstrations occurring in almost every urban space in the country.

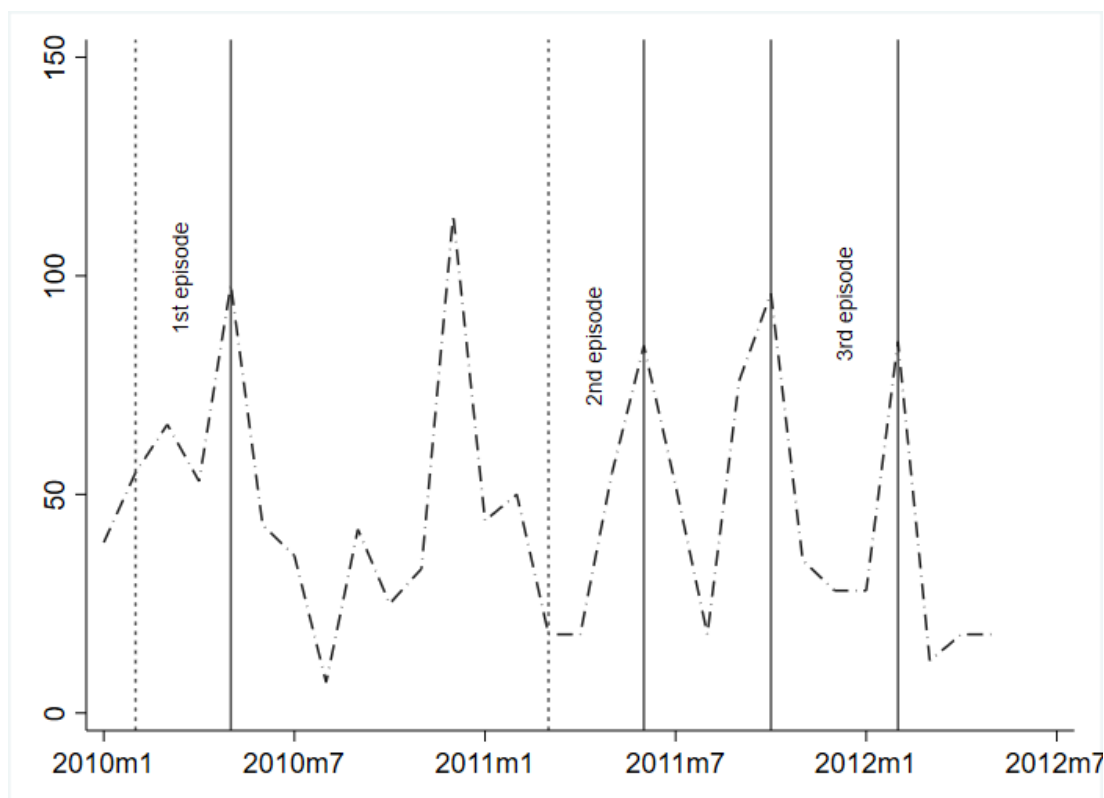
However, this final act of the episode is particularly notable for two significant developments. Institutionally, the passage of the bailout brought the Troika into existence. While the previous austerity packages had been initiated, decided and implemented domestically, this new package's implementation would be supervised by Greece's European peers. Policy would henceforth be designed jointly with the creditors' representatives, with the threat of catastrophic default always looming, giving birth to the multi-level regime of semi-sovereignty.

Protest also ended on a sour note. As localized riots broke out throughout the body of the main demonstration on 5 May, the situation outside parliament turned chaotic, with large blocks of protesters hurling Molotov cocktails at policemen while others were physically assaulting riot police on parliament's steps. Slightly further down the road, unknown rioters launched such cocktails against the Marfin bank, suspecting the bank had broken the work stoppage imposed by the general strike. The building was quickly engulfed in smoke and three people remained trapped inside, losing their lives as parliament was debating the bailout measures.

The nascent anti-bailout movement was numbed by the death toll. Images of bank employees desperately pleading for help, crowded on a small balcony, with dark smoke

looming over them while the building was burning (News247 2012) went viral across Greece.<sup>33</sup> The frequency of protest events deescalated, leading to a lull in contention immediately after events of the last general strike, as shown in the timeline of protest in *Figure 5-1*.

*Figure 5-1: Protest events in Greece, 2010–2012*



Note: The solid lines are months in which major austerity laws or legislation was passed.

It would take approximately seven months for another protest peak to arise. On the following day, the actual date of passage, the crowd outside the parliament square was reduced and the mood was solemn. No riots occurred and parts of the demonstration passed in front of the Marfin building to leave flowers (Dama and Kyriakopoulou 2010).

<sup>33</sup> For an extensive and sympathetic account of this phase of the protest wave, see also (Psimitis 2011).

### *Contentious action patterns and themes*

This episode was a foretaste of what was to follow, as all the characteristics of most subsequent episodes and years were foreshadowed. The high degree of contestation, the political–institutional conflict around the bailout, the foreign intervention, government intransigence, all are elements first encountered here and throughout this story. However, there are some characteristics that separate this episode from subsequent ones. In terms of contentiousness, I want to examine particularly the composition of actors, protest forms, claims and subsequently the patterns of interaction between challenger and government.

In terms of actor profile, as can be seen in *Table 3-2*, this episode constitutes the pinnacle of top-down mobilization. Most recorded challenger events are organized by the combination of top-level unions, i.e. the GSEE and ADEDY overarching unions, and radical left parties, predominantly the Communist Party of Greece and its grassroots union, PAME. If one adds sectoral unions organizing their own strikes and demonstrations, almost 80 percent of all actions were initiated by an institutionalized challenger. There are new groups emerging, like the “Can’t Pay, Won’t Pay” movement which began its activity by protesting increased tolls in national highways, but these are still marginal presences, gathering below the union umbrella.

This was directly reflected in protest forms, as the most frequent type of mobilization was the strike, oftentimes followed by an associated demonstration. We have recorded 39 instances of strikes, comprising 72 percent of all mobilizations. The heavy top-down nature of this episode is also mirrored in the quick succession of three general strikes, one each in February, March and May, a level of mobilization not achieved on most European states over entire years, let alone a trimester (Hamann, Johnston, and Kelly 2013).

The focus of the protesters' claims was also influenced by the identity of the organizers. There are 212 protest events recorded in our more detailed protest event database<sup>34</sup> for the months of February–May 2010. Out of those, 85 percent were categorized as “economic” protest, contesting the austerity proposals. In the more traditional type of protests occurring during this time, protesters joined blocks of institutional organizations, like unions and parties, which carried banners and chanted slogans denouncing the government’s anti-labor plans and demanding better wages, job security and pensions. An ADEDY banner declared: “We strike for real wage increases, for a fair and efficient tax system”. Another carried by the public water utility’s employees proclaimed: “keep your hands off social insurance”. PAME’s slogan read: “Rise so that the people do not pay—everyone on the streets”. The focus was also often distributional: other banners across the large 5 May march declared: “the thieves should pay”, “send the bill to the ones responsible for the crisis” or “stop payments to bankers”. The identity of the thieves or the ones responsible was not quite transparent at that point, still broadly reconcilable with the government’s narrative of focusing efforts on fighting corruption and tax evasion. Bankers might have been one primary target, but soon others would enter the movement’s crosshairs.

So far, this described relatively routine Greek contentious performances. Top-down organization, block-based marching, and demands focused on the economic dimension and disruption of the workplace predominantly by public sector employees. On the individual level, Rüdig and Karyotis (2013, 2014; 2018), who cover the 2010 protests, show that the most significant predictor of protest participation during this period was whether someone had protested before. The patterns observed were therefore a continuation of past behavior and the

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<sup>34</sup> The discrepancy between the number of protest events in contentious episode databases and protest event databases is due to multiple methodological and substantive differences. Most importantly, PEA records all protest events, while the CEP database only those concerning reactions to the specific austerity package.

perpetrators of this extraordinary turmoil were mostly the “usual suspects” (i.e., union members and left-leaning protesters with past protest experience).

The new element in these first protests was the quantitative expansion of participants and its durability. For three straight months, on at least three occasions when new austerity policies were discussed, between tens and hundreds of thousands of protesters gathered throughout the country to protest the bailout. Estimations of the last strike—demonstrations on 11 March and 5 May range from 100,000 to 250,000, as up to 2.5 million employees participated in the strike. Rüdig and Karyotis (2014; 2018) also mention that the 2010 protests were much more massive in scale than anything preceding them, involving approximately 23 per cent of the Greek population. As the measures proposed widened the share of the population affected—with VAT hikes, labor taxes and wage cuts imposed by government fiat affecting many more people than the original public sector wage freeze proposed in February—the numbers drawn to Syntagma square, outside parliament, grew. This is in line with the wildfire spread of economic pessimism, as the number predicting the economic situation would worsen in the future had jumped from 38 percent in February to 61 percent in March (Public Issue 2010b).

While the diversity of challengers was not particularly wide in this episode (see e.g., (Diani and Kousis 2014), these initial mass demonstrations were only a prelude to subsequent episodes. The top-down organizations acted as a cocoon for the social movement chrysalis. As Kanellopoulos et al. (2017) argue, the top-level unions acted as a facilitator—and an umbrella—enabling protesters from various different backgrounds to converge into Syntagma square. Among the diverse groups that marched below their banners, from Syriza, to “Can’t Pay, Won’t Pay” and sectoral unions, there was widespread mistrust toward the top-level unions, as they were suspected of being too cozy with the government and PASOK



(Kanellopoulos et al. 2017).<sup>35</sup> Their entire national leadership were PASOK members and there was a pattern of using the unions as a springboard for launching a national political career (Sotiropoulos 2018). Yet their organization of nationwide strikes and the porous and open nature of their protests attracted a record number of citizens who felt aggrieved by the proposed austerity measures. GSEE-led protest was acting as a focal point of protest, concentrating the resources and synchronizing the actions of a diverse palimpsest of otherwise small and organizationally weak groups. Apart from GSEE, no one at that point had the potential to coordinate successfully masses of people against austerity and send such an effective message.

While Rüdig and Karyotis (2013) are therefore right to claim that the 2010 protests mostly brought forth habitual protesters, the novelty of this mobilization was that it was the first time all those groups and protester profiles gathered *concurrently* at the same place or almost.<sup>36</sup> Kanellopoulos et al. (2017) describe the 2010 protests as the beginnings of the creation of an “informal coalition” of parties, unions and citizens who protested austerity, despite their factionalist and ideological differences. Kanellopoulos (2017) describes this informal coalition as a large network of protest, connected by the unions and left-wing parties, within which each organization kept its autonomy and agenda, but nevertheless their unity in action forged an informal bond between them. The important contribution of this first manifestation of the protest wave then was that despite the guidance of discredited unions, their call for protest acted as a focal point that coordinated the actions of a critical mass of people who opposed austerity.

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<sup>35</sup> Public Issue, a Greek polling company, traces a significant drop in trust toward unions during 2009, as the crisis had already affected incomes and job security. From almost an equal ratio of people trusting GSEE and ADEDY in 2008 to those who did not, by the end of 2009 there was one person who trusted the top unions for every two who did not (Public Issue 2010a).

<sup>36</sup> The Communist Party and PAME throughout the period insisted to hold their rallies at a short physical distance to other protesters, as a material reminder of the ideological gulf that separated them, but also to avoid infiltration of their blocks from raucous protesters.

Moving away from the challengers to examine the other interactions present in the episode, three themes emerge. First, the government's relationship with foreign creditors was one of mutual if begrudging support. The foreign governments implored the Greek government to take ever-more drastic measures and then showered them with praise when they did so. Second, the opposition was starkly opposed to the government throughout the episode, insisting the austerity and the bailout were a mistaken, if not criminal course of action.

Thirdly, with regard to the challengers–government interaction, the main feature that stands out is that the government's exclusive response to challengers was to either ignore or actively repress them, more so than in other Greek episodes. There are some coded events indicating that the government was willing to negotiate, but substantially the negotiations mostly consisted of sessions where the ministers tried to persuade union bosses that the austerity measures were urgent and necessary, allowing for no concessions or deviations from planned austerity. One peculiarity of this episode is that despite it being the one with the least government concessions, it also contained the most instances of negotiation between top-level unions and the government. After this episode, all actual negotiations we recorded between government and protesters would occur between the government and sectoral/firm level unions, in an attempt to appease part of the challengers to austerity and divide their front. Only in the first episode does the government try to persuade top-level unions to moderate their demands against austerity packages. The ministers probably understood that top-level unions were important in their function as a “glue” for mass protest, their rallies becoming the focal point of the informal coalition, but their efforts to dissuade them from protesting came to nothing. The challengers as well did not back down from their demands, but instead escalated their campaign against the government's plans, as each round of austerity brought more strikes and demonstrations.

This inability to confront such a profound emergency however leaves one asking for an explanation for these patterns of behavior. Why did the unions—whose leadership consisted almost entirely of PASOK members—not react in a less intense manner to what was apparently a national emergency? Why was the government–challenger relationship so intransigent and why did the Greek opposition behave in such a conflictual way when nudged by its European peers to pitch in the effort of adjustment? In the next section, I try to probe some explanations about these phenomena,<sup>37</sup> returning often to the theoretical toolkit developed in chapter 4.

### ***Explaining interaction patterns: Unions and parties***

#### *Unions and government*

I have delineated the relationship between challengers and government for this episode as a conflictual one; mobilization and confrontation on the part of unions, ignoring union demands and repressing their protests on the part of government. However, in 2010, PASKE (the union arm of PASOK) held a near-majority in both overarching unions, GSEE and ADEDY (Sotiropoulos 2018). It is therefore puzzling that they agitated so openly against a newly elected government to which they were affiliated. In the long-run, this is a critical question because unions—by calling for successive general strikes—set the tone of confrontation with the government and provided their organizational infrastructure for the anti-bailout movement to eventually blossom. They facilitated the first step of a process that would prove disastrous for the party their leadership hailed from. Why did they do so? As outlined in the theoretical chapter, we need to understand the internal calculus of union leaders and the forces that shaped their response. I believe the answer lies in the combination of four factors that can be summed up as interest, habit, ignorance and internal competition.

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<sup>37</sup> As I have already remarked, I do not engage with the Troika–government interaction unless necessary to explain something critical for the evolution of the Greek party system. Explaining patterns in the international sphere is not one of my research goals.

The most straightforward answer is *interest*: the initial measures asymmetrically targeted the unionized core of the labor force in Greece, that of workers in the wider public sector. The first austerity package in February froze civil sector pensions and the immediate response was the unleashing of strikes from many key agencies in the public sector. Tax collectors, customs employees, power utility workers, teachers, diplomats, local government workers and even parliament employees went on strike almost instantaneously. In fact, of the 32 base-level union strikes we coded for this episode, 30 were triggered by public sector employees and only two by private sector unions (sailors and dockworkers). Matsaganis (2007) explains that union coverage in Greece has followed a lopsided pattern, with almost the entire public sector being covered while the private sector is one of the least unionized in Europe. It is characteristic that for the first, February austerity package, only ADEDY—the union representing the narrow core of the civil service—called its subordinate unions to a general strike. There were grassroots grievances that union leadership had to address and the public sector unions were initially the organization with the most resources and power to respond forcefully to those grievances. Once they reacted to the relatively mild package of February with a general strike, it would seem inappropriate to forego the same type of mobilization on the more painful packages of March and May.

Grassroots pressure also manifested itself as *internal competition* within unions. As Sotiropoulos (2018) observes, the national political competition was reproduced on a smaller scale within the Greek unions. Almost all union factions present in GSEE and ADEDY were affiliated to a parliamentary party. Union elections were contested with ferocity, a prestigious trophy for parliamentary parties to claim their social influence was expanding. Additionally, for the decade before the crisis, GSEE was under pressure from the radical left factions and PAME, the Communist Party's union-within-a-union (Tsakatika and Eleftheriou 2013). PAME was essentially at the same time within and outside GSEE, nominally belonging to it,

participating in its elections, but acting as a parallel organization that could call for strikes by multiple base unions at a time. This parallel existence of PAME within GSEE made any effort to contain public protest harder, as anytime GSEE would not call for a strike, PAME would, creating the impression that GSEE was ineffective or had been captured by PASOK. Internal competition then provided an incentive to leadership to proceed with a mobilization arms race, at least within certain bounds.

The *timing* of the austerity packages was particularly sensitive, as GSEE held its tri-annual convention in March 2010 and its leadership was seeking re-election. While PASOK's victory was assured (Kopsini 2010), it would have been uncomfortable to appear to cave in to the government at that exact time. Internal competition and distrust toward unions grew, making their leaderships increasingly uneasy. On 5 March, protesters from the far left (and possibly Syriza) attacked the president of GSEE during the general strike, beating him and throwing objects at him, accusing him of being too passive (Mpourdaras and Karalis 2010).<sup>38</sup> While this episode of violence itself might not have been a major factor, wide distrust toward unions (Kanellopoulos et al. 2017; Public Issue 2010a) and repeated verbal and physical attacks on their leadership might have urged GSEE's leadership to assume a tougher stance, especially given the upcoming convention. Indeed, in early February the GSEE's president departed from collective bargaining talks, citing as a reason that he would not take critical decisions before GSEE's convention (Kathimerini 2010a).

In a narrower interpretation of the motive of interest, one should also mention the *loss of influence and resources of the union leadership*. Several scholars have stressed the central role of clientelistic links in Greek politics (Mavrogordatos 1997; Pappas 2009; Afonso, Zartaloudis, and Papadopoulos 2015). Union leaderships and members participated in the

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<sup>38</sup> In line with the party's anarchic internal state, its leader, Tsipras, was one of the first to visit the GSEE president while he was receiving first aid.

materialistic quid pro quo and the disruption of the material basis of this relationship produced by the strain on national finances might have rendered the unions even less likely to accept nudges from the government. Sotiropoulos (2018) makes the point that union leadership also acted as an incubator for a future political career. This trajectory would have been jeopardized if union leadership did not defend the interests of its members. In many ways then, union leadership sensed that their access, influence and benefits from the policy system was becoming “closed”, to put it in political opportunity structures terms. As the Troika entered the policy-making system, domestic stakeholders like unions were displaced. Iordanoglou (2013) claims that unions might have held more power in their dealings with the government than vice versa by some point in the late 2000s and their grasp on policy coming at an end might have triggered a break in their links to PASOK. PASOK affiliation did not necessarily entail PASOK control. In a series of disputes with past PASOK governments, the union leaderships distanced themselves from their party of origin and successfully challenged its policies (Matsaganis 2007; Sotiropoulos 2018).

This brings us to *habit and ignorance*, the final elements within the union leadership’s calculus. General strikes, while rare elsewhere, have been quite common in Greece (Hamann, Johnston, and Kelly 2013). Reproducing the standard Greek protest repertoire they had employed in the past could have been perceived as a relatively innocuous act; after all, past governments had been confronted by unions and had made concessions without collapsing or irreparably breaking the cord to unions. The unions had forced governments to scale back pension reform, once in 2001 and again in 2007 (Matsaganis 2007). It is possible that they thought they could extract some concessions or force the government to retreat by launching a similar mobilization. Even if not, calling for a general strike was not seen to be as large a disruption in Greece as elsewhere and it was a relatively routine instrument in the unions’ repertoire. But what in previous years had been a rather typical and mundane protest action

turned into something bigger, as the unpopularity of austerity brought more people out on the streets, paradoxically under the aegis of the discredited unions (Kanellopoulos et al. 2017; Kouki 2018).<sup>39</sup>

Habitual patterns of protest were compounded by shortsighted ignorance, or more accurately a misunderstanding of the lurking dangers. As the president of GSEE declared about the first package in February:

*I am saddened. The government that I supported has retreated before the markets' needs...whether the employers want it or not, the employees of the private sector will get raises (Kathimerini 2010b).*

The GSEE presidency seemed to believe that the crisis was not as deep as the government or employee associations claimed and that it was being used as an excuse to cheat their representatives. When the first package was introduced, GSEE declared that it could not agree to anything less than 800 euros as a floor for newly employed workers, a sign that unions thought wage increases a realistic demand (Kathimerini 2010a). Nor was it amenable to proposals for pension-age increases, which it argued would not aid sustainability of the pension system at all (Kathimerini 2010b).

In fairness, the misunderstanding of the crisis' extent by GSEE was also due to the information it was fed. The "transmission belt" between unions and parties were mostly those MPs and ministers they talked to from their parties. But it appears that the MPs were as confused and clueless about the extent of the crisis as the unions themselves. Reluctant MPs often asked the finance minister if the measures were really necessary or the burden could be lightened repeatedly (Papakonstantinou 2016: 135). Even the prime minister himself appeared

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<sup>39</sup> As a protester belonging to a base union describes: "People bestowed their own meaning upon the strikes, did we care about trade unionists? We ignored them" (Kouki, 2018).

furious at a meeting with the ECB and EC when he was asked to take further measures, having been assured that the measures already taken were adequate (Papakonstantinou 2016: 82).

This also helps to explain to some extent the government's dominant response (i.e., repressing the escalating protests and ignoring their demands). This response had two bases. The first was the idea that the crisis would soon subside, meaning there was time for the newly elected government in its remaining three years to heal its relationship with the unions and civil society (Papandreou 2015). After all, in 2007 Karamanlis had faced a similar protest shock against his pension reforms, with equivalent repertoires and crowds being deployed against him, but his government won re-election anyway after making some concessions.

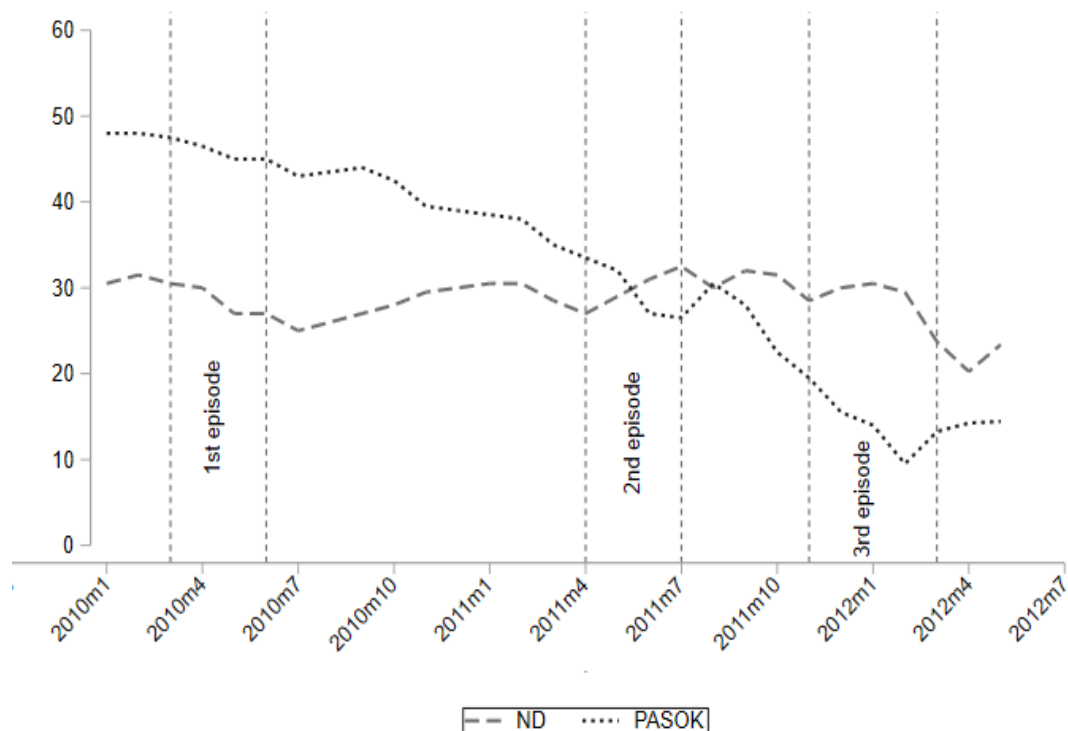
Given the assumption that market pressure would subside, PASOK felt it had time to correct things. Initially, it would not yield, as it saw the austerity packages as a necessity to avoid getting bailed out, which a lot of its ministers feared and thought would create much wider problems down the road. After the bailout had happened anyway, there was the consolation that at least funding was now secured and by 2012 or 2013 the crisis would probably be a distant memory, just in time for the 2014 elections. The priority therefore was to focus on the pressing issue of the debt crisis rather than on union reactions. Despite the massiveness of the protest events, Papandreou was not prepared to yield to protesters, as the prospect of a default scared him and his cabinet much more. Even if they wanted to make some concessions, there was little choice for them until market panic was suppressed.

The second logic behind repression was that the protests did not seem to dent the government's popularity. There was no reason for a government elected with a wide 11 percent margin to panic over a few massive demonstrations. There was no real evidence of a serious polling slippage and the government's strategy of deflecting blame toward New Democracy had partially worked (see *Figure 5-2* below). PASOK's honeymoon had ended, but the party was still comfortably ahead of its main rival. There was a respectable portion of Greek society



which saw the austerity as a necessary corrective to the fiscal excesses of previous years and supported PASOK's efforts to clean up the country, even if it would be painful in the short-term. Papakonstantinou, the minister of finance, was even applauded by a crowd of bystanders when he entered a Greek tavern during his winter holidays just before our first episode, when the government's intentions to curb the deficit were first announced (Papakonstantinou 2016, 61). Seeing the gathering crowds augment in size monthly might have been harrowing for the government and PASOK MPs, but many of them subscribed to the belief that the reactions were a massive response from a narrow sector of Greek society—namely, civil servants. Confusing the initial narrow response of civil sector strikes in February to be the entirety of the anti-austerity movement, an artifact of the strong unionization and resources of the public sector that allowed it to be the first to join the fray, the government was relatively complacent that despite the numbers in the street, the “silent majority” was backing it up.

*Figure 5-2: PASOK and New Democracy voting intentions, 2010–2012*



Source: Compiled by the author.

In fact, the aftermath of the March/May protests shows that they were not entirely incorrect in that assessment. As Karyotis and Rüdig (2013) show, the November 2010 elections that followed showed no noticeable change in electoral trends and PASOK was barely punished. Despite latent attitudinal tendencies indicating that anger, indignation and frustration were expanding, protest behavior was yet unlinked to electoral or institutional behavior. This was aided by the shock from the deaths of Marfin bank employees, as it helped forge a bloody link between the rhetorical association of protest against austerity and irresponsibility. The protest movement's post-Marfin slump was indicative of the still existing gulf between "habitual" protesters—who had acted en masse against the first bailout—and the rest of society, which was still numb from the repercussions of uncontrolled rioting and unwilling to join discredited unions and parties, in spite of its increasing unease at the bailout.

This initial round of interactions between government and challengers acted as a stepping stone for what would follow, for cementing the conflictual relationship that would dominate the bailout age. In the following two episodes, the same type of pattern of mobilization and repression would repeat itself with minor twists. I hope to have outlined how this pattern was carried over to the bailout age as a continuation of past trends and habits, and the internal and external constraints faced by the government and challengers alike. The common denominator was a *miscalculation* about the depth and duration of the crisis. Based on this erroneous (in hindsight) estimate, unions believed that typical confrontational behavior was warranted. They proceeded to mobilize to ward off against internal competition and secure their enshrined position and benefits. They consequently sleepwalked their way toward an unrelenting confrontation with the government rather than bend before the urgency of the crisis. The government, sandwiched between union demands and market/European pressure, chose to satisfy the latter, both because it believed it to be the most threatening but also the one with the most pressing deadlines. Repression was thus chosen as the response to union mobilization,

giving birth to the iconic images of Greek riots and of a parliament perennially enshrouded in smoke throughout the period. As there was plenty of time in their term and past governments had successfully bounced off such challenges, Papandreou believed this time would be no different. But it was.

### *Government–opposition dynamics*

Unions were supported, at least hesitantly, by the opposition throughout the first episode. As calculated by *Table 3-4*, there were 84 coded instances of third parties supporting the government and 34 supporting the challengers. The division of labor is near-perfect: out of the former, 73 are international actors. From the latter, 21 refer to the main opposition party, New Democracy. New Democracy fudged and qualified its support, always certain to condemn any episodes of violence, but inevitably sided with the protesters, as did KKE and Syriza, albeit with fewer reservations.<sup>40</sup> New Democracy leadership met GSEE's presidium on February 17th to explicitly declare its opposition to wage cuts for low incomes (*To Vima* 2010). In parliament, Samaras defended his proposal for a different mix of measures and also clearly referred to the protests sympathetically:

*[S]omething that we need to hear...these measures have detonated a social explosion...someone should express the concerns of the citizens (Samaras 2010).*

The bailout contained a true dilemma for New Democracy. On the one hand, the bailout caused dissatisfaction and anger, providing an opportunity for electoral gains over PASOK. Furthermore, the Greek patterns of government–opposition dynamics had always been conflictual, with the opposition perceived to always assume a role of government criticism. On

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<sup>40</sup> The exception to this conflictual behavior was LAOS, a small far-right party which supported the government's austerity drive during this episode and voted in favor of the packages.

the other, many of the treaty's provisions were congruent with the party's economically liberal ideology and the mild austerity package already proposed by the outgoing government. Additionally, the party's identity was emblematically associated with Greek participation in the European Union; fighting the European-led bailout came into direct conflict with the party's historical trajectory and its profile as a "responsible" force in politics. Caught in a classic responsibility-responsiveness wedge (Mair 2009, 2013), what was New Democracy to do?

Eventually, New Democracy chose a conflictual response via a sequence of contingent events and party processes. Following its 2009 heavy defeat in the polls, Karamanlis resigned and a profoundly fierce leadership race between mainly Dora Bakoyanni and Antonis Samaras was underway. Bakoyanni was the undisputed favorite at the time and daughter of former Prime Minister Mitsotakis, while Samaras was the man whose departure from Mitsotakis' government in the early 1990s had caused its collapse. He was subsequently exiled from New Democracy, wandering the fringes of parliamentary life for eleven years before being readmitted to the party and only gaining back his parliamentary seat in 2007. The rivalry between them was personal and ideological, with Bakoyanni representing the more liberal wing of the party and Samaras the more right-wing, nationalistic part.

New Democracy's freefall in the polls was also troubling the party apparatchiks who searched for a way to reinvigorate the party. While leadership elections up to then were decided by party conferences, party notables conceived of the idea, copying PASOK's practice, that perhaps an open primary would serve this purpose, engaging the party's base and turning the spotlight on it (Zoulas 2009b). The candidates other than Bakoyanni hurriedly concurred and pressured to adopt an open primary. In a conference contest, Bakoyanni was expected to win handsomely, as she possessed a considerable advantage among the elected MPs and party apparatus. She miscalculated that this would translate relatively seamlessly onto an open contest majority and accepted the challenge (Nafteboriki 2009), discounting the appeal of

Samaras' rhetoric for the party rank and file, as he unapologetically praised the party's right-wing legacy and adopted a strict anti-immigration line. New Democracy's leadership race ended with a surprising Samaras victory on 29 November 2009, taking 50 percent of the approximately 800,000 votes outright on the first round compared to Bakoyanni's 39 percent.<sup>41</sup>

However, his hold on the party was tenuous, as a large part of the MPs and executives remained hostile to him, and intra-party squabbles kept erupting (Terzis 2009, 2010a, 2010b; Mpourdaras 2010b). Throughout the first months of his presidency New Democracy showed no improvement in the polls, the majority of respondents stating the party was headed in the wrong direction (Mavris 2010). With a party convention scheduled for the spring of 2010, Samaras' tenure was still fragile, as he was still essentially an outsider, having to rely on the large part of the party that cohered around Karamanlis to tolerate him and fend off challenges from Bakoyanni's camp.

At the same time as New Democracy was occupied with its internal struggles, the austerity measures were announced in February 2010 and a parliamentary committee was set up to examine any political and legal responsibilities for the falsified statistics that had concealed the debt's magnitude (Mpourdaras 2010a). Papakonstantinou, the finance minister, publicized an expert report, detailing the logistic malpractices that suppressed the Greek debt and demanded the previous government be held accountable.

The government had been consistently attempting to frame the opposition as the ones responsible for the emergency measures it had imposed. A survey on 7 March shows that they were rather persuasive, as almost 40 percent of the questioned citizens place the blame on the previous government and almost none at the then current one (Chiotis 2010). Later on,

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<sup>41</sup> There was a third candidate who received 10 percent of the votes.

Papandreou even began his Kastellorizo speech in which he announced the bailout with these lines:

*Yesterday the data for the true magnitude of the 2009 debt were announced. They reminded all of us of the incomprehensible mistakes, the omissions, the criminal decisions and the storms of problems that the previous government bequeathed us (Papandreou 2010).*

The internal party equilibrium, the electoral decline of New Democracy, and the attempt to frame it as the culprit behind the bailout helps complete the picture and explain Samaras' decision. He was initially ambivalent, as we have recorded several responses supportive of the government, hinting that he would countenance voting for austerity bills, or at least the parts he agreed with.

But considering his fragile hold over the party, supporting the measures would create an internal problem, as it would be an implicit confession that the deficit had ballooned out of proportion. With public opinion blaming New Democracy for the fiscal wreckage and a commission examining criminal charges against Karamanlis' ministers, the recriminations and conflict about the situation reached new heights. Agreeing to the measures would be equivalent to throwing Karamanlis and several high-profile former ministers under the bus, risking their estrangement and forcing Karamanlis to eschew the position of internal neutrality he had held up to that point.

Resolution lay in Samaras doing exactly what he did: oppose PASOK's packages and allow New Democracy MPs to claim that the deficit accounting by the previous government was not problematic, but rather the product of PASOK using unorthodox accounting techniques to frame New Democracy for the looming economic disaster. By doing this, Samaras kept his domestic front at peace and could also painlessly refuse to support PASOK's austerity

measures. After all, if the deficit was falsely inflated, then the measures were also unnecessary; even better, they could be cast as an accidental side-effect of PASOK's zeal to frame his party for their economic blunders. Echoes of Samaras' politics reverberate through time, as Greece's chief statistics officer during this period still faces a trial for supposedly forging the post-2009 revised statistics (Brunsden and Hope 2017). While New Democracy did not deny that some corrective measures were required, it was insisting that the government had chosen the wrong mix, over-relying on tax increases and additionally was directly causing the market panic, by exaggerating the condition of Greece's fiscal balance. As the party's spokesman said on the vote for the second austerity package:

*[Y]ou were the first to speak of bankruptcy and you fell in the trap that you set up...did you see Ireland, which has a large debt, do it [bankruptcy]? Portugal? Spain? You declared on international markets that we are defaulting, that our national sovereignty is at stake and the speculators came and battered Greece. These are your mistakes [but] we pay [for] them (Kefalogiannis 2010).*

Samaras would also often condemn the measures, adopting a semi-Keynesian macroeconomic framework, which emphasized the downward spiral caused by austerity:

*The policy you are implementing...leads to a vicious cycle, destructive for the economy. It is a vicious cycle of recession, persistent deficits that render new harsh measures necessary, harsher cuts each time, that lead to an even greater recession...into deficits that persist and lead again to new harsh measures and even deeper recession. I supported breaking this vicious cycle and to break it we need a stimulus of the economy, but of zero or minimal fiscal cost (Samaras 2010).*

All the elements of the rationale that would later be adopted by the anti-austerity movement (and that Samaras would eventually have to recant) were also present there; that austerity fed deflation and economic deceleration, that the deficits persist due to the program itself, that a stimulus rather than austerity was necessary and also that there were other measures that would be much less painful to implement. This kind of narrative might have been adopted for opportunistic or introspective reasons, but it would be used in the future against New Democracy both domestically, by its mushrooming party challengers on the right and internationally, when European creditors doubted the support of New Democracy for the bailout without written reassurances.

By the end of the first bailout, the combination of internal struggles and diverging economic frameworks in New Democracy had acquired substantive implications. Bakoyanni supported a line of consensus and support toward the government, citing the need for responsible opposition at a time of crisis and the need for liberalization. Samaras opposed the austerity measures, citing the need for a “social liberalism”. Largely estranged and marginalized in the party during this time, Bakoyanni was finally expelled when she voted for the first bailout on 6 May, contradicting the party whip (Triadafillou and Terzis 2010). She would go on to found her own liberal formation, Democratic Alliance, ahead of the next elections. Samaras’ leadership was now on a sound footing, but at the cost of perpetuating the pattern of conflict between government and opposition during the entrance to a delicate new era.

To sum up, the government–opposition dynamic remained conflictual due to the factors of internal complexity and habitual politics, of calculated sleepwalking, outlined in chapter 4. The opposition could not forge a consensus with the government because of its leadership’s fragile internal balance of power and because the government, following the routine practice of creating an examination committee for every scandal, decided to exploit politically the



falsified deficit issue and seek the recrimination of its predecessors. Coupled with other ongoing investigations of the Vatopedi scandal, consensus became near impossible—it was difficult to find common ground on economic measures while concurrently accusing the other party of bankrupting the country through its corrupt practices. The habitual mode of politics as recrimination and internal complexity inevitably locked up the government and opposition in an adversarial relationship until the third episode, when external pressure broke the deadlock.

### *Government–MP dynamics*

I have also noted the government–MP relationship as a major factor in the evolution of the play, but within this episode their interaction was relatively smooth. Initially, we have coded incidents where PASOK MPs protested verbally against austerity, as it was an ideologically incongruent policy prescription for them. However, the sense of emergency, the realization that most of the blame was shouldered by the opposition and the promise that these measures, taken early in the government’s term were a way to avoid something worse gradually diminished their fears. Indeed, the first austerity packages would pass without any losses for PASOK in parliament. Instead, frictions mostly developed in the cabinet, between those who believed that the austerity measures voted before the bailout should suffice to quell the markets, led by the minister of the economy, Katseli, and those who pleaded for further decisive action, concentrated around the finance minister, Papakonstantinou.

Despite all that, the internal situation of PASOK was much less fragmented than that of New Democracy. Papandreou had just won a landslide, had been affirmed in a mass open primary two years ago and was the son of the party’s founder. His resilience in polls, and personal ties to MPs kept the party in check. However, this was all subject to the assumption that recovery would follow austerity and this was “really the last time”—a phrase PASOK MPs would come to repeat and regret repeating many times in the following years. Only three MPs

eventually defected from PASOK over the first bailout. Nevertheless, with a standing majority of 157 out of 300, PASOK suffered no major losses in parliamentary strength and with the slump in protest seemed to have overcome its most significant hurdle.

Overall, this episode acts as the introductory act to the play. This episode is both the link to past practices, such as conflictual modes of political and social life being continued within the new context of the bailout era, and also a gateway to the future, as it hints at the future political conflict over the bailout and the massive contention around it. The coalition for and against the bailouts takes its initial shape during this episode, with the government of PASOK going at it alone domestically, supported and urged mostly by foreign governments and institutions, while the mainstream opposition refutes institutional cooperation and the minor opposition and unions align their institutional and contentious resistance to the austerity project.

At the end of it, despite a dreary sense of entering uncharted waters, the main actors could feel that not much had changed considerably. The Greek recession was getting deeper, but there was a sense that perhaps the foreign intervention could correct some of the Greek fiscal and institutional flaws and that it might have stabilized the Greek economy. A new round of brinkmanship and mass protests was not something entirely uncommon in Greece and similar scenarios had played out in the past decade twice or thrice. Apart from the warnings of some international economists (Krugman 2010), there was not much that foretold the development of the crisis, from this early reproduction of past actions to a climax of new, massive and disruptive type of contention.

### ***Interlude I: Syriza's series of accidentally fortunate events***

The time between the first and second episode spans almost ten months. In those ten months there are two relevant events. First, the regional elections of November 2010 reinforced

the idea of a durable political system, as PASOK and New Democracy retained their percentages and municipal seats. As Karyotis and Rüdig (2013) note, this image of stability may have concealed latent attitudes of social unrest but nevertheless voting intentions at the time showed that PASOK retained over 40 percent, despite the previous unrest and deep austerity (see *Figure 5-2*).

The second event worth examining has to do with the story's main challenger, Syriza and its pathway to success. Once the events of the first bailout were over, Synaspismos, the main pillar of Syriza suffered a split. At the 6<sup>th</sup> party convention held that June, the reformist wing of the party and its leader, Kouvelis, declared it would leave the party. Soon after, they created a new party, called Democratic Left (DIMAR). There were multiple points that caused the split. The first was the emphasis of Syriza on movements and its slow transformation into a unified party. The far-left allies of Synaspismos in Syriza were seen as hindering the party with their activist excesses and detracting from any prospect of political relevance through the electoral cooperation with PASOK, the main center-left pillar (Katsourides 2016; Spourdalakis 2014).

In 2010, the main perennial concern of Synaspismos was political survival, as the party had barely cleared the parliamentary threshold in 2009. Squeezed between the hardline Communist Party and the governmental PASOK in a strongly bipolar system, Synaspismos was looking to carve some space for itself. In the early 2000s, the strategy adopted to address this concern was renewed participation and coalition with social movements, hence Syriza was born in the trails of the anti-globalization movement (Tsakatika and Lisi 2013; Tsakatika and Eleftheriou 2013; Spourdalakis 2014; Tsakatika 2016; Katsourides 2016; Kotronaki 2015, 2018).

The idea was for Syriza to become a connective node between different social movements, using the party as a communications and organizational hub (Tsakatika and Lisi

2013; Spourdalakis 2014). In return, wider connections to civil society would reward the party electorally. Once Syriza was thus forged as a coalition of parties and groups by the left wing of Synaspismos, the mantle was passed to Alexis Tsipras, who represented this younger, modern generation brought up in the heat of mobilization rather than party corridors. The plan seemed to work, as the party soared up to 20 percent in 2007, but was grounded again in 2009, barely achieving the 3 percent threshold.

For the reformist wing, the social movements' "turn" was the main reason for this retreat. Uncritical support of the 2008 youth protest, involving daily riots, had purportedly scared the voters who were flocking to the party and annulled the attraction of a modern, young party and leader. Concurrently, the alliance with hard-left groups estranged the reformist wing, attached to Synaspismos' traditional Europhile and reformist tradition. For them, the main strategy of the party should not be enlargement via social movements, but relevance via governmental cooperation with PASOK.

Their departure from Syriza after the withering of the 2010 protests set two critical processes into motion. First, it allowed Syriza to openly embrace the anti-bailout movement and camp (Spourdalakis 2014; Kotronaki 2015, 2018; Kouki 2018). By saying the party "openly" embraced the anti-bailout movement, I mean two things; the party's tolerance and justification of most action forms of protest, including riots, disruption and confrontational events and the overlapping membership between Syriza and SMOs. Even when it did not condone confrontational protest, Syriza framed it as a result of "popular indignation" at the government. Second, Syriza tolerated double membership in other SMOs and did not dictate its members' behavior there (Kanellopoulos et al. 2017; Chironi 2018). Syriza members could cross party lines in demonstrations and join protest blocks sponsored by unions and SMOs and vice versa. Both types of behavior were in stark contrast to the rigid KKE, which neither welcomed anything outside its own action repertoire nor tolerated overlapping membership.

The second, underappreciated, aspect of Syriza's evolution, was the strengthening of Tsipras' position after the reformists' departure. Previously, the party had three wings—namely, a radical-communist one, a reformist wing, and a “presidential” faction. The departure of one of those meant easier internal balancing and dominance of Tsipras' “presidential” faction, as the remaining minority would have trouble building coalitions against him.

The result of those two developments was an institutional/movement organization dichotomy: in the movements, Syriza had a horizontal, almost anarchic presence. For example, Synaspismos marched against the bailout with GSEE, while another faction physically assaulted its president, followed by Tsipras visiting him at the hospital. In the institutional setting though, the Syriza coalition transformed into a *disconnected vertical* structure: there was no official hierarchy and coalition policy was filtered through background processes between notable executives of each coalition group. Tsipras had a hegemonic presence in this scheme, being the largest party's leader and its media face.

The party worked neither like a pyramid, nor like a horizontal network, but instead like a hierarchical, disconnected network, with the leadership “floating” above factions, grassroots organizations and coalition instruments, becoming more autonomous, especially after the party's electoral success validated the leadership's strategy.<sup>42</sup> The leadership's autonomy was further enhanced by the rapid media cycle and the need for urgent policy responses. In Varoufakis' (2017) later account, for example, all negotiations and policy decisions were taken by a tight group around Tsipras which had no real institutional foundation.

Syriza combined grassroots anarchic behavior in movements with a floating, dominating leadership in institutions created a bizarre, dualistic party organization. While the

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<sup>42</sup> Milios (2016), Syriza's key economic executive during the party's time as the official opposition, documented how the group around Tsipras detached itself from Syriza. His account claims this process started in 2012, but in reality Synaspismos was always emphasizing background consensus processes over formal party hierarchy.

leadership embraced movements and their manifestations, it was not too eager to integrate people from the movements into the party mechanism.<sup>43</sup> The party might have acted as a bridge (Tsakatika and Lisi 2013), but the bridge operational committee was fairly autonomous from those who crossed it.

Overall, as Syriza would become the most important challenger of the entire narrative, it is important to highlight the situation the party found itself at the beginning of this cycle of unrest. What appeared an unfortunate turn of events—the split of the party—was really addition through subtraction. It allowed the party to embrace mass participation in social movements and enter the next phase of contestation unperturbed by internal struggles and faction balancing. Furthermore, by ridding itself of the main faction that saw governmental cooperation as the party's *raison d'être*, it shed off any connotations of connection to the mainstream party system, just at the time the political establishment was about to become toxic.

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<sup>43</sup> Kouki has a characteristic quote of a person working for Syriza's headquarters: "We were being called daily so many people, especially after the 2012 elections, but even after 2015, and they were asking how they can help...but we did not know what to say, what to suggest and we never called back...and this happened all the time (Kouki, 2018)."

## 6 The mid-term adjustment plan – Indignation

The second episode begins in March 2011, with the announcement of a new austerity round, and ends on 30 June 2011, when the measures were passed in parliament. However, essentially there are two distinct phases in the episode, one preceding the rise of the Greek Indignados (GI) and the one following it. I begin again with a reconstruction of the events recorded in our contentious episode database for each phase and then proceed with the analysis of the episode's themes and contribution in the transformation of Greek politics.

### *Timeline of events*

#### *The calm before the storm: 3 March–24 May 2011*

The measures announced were required to meet the objectives set out in the first bailout at the mid-point of its life, hence the name “mid-term adjustment plan”. Papakonstantinou claimed that further measures of approximately 25 billion in savings were required and invited other party leaders to a dialog about the exact policies, attended only by LAOS, and the newly founded DIMAR and Democratic Alliance of Bakoyanni (Papastathis 2011). The mid-term adjustment plan eventually included further decreases in public sector wages, pensions, the abolition of multiple tax allowances, new income and real estate taxes, as well as a program of privatizations (Hellenic Parliament Archive 2011).

The first phase, between the 3 March and 24 May, was reminiscent of the previous episode, only less intense. Institutionally, the opposition in its entirety denounced the government's plans and called for an end to unproductive austerity. Out of 50 actions of opposition parties, 46 went against the government. And as in the previous episode, European creditors were the government's main pillar of support, with 42 out of 44 of international actor's codes being supportive to the government (see also *Table 3-4*).

In protest terms, there was an anemic series of strikes against the government, held mostly by public sector unions again (see *Tables 3-2* and *6-1*). The typical general strike-riot-repression pattern reappeared on 11 May.

*Table 6-1: Challenger action and third-party profile breakdown for the second episode, March–June 2011*

	Strikes	Demonstrations	Confrontational	Elite actor share*	Pace (mob./day)
03/03 – 23/05	47.6	2.3	50.0	1.0	0.13
24/05 – 30/06	52.4	97.7	50.0	0.3	1.42
Totals	100.0	100.0	100.0	-	-
N	21	43	2	-	-

\*Elite actors are defined as unions and parties, contrasted to the bottom-up Indignados action.

However, there was an interesting escalation of confrontational protest events outside the normal frame of protest politics.<sup>44</sup> Some outraged protesters were no longer content to march against an unresponsive government. Instead, they sought government officials and politicians in their everyday activities, to boo, curse or physically attack them, letting their indignation at the political world be known from a close distance. Just as the episode began, “indignant citizens”, with probable links to the far-right, gathered outside the house of ex-prime minister Simitis, asking him to “return the stolen money”, warning about “impeding hangings” (Papakosta 2011). On 17 March, citizens allegedly close to Syriza intruded into the dinner of the government’s vice-president, Pangalos, and chanted offensive slogans at him for two hours while he stayed at a tavern (Kechagia 2011). Later, on 14 April, they disrupted a PASOK event attended by Health Minister Loverdos, throwing eggs, cursing at him (Stavropoulos 2011b), and so on.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Due to our keyword-based search when constructing the contentious episodes database, we have missed some of those events as they did not turn up with our initial keywords, focusing on terms like “strike” and “demonstrations”. They were only revealed by my second reading of the press archives and narrated and counted separately from the contentious episode database, hence the small number of original confrontational actions.

<sup>45</sup> For reasons of parsimony I do not record every event, but there were quite a few more, like a “siege” of MPs in Kerkyra or an assault of PASOK’s spokesman in the streets of Athens.



Citizen associations, supported solely by Syriza among institutional parties, would also be the protagonists of more specific forms of confrontational contentiousness. The “Can’t Pay, Won’t Pay” movement focused its energies on rising tolls in national highways, refusing to pay tolls, lifting booth bars so their vehicles could pass freely, portraying high tolls as a result of corrupt collusion between past governments and public contractors. In the area where the vice-president of the government was confronted by protesters, a strong movement against the relocation of waste management facilities had formed, utilizing semi-guerilla tactics against government, police and municipality vehicles transporting trash (Palaiologos 2015). A series of confrontational tactics were brewing beneath the tranquil surface, indicating the potential for wider disruption.

If assaults on politicians and confrontational specialized protests were a way to exercise pressure, PASOK MPs and members were clearly receiving it. The government–MP tension was growing, as a result of prolonged, seemingly fruitless austerity, and the accumulation of personalized action against PASOK MPs. In the last episode, few MPs defected at the last moment, but there were fewer events where party members voiced their dissent. In this one, the (remaining) parliamentary base of the party remained almost intact, but there were wider rumblings. There were nine instances when ministers disagreed with the government’s direction, a demonstration of the cabinet’s disagreement about the extent of austerity and particularly the privatization program and its crown jewel, the plan for the break-up and sale of the Public Power Company (PPC). But the cabinet objections would eventually trickle down throughout the parliamentary group. Compared to the first episode, government rebels quintupled the articulation of dissatisfaction and those would be the most coded events for government rebels in an episode until the last (see *Table 3-2*). During the GI, the rift between leadership, cabinet and parliamentary group would only widen, costing the government its first victim.

That might not have happened had protest continued on the pace of the first part of this episode. After the 11 May strike was disbanded forcefully by riot police, only a march held by ADEDY and municipality workers' unions on May 18 was held, which was not massively attended. The strategy of repression so far was working. While negotiations over the mid-term proceeded at a rapid pace and the government was close to present it to parliament, social unrest appeared subdued and resigned. Unfortunately for PASOK, a forceful western wind would unleash an unprecedented storm in Greece, accelerating the pace of events in a dramatic fashion.

*The Aganaktismenoi (Greek Indignados): 25 May–30 June 2011*

On 24 May, a call for an event–demonstration at Syntagma square and the White Tower in Thessaloniki went up on Facebook and by the next day thousands of people had registered their attendance.<sup>46</sup> The event was planned by one man in Thessaloniki, envious of the success, breadth and popular participation in the Spanish squares movement that had started nine days earlier (Aslanidis and Marantzidis 2016). In Madrid, a gradually widening mobilization had started on 15 May, demanding “real democracy” and denouncing Spain’s dire economic and political situation. In late May, the Greek internet became rife with the rumor that Spanish demonstrators had piqued Greeks by chanting “silence or we will awaken the Greeks”, sparking a sense of embarrassment at growing passivity in the face of economic and social injustice.<sup>47</sup> The (possibly phantom) Spanish call for action would be answered vigorously in Greece, thousands of people heeding the social media call to gather at the country’s main squares. On

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<sup>46</sup> The description of the Greek Indignados that follows will be based on our coded articles and press archives, but also draws frequently and extensively from secondary literature on the movement, mainly (Sotirakopoulos and Sotiropoulos 2013; Petropoulos 2014; Diani and Kousis 2014; Simiti 2015; Aslanidis and Marantzidis 2016; Kanellopoulos et al. 2017; Karyotis and Rüdig 2018).

<sup>47</sup> Simiti (2015) claims that this narrative was fabricated and uncritically reproduced by media while there was never any such event in Spain, but it anyway shaped the perceptions of many Greeks. Padelakis (2018), a journalist, confirms in his book that the event never took place and was probably confused with a football chant irrelevant to protest.

25 May, at least 20,000 people assembled in both Athens and Thessaloniki, mostly chanting “thieves, thieves” at parliamentarians and cursing at parliament. The movement unleashed by this demonstration would prove massive, expansive and innovative.

The occupation in the two main squares in Athens and Thessalonica started immediately after the first demonstration on 25 May, along with simultaneous protest across almost all major urban centers in the country. Interest though would focus on Syntagma square, where the occupation was symbolically confronting the parliament, juxtaposing the public protests and their assembly with the seat of power. In the following days, the occupation grew exponentially, as the initial 20,000 became 50,000 the next day, multiplying constantly until it reached almost 400,000 participants on 5 June (Diani and Kousis 2014). In our dataset, there is an event associated with the Aganaktismenoi for almost every day from 25 May to the end of the episode. As can be seen in *Table 6-1*, the pace of the episode and the density of events considerably picked up when the Aganaktismenoi made their appearance, while the share of mobilizations by elite actors plummeted.

The PASOK government reacted to the Indignados in a lukewarm and ambivalent way. Due to the spontaneous, bottom-up character of protest, several PASOK officials believed that this new round of protest could be much less contentious, being less partisan, top-down and ideological than previous ones. Some, like MP and former minister Floridis, tried to co-opt and sympathize with the GI, claiming that it was a “patriotic and responsible” movement (Xasapopoulos 2011a). Others were much more hostile toward what they saw as a siege on parliament and state institutions. Pangalos, the government’s vice-president ridiculed the GI as an “internet fad, which does not interest mainstream politics” (Pangalos 2011), for which he was rebuked by the government’s spokesman (Zoulas 2011b).

On the following days, the crowd converging daily on Syntagma square would fluctuate but would always number tens of thousands of protesters. The original ambivalence of PASOK

officials was succeeded by intense anxiety that the burgeoning protester numbers, representing more than habitual protesters, had to be somehow acquiesced. Growing signs of arrhythmia were evident in cancellation of PASOK's Political Council convention, postponed from 30 May because PASOK feared the proposed measures would spark controversy within its party organs (Kroustalli 2011b). Papandreou felt he needed to address the ongoing mobilization on 1 June, on the eighth day of the occupation. However, it is doubtful that his effort to shift blame to abstract powers of globalization satisfied protesters furious with mainstream Greek politicians:

*[W]hoever protests today...in all these squares all over the world addresses national democratic systems, which are weak...captured by global powers...a more democratic and informed governance on a global level is needed (Sokos 2011; Kroustalli 2011c).*

On the same day, the GI attempted to block parliament—sealing all the exits—while the crowd stood menacingly on every pathway leading to or from it, shutting the MPs inside. MPs had to escape the building with the Fire Brigade's help. At night, they fled through the dark, eerie pathways of the adjacent National Garden, the only alternative to going through the raucous crowd. A PASOK MP, Theohari said:

*God...I will quit everything. I never imagined I would need the help of firefighters, policemen and torchlights to leave parliament...I left through the National Garden, within the darkness like I were hunted; I strained my foot (Xasapopoulos 2011b).*

This mix of fear and embarrassment by MPs was a constant theme in this episode. The Garden escape might have been especially humiliating, but there was an abundance of more mundane assaults on politicians. PASOK MPs were becoming hunted, bearing the brunt of the pain for a policy they had substantial reservations with anyway. A group of sixteen MPs shortly

afterwards demanded that the finance minister account for the first bailout's failure (Kroustalli 2011c; Nedos 2011a). PASOK MPs did not yet stray from familiar patterns of government support but wanted explanations for the dramatic underestimation of the effects of the first program and assurances that the next package would "be the last". Overall, PASOK challengers, with fifteen actions after the eruption of the GI, compared to only four in the two months before, became the second most frequent challengers of the government. Many PASOK MPs considered resigning or not voting the package, while the finance minister, Papakonstantinou, had become a red flag for MPs, and even his cabinet colleagues, for insisting on the proposed measures (Kroustalli 2011a).

MPs' eyes remained fixed on the squares and on the polls. In June 2011, amidst the Indignados gathering, was the first time that New Democracy surpassed PASOK in the polls (see *Figure 5-2*). In June, the party was standing at 28 percent in polls, having potentially lost one-third of its 2009 voters. The intensified outflow amplified the cacophony of frustrated voices within PASOK, as an incidence of internal dissidence was recorded once every two days on average.

On 6 June, facing persisting occupation of the Syntagma square, the cabinet agreed to consider re-examining the tax measures to alleviate some "injustices", after many ministers joined the chorus demanding accountability for the first bailout (Kovaios 2011a). The next day in a parliamentary committee, the five ministers in charge of the bailout took fully thirteen hours to convince raging and fearful MPs about the need for new measures (Kroustalli 2011e). MPs openly fumed against the austerity measures, Papakonstantinou's culpability for the failed program, and their desire that the government seek an institutional change to overcome this hurdle. Of the MPs that talked, twenty were referred as blaming the finance minister for the current situation (Kroustalli 2011d). More than ten demanded that the government either

proceed with a national unity government or elections.<sup>48</sup> And several made a reference to the squares, acknowledging that:

*[H]alf of PASOK voters are depressed and the other half in the squares...imagine voting for the measures with a million people outside (Kroustalli 2011d; Nedos 2011b).*

Overall, at least sixty PASOK MPs criticized the implemented economic policy, enhancing the perception that the bailout did not have social or even institutional legitimacy and was hanging on the will of a small circle within the cabinet. Papakonstantinou himself recalls those sessions, noting how the common refrain was that “the sacrifices were in vain” (Papakonstantinou 2016: 206–7).<sup>49</sup> The squares, which were initially seen as a potential relief for PASOK, were now fraying the government–MP link.

At the same time, as public pressure was increasingly taking a toll, EU pressure escalated. While Papandreou was thinking of holding a referendum on the bailout (Zoulas 2011c), senior voices within the Troika constantly reminded him to hurry with the task at hand. Creditors were supportive of the government, but always nudged it to move faster. Oli Rehn, Barroso and Van Rompuy persistently demanded in multiple statements that the government implement the measures with speed.

The silver lining for Papandreou was that European pressure was also prodding Samaras to cave in and accept co-responsibility for the new bailout. The opposition however

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<sup>48</sup> Some quotes from MPs include: “There should be resignations. We do not need elections, but a government of national salvation at least from the two government parties and if not, elections”. Another MP stated: “Ask for a 180 super-majority for the mid-term or go to elections” (Kroustalli 2011d).

<sup>49</sup> It is indicative of the government’s absorption into negotiations with foreign actors and general aloofness that Papakonstantinou barely mentioned the protests until they cost him his position. In his account of events, he mentions them in passing in one sentence, reducing them to a top-down phenomenon, claiming that “the opposition successfully channelled popular discontent with our politics into violent protests” (Papakonstantinou 2016: 205).

was not budging. By now, emboldened by overtaking PASOK in polls and in full control of his party, Samaras was absolutely unrelenting about the new “adjustment”. He repeated this continuously, in meetings where Commission and Council presidents Barroso and Van Rompuy tried to persuade him to relent (Ravanos 2011a). EU institutions and his colleagues in the European Popular Party were trying the same, but to no avail (Triadafillou 2011b). Between 7–9 June, leaders in the EU Commission, Council, ECB and the French and German governments successively contacted Samaras and asked him to change course. In Samaras’ circle of trust, though, there was the impression that with the appearance of the GI, his anti-bailout stance has been vindicated (Triadafillou and Terzis 2011b).

Just before the Aganaktismenoi began, in Zappeio, the place where prime ministers traditionally announce their programs once elected, Samaras declared on 12 May that his priority was for his party to come to government and “re-negotiate” unacceptable aspects of the bailout treaties. On the following month, he repeatedly stated that consensus to the wrong policy would be a lethal mistake and praised the GI movement:

*We feel their concerns, we are glad for their peaceful demonstrations  
in the squares, under symbols that unite...Greek flags (Triadafillou and  
Terzis 2011a).*

The pressure on Samaras intensified when one PASOK MP resigned and another one publicly declared he would not vote for the mid-term hours later on 14 June, leaving the government with a majority of four. As plenty of PASOK MPs were suspected of defying the party whip when the vote would come, the possibility of a failed vote and a subsequent chaotic default loomed large over the government. Papandreou calculated that New Democracy voting the package would salvage the situation, diffuse responsibility, but also show citizens a common consensus, a front of “responsibility”.

At the same time as PASOK floundered, the unions—which had retained a cautious stance toward the GI until that point—entered the fray. On 15 June, the large strike-demonstration of the GSEE fused with the Syntagma square occupation, gathering hundreds of thousands once more. Another attempt like the June blockade of the parliament took place. For the first time after 20 days of peaceful protest, the riot police moved forcefully to disband the blockade and the new protesters gathered by the Aganaktismenoi underwent their baptism by fire. Reports of police repression and brutality on a crowd that was until then peaceful and socially distinct from typical protesters were shared widely and shocked the attending public (Vasiliadou 2011).

On the evening of 15 June—as the riot police and parts of the Aganaktismenoi were caught in street battles and his parliamentary group was shrinking by the hour—Papandreou visited the President of the Republic, possibly thinking his government was nearing its end. He repeated that a joint national effort was required to overcome the crisis (Papakonstantinou 2016, 211; Xasapopoulos 2011c). Hours later, he called Samaras to ask for a national unity government, offering his resignation and the appointment of a consensus prime minister (Ravanos and Kovaïos 2011). Samaras accepted—on the condition that the government’s sole focus would be the “renegotiation” of the bailouts and that elections would then be called (Ravanos 2011b). Papandreou seemed to initially agree but withdrew his consent to such a program within the day. Speculation for his back and forth focused on his desire for a longer-term grand coalition government and internal resistance from PASOK (Ravanos 2011c; Triadafillou 2011c). Apparently, government ministers who had not been informed about his offer to personally resign were up in arms about surrendering the prime minister’s seat to an outsider. On 16 June, sensing the impasse, two more PASOK MPs resigned their posts (*Kathimerini* 2011).



Papandreou opted for a cabinet reshuffle as a relief valve, sacrificing his finance minister, Papakonstantinou, who had concentrated the ire of protesters and MPs. His replacement would be Venizelos, Papandreou's old antagonist for the party leadership. The GI had claimed their first victim, but the protests showed no signs of abating, each day brining new crowds forth. However, the government's stance softened. Venizelos tried three times to reduce governmental rigidity, asking to open a dialog with Aganaktismenoi, considering some concessions on the law draft and holding negotiations with PPC unions about possible amendments to energy privatization. He also stressed that the priority for the new measures was for a "fair austerity" and the "moral balance of the new cuts". However, when he tried to negotiate some of those "fair austerity" ideas in the Eurogroup on 24 June, he was quickly rebuked and forced to concede the already negotiated measures lest he face a sudden default (Kroustalli, 2011b). The government also asked for a confidence vote after the reshuffle, which it received on 21 June, as the GI tried once more to surround and blockade the parliament, this time unsuccessfully (Pouliopoulos and Vithoukas 2011).

The next week would see the numbers of the GI start to wither somewhat, following repeated instances of repression. Within parliament, various committees continued to discuss finalization of the contents of the mid-term adjustment. Once agreement was reached by the Eurogroup on 24 June, the text was introduced to a plenary session of parliament and, dutifully, GSEE and ADEDY declared a 48-hour general strike for the 28–29 June, the days of the discussion and vote. Already on the 27 June, GENOP-DEI, the union of the PPC employees forced rolling blackouts of electricity supply in the capital, sinking various neighborhoods successively into darkness. Syriza called on the people to "flood the squares" in anticipation of the mid-term vote. On the 28 June, minor skirmishes between police and anarchist protesters occurred outside parliament after the conclusion of the first immense demonstration. The next day, the demonstration—attended by GSEE, ADEDY, PAME and the Aganaktismenoi—

proved to be one of the largest to date, with Diani and Kousis (2014) estimating 300,000 participants. While each organization had its own block, radical left parties, anarchists, a loose nationalist crowd and lower square Indignados converged their forces over the weekend, in the first showing of an “informal” anti-bailout coalition, a dense network of autonomous organizations with varying philosophies but similar aims (Kanellopoulos et al. 2017).

Soon, chaos reigned in the city, as a large group of hooded protesters clashed all night with riot police, while the mid-term was legislated. Hotels near Syntagma were evacuated and the police unleashed a shower of teargas covering the city in smoke up to two kilometers away from parliament. The city looked bombarded the next morning and the GI had to move their assembly to another square to avoid the violence and teargas (Vithoulikas et al. 2011). Civil society’s reactions to police repression were thunderous, as the mayor of Athens, the head of the Greek Association of Doctors, Athens University deans, opposition parties and Amnesty International condemned what they saw as “excessive and disproportionate” violence on the part of the police, reports noting that more than 2,800 teargas canisters had been used that day (Amnesty International 2011; Labropoulos 2011). Tsipras chimed in, filing a lawsuit against the Greek police’s excessive force. Nevertheless, the reshuffle and Venizelos’ signal that he would consider social concerns sufficed to relieve the tension within parliament and allowed PASOK to retain its 154 remaining votes. Those, plus one rebel from ND would be the ones voting for the mid-term adjustment on June 30. External pressure trumped the domestic threat from the new challengers.

The episode coding ended as the mid-term program became law, but the GI continued for a while. Like in all other episodes, the challenge diminished substantially after the bill’s passage. As Petropoulos (2014) argues, the combination of repression and unresponsiveness of the elites deflated the movement. Within days after the mid-term vote, the square that hosted hundreds of thousands for a month was left with a few hundred protesters voting for empty

resolutions in a GI assembly rivaling the parliamentary one in size. On July 30, amidst frustration, depression and the happier occasion of summer holidays, the police cleared Syntagma square from the few remaining tents and the movement formally ended.

### ***Themes and effects of the Greek Indignados***

#### *Origins, organization, protest forms*

The Aganaktismenoi were undoubtedly influenced by the Spanish Indignados and the Arab Spring in what was a turbulent year globally. The success of Tahrir square demonstrations in overthrowing Mubarak and the massiveness of the protests in Spain and the Arab world enhanced the perception of protest as a potentially powerful means of expressing social dissent and enforcing popular will, rather than a rigidly delineated form of action wielded exclusively by unions and left-wingers. Unlike the previous episode that was dominated by elite actors, protest in this episode had much more bottom-up characteristics, as protesters were attracted to Syntagma square by social networks (see *Table 6-1*).

The Spanish paradigm was reproduced in the forms of protest and organization. Apart from the Syntagma square occupation, the most distinct organizational feature of the Aganaktismenoi was the popular assembly held each evening at the lower part of the square. Speakers were assigned by lot and anyone could take the microphone and address those assembled. It was envisioned as a form of direct democracy and a method to actually articulate the demands of the squares movement, without top-down guidance from hierarchical organizations like parties and unions. The objective of the GI, according to the organizers, was to facilitate a deliberative process to find alternative solutions to the crisis. A necessary condition for that—and one that distinguished the GI from previous protest—was the peaceful character of assemblies. As evidenced in *Table 3-2* in the methods chapter, the dominant form of mobilization during the Indignados changed from the strike, to the peaceful demonstration. Many GI participants viewed previous protests as devolving into chaos, with the confrontation

between masked protesters and police drowning the voices of other, peaceful, protesters. The memory of the three dead bank employees, in the last demonstration against the first bailout, was still impressed on the memories of citizens. As Petropoulos (2014) documents, the assembly of the protesters would condemn violent protest actions multiple times.

### *Quantitative and qualitative expansion*

The peaceful and deliberative nature of the GI drew a critical crowd. Rüdig and Karyotis (2018) show that 36 percent of the Greek population participated at least occasionally in the Syntagma square occupation, up from 23 percent in the 2010 episode. Petropoulos (2014) and Aslanidis and Marantzidis (2016), using survey data, demonstrate that protesters were coming from all walks of political life, comprising many voters of mainstream parties (particularly PASOK) but transcending left–right divides. As Petropoulos (2014) shows, their most distinct characteristics were opposition to the bailout, a slightly more left-wing orientation than the general public, and antipathy toward the political system.

This profiling of protesters conceals important divergences between attending groups, manifested in physical space. The GI were separated into two camps, physically divided by the stairs descending from the upper part of Syntagma square to the lower part. The first camp was more nationalist and the second a more left-wing group. In the upper square, the gathered crowd tilted toward nationalism, referencing historical instances of national liberation and struggle in its slogans, but mostly chanting profanities against politicians and parliament, such as “Burn, burn, the bordello, the parliament” or “thieves, thieves”, directed to MPs. Greek flags exclusively dominated the upper square skyline. At the lower part of the square, where the assembly took place, the protesters were more left-leaning. Apart from the political class, chants were also targeted toward the EU institutions and the IMF while red and black flags stood alongside Greek ones. This separation and its political, aesthetic and organizational dimensions were palpable almost from the very first days of the square movement. While the

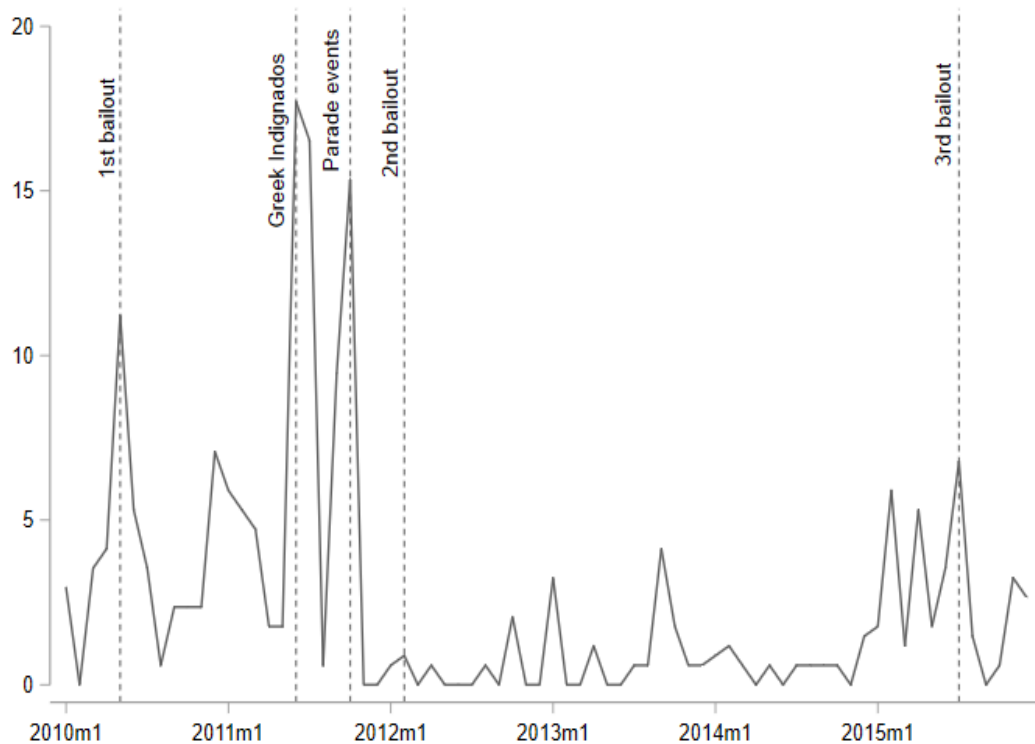
spatial separation of the square into a right- and left-wing side is often and justifiably repeated as a very important aspect of the 2011 protest (Sotirakopoulos and Sotiropoulos 2013; Petropoulos 2014; Simiti 2015), the insistence on the separation of protesters also tends to underemphasize an important element of the protests; that while left and right-wing camps were distinct, they were transcending this divide by both standing in neighboring space, opposing parliament and the political class, giving the anti-bailout movement a “national” hue.

The expansion of protest claims to include opposition to the political class was an important novel aspect of the Greek protest wave. Prior to the GI, while there were wide-ranging grievances, Greek citizens only had the opportunity to protest under union banners, focusing on narrower economic demands. The freefall in levels of political trust toward institutions, like the parliament and parties, but also unions (see *Figure 2-3* in the case selection chapter and (Teperoglou and Tsatsanis, 2014) since the onset of the crisis was not reflected in the more traditional protest events. Successive physical and verbal attacks on mainstream politicians were an outlet for this latent, seething anger against the political class—deemed responsible for the outbreak of the crisis—but they were neither very widespread nor truly collective.

The Spanish example of gathering in the squares provided an alternative template to follow for bottom-up organization expressing this discontent, unshackled from elite organizations who drowned it. The original call for 25 May was littered with posts on its Facebook page demanding that union, party and other organizations’ symbols be kept away from the demonstration. Apart from the Greek flag, the only other banners were Spanish, Egyptian and Tunisian ones: fellow nations in revolt. The GI attendants aspired to contest not only austerity, but also the deep corruption, clientelistic practices and nepotism of the Greek political class, a burden the entire Greek people shared. Within our own protest event database,

the number of protest events with political claims, peaked at this point, as shown in *Figure 6-1*.

*Figure 6-1: Weighted political protest events in Greece, 2010–2015.*



Source: POLCON.

As Diani and Kousis also show (2014), the claims of the GIs overlap with that of other phases of protest, but also cover a much broader spectrum of topics. Petropoulos (2014), on an exhaustive coverage of the slogans chanted during the squares occupation, notes that 65 percent of them concerned the political class and several more of them were personal attacks directed to top government officials.

The nationalist and anti-elite undertones of the movement did not stop its embrace by leftist organizations other than the KKE, which typically kept its distance from any social phenomenon it could not control (Sotirakopoulos and Sotiropoulos 2013; Spourdalakis 2014; Simiti 2015). While the assembly of the Indignados passed repeated resolutions asking even for the abolition of parties (Petropoulos 2014), nevertheless, Syriza and extra-parliamentary

left activists were crucial in staffing, organizing, sustaining and shaping the assembly and its agenda (Petropoulos 2014; Simiti 2015; Aslanidis and Marantzidis 2016; Kanellopoulos et al. 2017). As Diani and Kousis (2014) and also Kanellopoulos et al. (2017) establish, rather than being completely unpartisan as it aspired, the GI drew a significant number of organizations and parties into its vortex, albeit covertly. Syriza and other extra-parliamentary left organized members would converge at Syntagma square in a non-organized manner, mingling with the crowd and participating massively in its processes, particularly in the lower square. Syriza's openness and toleration toward protesters, despite their anti-political stress could help it form a symbiotic relationship with the squares movements, becoming a "connective" node in the informal coalition of GI, unions and parties (Kanellopoulos et al. 2017) against the bailout.

Finally, one should note an important difference between the GI and their Spanish equivalent with respect to the mode in which conflict expanded. While the Spanish gathered to demand "real democracy" in a general context of economic crisis, the GI surge occurred in Greece at the *exact* same time that a specific austerity package was about to be introduced in parliament. The political claims against mainstream politicians became entwined with the concrete proposal of the mid-term adjustment (Sotirakopoulos and Sotiropoulos 2013). It is at this moment that the bailout truly became a "super issue". The expansion of the indignation against austerity acquiring an intense and explicit political aspect coincided with the vote for yet another major bill, allowing the bailout to become affixed to a concrete action in real physical space, the vote for the mid-term adjustment. The two aspects of a super issue analyzed in chapter 4, its bundled nature and attachment to a particular event or action, both manifested themselves in this instance, super-charging the conflict around the bailout.

This qualitative expansion of conflict also contributed to the process of the establishment's reification. It was not only the corrupt elite's practices that led to the bailout, but that the bailout was also the unjust and pernicious response of the elite to the crisis. Support

for the bailout became the elite's trademark, its defining and most toxic characteristic. It was already felt that the bailout was a deeply unequal and punitive treatment that disproportionately hurt the weakest in society.<sup>50</sup> The fact that it had failed its chief goal—quelling market unrest and reducing the debt and deficit—made it look to many protesters as senseless, a sadistic rough treatment that Greeks were forced to accept without any relief in sight. Anyone supporting it was thus either idiotic, detached or nefarious. Elite support for the bailout appeared arrogant and borderline criminal. As Samaras confirmed, “consensus on the wrong policy was a crime” (Triadafillou 2011a).

#### *Expansion of conflict beyond parties and unions*

Another way in which the GI helped expand the quality and quantity of conflict and trigger the mechanism of elite division, was the incorporation of elite civil society actors. Much of this is owed to the movement's initial positive portrayal. Mainstream media, which was hostile to previous mobilizations and the ensuing violence, perceived the GI warmly, as a breath of fresh air, albeit with some perplexity. Like PASOK MPs, they believed that the Indignados could be a clean break with the violence and unruliness of the protests initiated by the left and unions, a form of protest less radical and threatening to their interests and preferences (Sotirakopoulos and Sotiropoulos 2013).

The positive media coverage helped the movement swell in its initial steps. The frequency and identity of other third parties that supported the movement was crucially augmented and more varied than that of the first episode (see *Table 3-4*). Greek artists, like world-renowned Theodorakis, often lent their support and participated in concerts while the occupation lasted. The Dean of the Athens University offered the university's premises to host GI events. The Greek Church, through the Archbishop of Kalavryta, supported the

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<sup>50</sup> See, also, Giannitsis and Zografakis (2015, 2018) for an empirical confirmation of this perception.



mobilization, while Petropoulos (2014) notes that priests often took the floor in the upper Syntagma square. Trade associations and even the chief of police would announce their disagreement with the proposed measures of the mid-term adjustment, the latter claiming that he was morally on the side of protesters, his occupational duty notwithstanding.

These events reveal how the Aganaktismenoi were warmly welcomed, at least initially, by elite actors dissatisfied with the government's direction. The width of the anti-bailout social coalition had expanded to include church, university, NGO and police officials, articulating a message of clear opposition to government. These were unusual events, warping the normal routine of politics. The transcendence of normal divides and the "national" character of the anti-bailout coalition was therefore also reflected in the array of organizations stacked against the mid-term program. As the painful effects of austerity reverberated throughout society, elite division became manifest in civil society. The government and MPs were not thrilled to see important parts of their social base and coalition disintegrate before their eyes and typically "neutral" organizations starting to oppose them.

#### *Government–MP interactions: Fear and paralysis*

This brings us to the main change within this episode: the deterioration in the government–MP relationship. While the challengers and institutional opposition more or less continued on the first episode's pathway of conflict, there was a qualitative change in government–MP relationships, which I labeled in *Table 4-2* as a shift toward "reluctant support". The mechanism through which this happened, was the fear and paralysis brought about on PASOK's parliamentary group by both the scale of the GI and the alarming frequency of confrontational events against PASOK executives.

The mechanism that sustained the bailout bills was top-down: Troika pressure was being transmitted to the Greek government, which in turn coerced its parliamentary group to

vote for new measures or face a catastrophic default. As long as public pressure from below was diffuse and led by habitual protesters, PASOK MPs could withstand it. But when reaction to them became personalized, physical and massive—and the bailout issue acquired a political dimension—retaining their resolve proved difficult. Coupled with PASOK's accelerating descent in the polls, and the widening of the anti-bailout coalition to incorporate domestic civil society elites, the signals sent to them were unambiguously negative. The hundreds of thousands converging daily to contest government policies could no longer be dismissed, particularly as the illusion they were a narrow but large group of civil sector employees, unionists and radical leftists could no longer be sustained.

Additionally, they appeared uncertain about whether it was all worth it. Rather than any encouraging signs of economic recovery, they found themselves summoned to rubber stamp new austerity. First, they were told there was no need for international intervention; then the IMF arrived. Then the first bailout should have acted as a sharp but short corrective to years of excess, but here they were voting for the mid-term adjustment a year later. The new program was an admission of failure and many MPs remarked on the pointlessness of their sacrifice, sucked into a bottomless pit of permanent austerity while being vociferously attacked on squares by their former members and voters.

Their most common reaction was to demand an institutional resolution. As the press archive reveals, there were three MP proposals. The most immediate was to blame Papakonstantinou and demand his resignation. On a more general level, they asked for either the formation of a government of national unity or fresh elections that would unburden them from the bailout responsibility. Eventually, as the two latter paths became blocked by the opposition and debt repayment deadlines, the reshuffle and Papakonstantinou's sacrifice sufficed. Venizelos' softer attitude of reconciliation and negotiation with challengers momentarily soothed their nerves and the government managed to legislate the mid-term

adjustment. But it was clear that the structural problem of having to implement austerity on their own remained. The government either had to amend the program significantly or the demand for a grand coalition and/or fresh elections would recur, as it eventually did. In the event that neither of these happened, it was very possible that the MPs would snap and not vote a future package, bringing the prospect of a “historical accident” closer.

The widening internal PASOK rift was also being transmitted back to society. Protesters—a plurality of whom habitually voted for PASOK—picked up their cues from the division in the party and government, wondering whether PASOK could actually navigate the crisis. The cracks in the government and “bailout as corrective” narrative caused a profound sense that things were heading the wrong way, despite reassurances to the contrary. The voting intentions and trust in institutions had started declining even before the mid-term adjustment and the GI, but several other indicators demonstrate the increasing unrest. As Public Issue (2011a) polling shows, satisfaction with the government started dipping already by March, when the discussion for the mid-term adjustment began, plunging from 20 percent in January to an 8 percent low during the GI protests. Papandreou remained the most suitable prime minister for 41 percent of the sample in January, dropping to 34 percent in March and 22 percent at the end of the GI protests. Asked whether the country was going in the wrong direction, the share of citizens saying “yes” jumped from 68 percent in February to 78 percent in March, reaching 87 percent in June.

Things were still in flux, though. The rapid ascent of challenger parties had not yet started. PASOK still hovered around 30 percent in the polls, a moderate (in hindsight) 15 percentage point drop. While the Indignados adopted a stance of profound opposition to the political establishment, repeatedly ridiculing and denouncing parliamentarians, as Petropoulos (2014) observes they nevertheless persistently stood, stared, and waited for something to happen in parliament that would respond to their demands. For a month, the occupation had

blocked parliament, jeered MPs and threatened them, but by directing their chants toward parliament, they also recognized its authority.

The movement had an assembly passing resolutions but it was not revolutionary. There was no emergent parallel authority, no committee of public safety. The deliberative and peaceful predisposition of the participants reflected Greek society's worry that something had gone tremendously wrong and off-script and they needed to debate how to fix it, the conclusions perhaps adopted by parliament. The government and politicians were to blame for it, but also were the ones responsible to heed the crowd and provide a resolution. Perhaps enough MPs would rebel and the mid-term adjustments would be abandoned, forcing the government and opposition to come to terms and negotiate better. Most protesters might have harbored animosity toward PASOK, but they expected a modicum of responsiveness from their representatives. As they did not find it, escalation continued in fall.

### *Locating the effects of the Greek Indignados*

To conclude this chapter, how can we appraise the legacy of the GI and the place of this episode in the entire drama? In terms of policy, their attempt to halt the mid-term adjustment vote, let alone their claims for direct democracy, resulted in no substantive concessions. They threatened to undo the government–MP link, but in the end the reshuffle served to relieve PASOK's internal tensions and maintain it. In terms of the challenger–government relationship, the basic pattern of conflict carried over in this episode. Perhaps the government was more hesitant and conflicted and the challengers more perplexed and confused, but they clashed nevertheless, as they did across all episodes before the last and the government eventually passed its policy bill. In the short-term then, their impact was minimal.

Other scholars tend to appraise the GI effect differently, focusing on the longer-term, linking the summer of unrest to the eventual collapse of the Greek party system. Spourdalakis

(2014), Petropoulos (2014) and Kotronaki (2018) account for the future Syriza rise by reference to the inflation of party membership through participation in the protest movement. Kanellopoulos et al. (2017) also treat Syriza as the only institutional node that was connected to all aspects of the informal coalition against austerity and hence indirectly associate its role in the anti-austerity movement and the GI with its electoral success. Contrary to other actors, like DIMAR and the Communist Party, Syriza would always support and try to represent the Indignados (Spourdalakis, 2014) and the emerging social majority that was harmed by the bailout that the latter sought to channel (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis 2014).

Both Kotronaki (2018) and Aslanidis and Marantzidis (2016) try to navigate the impact of the Indignados through the prism of McAdam and Tarrow's framework for understanding the links between social movements and electoral politics (McAdam and Tarrow 2010, 2013). They focus on how discursive and performative innovations and the lurking populist ideology at the heart of the Indignados would later transform Greek electoral politics. Inevitably, scholars focused on populism tend to favor explanations centered on this concept, i.e. in the way slogans, chants and ideas of the *Aganaktismenoi* were transplanted and reproduced in a populist discourse by Syriza (Aslanidis and Marantzidis 2016; Stavrakakis and Katsambekis 2014).

While I think all these explanations hold some purchase, I believe them to be somewhat limited. I argue that looking for the rise of Syriza in the GI requires skipping a few steps in the process of party-system collapse. There does not appear to be any great flow of activists entering the party, something that will mostly happen after the 2012 elections rather than during the GI (Kouki 2018). As I will show in more detail in chapter 8, the party's electoral rise is also only partially concurrent with the GI protests, while its use of the rhetorical schemes initiated by the GI is relatively limited during the actual electoral campaign. While Syriza helped

organize and sustain the GI protests, the links at this point were tenuous, at most an affective affinity between party and protesters due to Syriza's openness.

Perhaps the most significant boon for Syriza in this episode is not so much borne out by its direct participation in protest, but by the continued insistence of PASOK officials and ministers that Syriza lay behind all assaults on them.<sup>51</sup> It is dubious how many of those were indeed organized by Syriza. Accounts of Syriza staging protests (Palaiologos 2015) are probably vastly overestimating the organizational capacities of a party with few members and committed activists (Kouki 2018). The party made sure to distance itself rhetorically from activists abusing mainstream politicians, but nevertheless was, as discussed, permissive about all kinds of activist behavior and eager to justify it. In any case, the constant accusations amidst the emergence of profound political grievances probably helped the party project itself to protesters as an anti-establishment Zorro, an omnipresent vigilante hounding the villains of the political class wherever they thought they would be safe from public wrath. More than anything, Syriza was elevated to a privileged adversary of the government, a status that might have made it more prominent among those citizens who were already contemplating who could electorally express their indignation.

Rather than direct links between GI and the rise of Syriza however, I predominantly focus on the movement's medium-term role in longer processes. I believe the most significant effects of the GI were three. First, the quantitative expansion of conflict in terms of participants, organizations and duration that constituted a wide anti-bailout coalition, exceeding the narrow confines of the first episode's one. The GI helped bridge the gaps between "institutional" challengers, such as unions and parties and the large mass of newly mobilized protesters and

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<sup>51</sup> Indicatively from the *Kathimerini* archive, see Zoulas (2011a); Galiatsatos and Mpourdaras (2011); Mpourdaras (2011a, 2011b) and Galiatsatos (2011).

other elite civil society organizations, yielding an unlikely coalition that expanded the reach and threat of the anti-bailout movement.

Concurrently, the experience of government unresponsiveness and police repression helped radicalize the demands of an initially pacifist crowd, solidifying and cementing the sense, within what was an initially fluid mass of indignant citizens, that there was an arrogant and actively hostile political establishment. Paradoxically, the least radical episode (in terms of mobilization forms), had the most radical substantive implications of all. The second effect, then, was a qualitative expansion of the anti-bailout theme, by the addition of a political dimension, as latent attitudes impeaching the political class for the pathway to the crisis transformed into the collective behavior of assaults on politicians and the rise of political claims in mass protest.

Finally, the twin quantitative and qualitative expansion of contentious action resulted in the third main effect: the freezing of the government–MP relationship, or what I described as elite division and paralysis *within* the political class. PASOK MPs, concurrently pressured from below, above and abroad, considered forsaking their customary duty of deference to the government, feeling the need to respond to the growing mobilization or resign and retain their tranquility. Eventually, the vast majority would be persuaded to show some tolerance and patience once more, waiting to see the outcomes of the reshuffle, but the corrosive friction that would eventually derail the PASOK government had manifested itself.

In conclusion, this episode served as the accelerator of the whole drama, the part of rising action. The first “actor” to wake from sleepwalking and try something new were the challengers, as new actors emerged that changed the existing repertoire and consequently expanded the meaning of the bailout conflict. Suddenly, the frozen patterns of protest were reshaped and one-third of the country descended onto the streets to protest the bailout, symbolically encircling the parliament, besieging the political class cowering within. The

outburst of indignation forced the political personnel, MPs and ministers, to slowly realize that something had gone terribly wrong and the promised recovery was not anywhere around the corner; in fact, many doubted the corner existed at all. The start of the downward spiral of PASOK, the disintegration of the party and its social alliance can be traced back to this episode. Having set up the conditions of its fall, in the next episode the tension created by challengers from within and creditors from abroad will provide the coup de grace.

### ***Interlude II: The short summer of 2011***

In July 2011, almost concurrently with the decay of the GI, the IMF published its debt sustainability analysis on Greece, as part of its evaluation of the ongoing evolution of the bailout program, retaining that the country urgently needed debt relief and refinancing. On 21 July, at a summit of European leaders, it was decided that Greece would have to take some additional measures and in return, some debt relief, based on a “haircut” of private creditors, would be agreed. The agreement for debt relief stabilized the markets temporarily and coupled with the decline of protest, polls showed that PASOK’s decline had been temporarily arrested (see *Figure 5-2*). Additional measures were not warmly welcomed, but at least debt relief had the potential to provide a definitive solution to the Greek problem.

This agreement hinged on the faithful implementation of the mid-term program and would be pushed back by the breakout of hostilities between the Greek government and the Troika at the beginning of September (Papadiochos 2011a). As the public deficit had not been reduced sufficiently, the Troika, in its program evaluation, demanded additional measures to reach the agreed targets. Venizelos had however promised to slow down the pace of austerity when he replaced Papakonstantinou. The talks with the Troika hit a wall. The foreign trio departed, officially to return when “more data becomes available”. Venizelos welcomed the departure of the “technocrats”, as he wanted to negotiate directly with his peers—whom he



believed would be more sympathetic. After all, the deficit was derailed partially because of austerity and creditors should show some clemency.

This was the first time Athens would try to override the Troika representatives after the first bailout and “renegotiate” parts of the agreements. This attempt, as in all future instances, would prove neither successful nor warmly received by its European peers (Karkagiannis 2011). Eventually, as was disclosed later, the negotiation backfired: Schäuble, the German finance minister, proposed that Greece should leave the Euro instead, with some financial support from Germany (Nedos 2016). The Greek government, terrified at this prospect and the realization that the German government would consider it, ended the discussion there. Venizelos hurried back home to assemble the package of cuts needed to satisfy the Troika’s evaluation.

Within this sudden rush, one of the most unpopular and fateful measure of the bailout age was conceived: the real estate tax, announced in September. A real estate tax was already included in the previous measures, but to bridge the new fiscal gap it was decided to considerably increase the tax rate per square meter of real estate. In Greece, a country with homeownership rates of 80 percent, only loosely related to income and wealth, the new tax was akin to a poll tax. Direct taxes on income at least taxed those who had an income, while indirect taxes on perishables could be more easily digested by reducing consumption. Houses were an illiquid asset amidst a profound real estate market slump, possessed by the majority of Greek households and relatively easily detected by authorities. To add insult to injury, the new tax was attached to the electricity bill—the aim being to enforce compliance by threatening to terminate electricity supply to houses not paying the tax. On top of all that, the tax was due immediately, as the tax service notes demanding payment were sent out in late September. Predictably, the public did not respond enthusiastically to this historical political economy blunder. It is indicative that once the tax was announced, calls to the electricity utility charged

with its collection increased to 3,000 per day, a ten-fold multiplication of its daily interaction with the public (Liaggou 2011). A wave of legal action hit the company, as house owners tried to cut their connection to the electricity grid for inherited homes they were not using, in order to avoid the tax.

More importantly, after this, PASOK's stabilization in the polls came to an abrupt end. Between 15 August and 10 September, six polls put PASOK on an average of 27.7 percent, almost unchanged from the GI. Between 22 September—the first poll taken after the real estate tax notifications were sent—and 10 October, just before the next episode, the average level of PASOK support declined to an average 22.7 percent. A nosedive of five percentage points in polls was equivalent to the whole period of the GI, this time without a single protester showing up on the streets. Even worse, there would be no respite from now on. Despite the apparent outrage over the real estate tax, the need to placate creditors once again prevailed and the government waved away complaints. Instead, it turned its attention to other obligations it had, like liberalizing licensed professions and tax reforms. Challengers too, prepared for this next, and decisive, round.

## 7 The second bailout – Climax

### *Introduction*

The second bailout of the Greek economy stands out as the climax of the contentious drama; this would be the first instance in which the unfolding of contentious action would rock the institutional arena. In this period, the accumulated pressure from contentious action and the economic impasse would finally produce a rupture in the sleepwalking patterns that had characterized the reaction of Greek institutional players to the emergence of the bailout.

There were three main elements of change. The first was that the government–MP relationship—already tense before the second bailout—finally buckled, requiring the Greek political system to enter uncharted and perilous waters. I argue that the dismantling of this relationship happened within the boundaries of what Sewell (1996) has termed a “historical event”, a chain of incidents with symbolic resonance that combined contingency and agency to bring about a durable transformation of structures. The consequences would be far-reaching: the incapability of the old party system to manage the bailout within its familiar patterns led to a durable restructuring of the government–opposition pattern of interaction and further frayed the government–MP bond in subsequent months. Furthermore, this would be a critical part in the process that would eventually restructure the entire Greek party system in a new base, as examined in the next chapter.

The protest arena was the catalyst of these changes, providing the push that toppled the first domino that led to party-system collapse. Like previous episodes, this one would also become the stage of massive contention and violent confrontation, more so than ever. An unprecedented wave of industrial action was unleashed by unions and Syntagma square was engulfed again by hundreds of thousands of demonstrators. However, at the epicenter of the

political earthquake lay a relatively small demonstration on 28 October 2011 that—due to its timing and symbolic value—precipitated most of the subsequent developments.

As with the other episodes, it is best to break this episode down into distinct phases. The first is between early October 2011—when yet another austerity bill was introduced to the parliament—and the vote on it on 27 October. This is followed by the “historical event” period, featuring the collapse of the Papandreou government between 21 October and 11 November. The third is the emergence of the Papademos government domestically and the winter of negotiations between Greece and creditors abroad, and party leaders at home. The fourth and final is the vote for the second bailout between 8–12 February 2012. I start at the beginning of October, at which point the government was once again rushing new measures through parliament to tie the failed summer renegotiation’s loose ends.

### ***The timeline of events***

#### *The hot and smelly Greek fall: 5–27 October 2011*

The episode started when the government announced the “multi-law bill”—aptly named due to the wide number of provisions included in it—addressing most of the remaining Troika demands from the first bailout. The law’s coverage was broad—from more cuts in pensions and public and private sector wages to public sector dismissals, the elimination of tax relief for vulnerable categories of the population, further (and significant) erosions of the right to bargain collectively, and a sizable decrease of the tax eligibility threshold (Siomopoulos 2011). The multi-law bill ran alongside negotiations with the representatives of the “closed-shop”, licensed professions on the terms of further liberalization of these sectors.

The government’s aim was to assemble the package and push it through parliament before 18 October, when a new EU emergency summit was planned for the Greek crisis. Due to the time pressure under which the small circle of ministries charged with bailout

implementation were operating, there was neither proper time for negotiations with unions and MPs or for thinking about the political ramifications of the new package.

The first part of this episode was characterized by the intense confrontation between the Greek government and challengers on the street, who comprised the majority of actors during this period. Again, most third-party actors during this phase were international agents supporting and prodding the Greek government to move forward. The hastily introduced multi-law bill triggered a wave of industrial action, this time spearheaded by sectoral and localized unions (see *Table 3-2*). Both private and public sector unions—along with the associations of threatened closed-shop professionals—mobilized against the bill and the majority of the country’s workforce went on strike. Taxi and truck drivers, pharmacists, and lawyers all withdrew their labor and downed tools. Public sector unions were despondent about new wage and pension cuts and the threat of dismissals, while professionals revolted at the prospect that their licenses would be revoked without compensation. As can be seen in *Table 3-2*, this is also the episode with the most mobilizations by professionals (i.e., employees requiring licenses to do their jobs).

The episode began with another general strike by GSEE and ADEDY on 5 October. Turnout was not particularly impressive this time: approximately 50,000 protesters (Diani and Kousis 2014), but this was only the first incidence of mobilization, after the dismantling of the Aganaktismenoi camp in mid-summer. Following that general strike though, a torrent of union action followed until the multi-law bill’s vote. We counted no less than fifty strikes by grassroots-level or sectoral unions and associations during this first phase (see *Tables 3-2* and *7-1*). In *Table 7-1*, I depict the share of actions corresponding to each of the three stylized actors for each phase of the episode, showing the drastic ramping up of challenger action in its beginning and its end, while also noting the laguna of contention in the middle.

*Table 7-1: Actor share of actions for each phase of the third episode: percentages*

Third Episode	Government	Challengers	Third Parties	Totals	N	Pace (mob./day)
5 October–27 October	25.6	47.9	26.5	100.0	117	2.33
28 October–11 November	26.1	4.4	69.6	100.0	23	0.07
12 November–5 February	26.8	21.8	51.4	100.0	142	0.35
8 February–15 February	19.2	50.0	30.8	100.0	27	1.75
N	79	102	128	309	309	–

Source: POLCON.

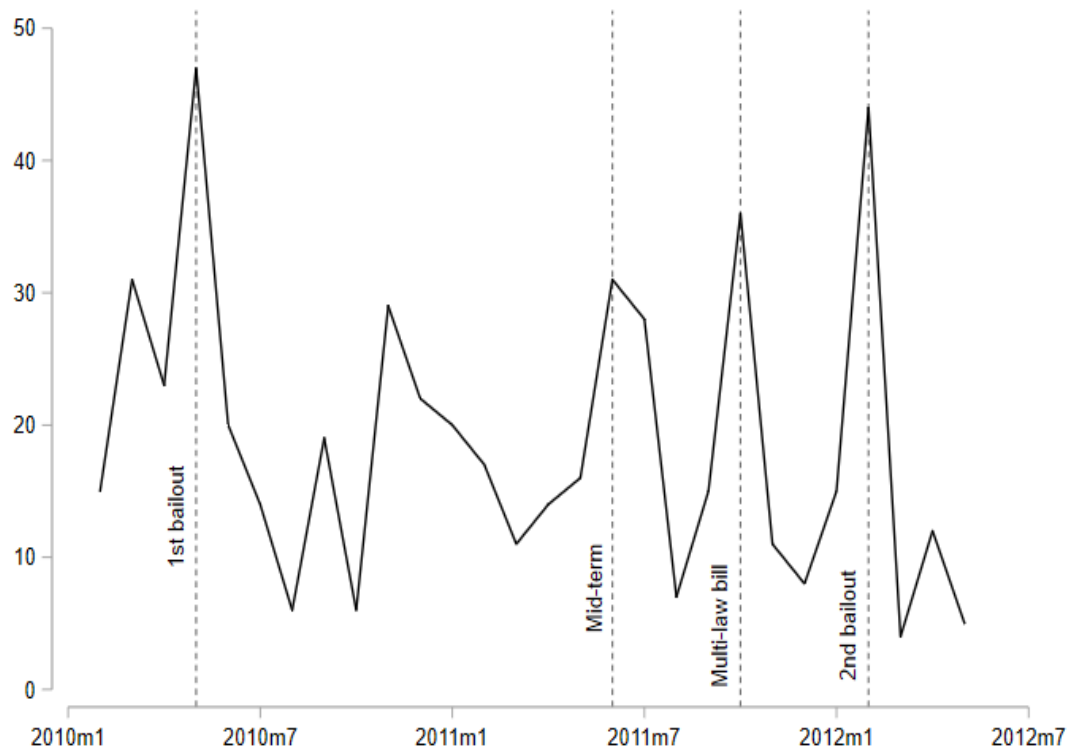
Furthermore, they presented a wide diversity in terms of actors: almost the entire civil sector would go on strike. Apart from strikes, the new protest was much more confrontational, as most civil sector unions frequently occupied their place of work. As shown in *Figure 7-1*, based on our PEA data, this episode contained a “twin peak” of radical forms of mobilization during the entire protest wave, second only to the first episode’s amount of violent and confrontational events.<sup>52</sup>

At the beginning of the episode, the State Accounting Unit was taken over by its employees, in a bid to stop the new budget and measures from going through. Metro, buses and trains all rarely moved: transport workers were the most active union, with nine recorded strike instances throughout this episode. Combined with the taxi strike, immobility took over the urban centers. Commercial transport fared no better. Sailors, dockworkers and truck drivers downed tools, terminating the flow of goods and tourists to and from the country and throwing a span at its biggest service industry, shipping. Banks would shut down for days prior to the multi-law bill vote. Archeologists—suffering steep departmental budget cuts—distributed black leaflets to Acropolis tourists (*To Vima* 2011a). In anticipation of the parliamentary vote,

<sup>52</sup> Again, discrepancies between PEA and CEP are due to different data collection methodologies. The CEP database is better equipped to trace confrontational events related to the specific policy bundle, such as ministry occupations and waste workers’ confrontations, as it relies on local press. PEA is better suited in tracking violent events, like riots, due to their high salience in the international press. Combining the two sources and wider press archives works best for triangulating the high confrontational nature of this episode compared to the rest.

the chamber of small businesses and the artisans and craftsmen association asked its members to shut down their shops in protest.

*Figure 7-1: Radical protest event timeline for Greece, January 2010–May 2012*



Source: POLCON.

The Attica landscape festered for days under piles of uncollected garbage, as the combative municipality waste collection workers went on strike. The odor emanating from uncollected trash became particularly vile during the rolling blackouts planned as power company workers left their posts, in continuation of their practice—seen in the previous episode—of intermittent interruptions of the electricity supply. Oil refineries, Greece’s prime export industry, ceased activities on 10 October, a significant financial hit on a country in such dire straits. Air traffic was curtailed as the controllers limited their availability, as did doctors and hospital personnel in the public health sector. The protest action reached even the third branch of power, as lawyers and judges partially abstained from attending trials for five days in a row in mid-October, adding to the excessive backlog of non-trialed cases.

Within the core of the state apparatus, ministries became occupied by their employees in protest, coordinated by their top union, ADEDY. The ministries of the interior, labor, environment, trade, justice, and administrative reform—and the buildings of the insurance funds and water company in Thessaloniki—were taken over by disgruntled public sector workers from 5–20 October 5, in brief, but repetitive, occupations and disruptions of their work (Vithoukas 2011). While all these sectors had mobilized before, it was the first time that the whole country came to a standstill, mesmerized by the clash between the flailing government and almost every working sector in the country.

The government's reaction to the new wave of protest was again uncoordinated. Its strategy remained consistent substantively—always denying protesters' claims—but not rhetorically, as it alternated between the carrot and the stick. Often, different ministers—or even a single minister—could be found attempting to simultaneously suppress and negotiate with challenger groups. Out of twenty-three government actions during this period, five were coded as negotiations or concessions to the demonstrators. However, for the most part—like in all the episodes—the government stuck to its plan and held only sham meetings with challengers. The room for maneuver afforded by the Troika was exceptionally narrow and even when the government negotiated under Venizelos' new strategy of softening PASOK's attitude toward protesters it could not offer substantive concessions.

The example of the municipal waste collectors' strike, dubbed the “waste battle”, is instructive. Mosialos, the government's “hardline” spokesman, would threaten civil servants who participated in public building occupations with wage cuts (*To Vima* 2011c) and municipal waste workers refusing to return to their work with dismissals. Within the same timeframe, other ministers would contradict his harsh stance and try to negotiate with the same unions to end strike action, offering some possible, albeit unrealistic concessions, given the context.



After negotiations failed—the gulf between the Troika and strikers’ demands being simply too wide—legal suits against union leaders and threats of dismissal succeeded them. In a truly surreal turn of events, the minister of the interior was unable to make a public announcement about the state of the “waste battle” because, as he sought a venue to deliver his remarks, a mobile band of strikers shadowed him from one government building to the next, occupying each before he had a chance to speak (*To Vima* 2011b). This series of dysfunctional events peaked when limited waste collection by private companies had to proceed under the protection of battalions of armed riot police, who shielded private waste collectors from the wrath of their public sector colleagues (*To Vima* 2011d). To end the farce, the government activated a rare tool in its repertoire of repression, utilizing an emergency law provisioned for war and natural disasters that allowed it impose a pseudo-“draft” on the state’s municipal workers. Failure to comply would result in criminal charges.

In the meantime, more than 12,000 tons of waste had accumulated in Athens. The government’s failure to accommodate economic demands was not only reflected in paychecks. It could literally be seen (and smelled) across the nation’s capital, home to almost 35 percent of the Greek population. The waste battle was characteristic of the increasing lack of communication within the government and its inability to come up with responses other than bare repression to mounting social protest. Challenger–government relationships were thus the same in this episode as well. Namely, escalating mobilization—followed by faint and futile attempts at rhetorical and procedural appeasement—eventually degenerated into plain repression of various forms, and no substantive concessions.

The multi-law bill, after some delays, was finally due to be voted on October 20. Predictably by now, a 48-hour strike was called by the GSEE/ADEDY alliance. On 19 October, the associated demonstrations gathered up to 500,000 participants—the largest number to date—with 300,000 people showing up the next day (Diani and Kousis 2014). On 20 October,

some anarchist groups and other protesters tried to invade the parliament, bypassing the KKE's blocks in front of the building, resulting in a three-way battle between riot police, the KKE and unionists trying to defend their peaceful rally, and anarchist groups. Molotov cocktails and large slabs of the marble square floor were thrown indiscriminately at anyone standing between protesters and parliament. One KKE unionist died from a heart attack, as teargas, fire and marble rained on Syntagma square (Souliotis 2011). The attack on the parliament was a sign of challenger action escalation; the Greek Indignados had blocked parliament before, but never tried to breach directly into it, something that had last happened on the day of the Marfin incident but by fewer protesters.

On top of the thematic expansion of protest, the unresponsiveness of last summer and police repression had radicalized the repertoire of a significant part of protesters who joined the assault on parliament. While the crowds gathering for the GI were initially peaceful and suspicious toward all institutional actors, the mass aspect of the October protests, organized by the unions, indicates that many had returned to Syntagma square, willing to set aside their distrust of organized labor and parties and engage in more radical actions during this round.

The government once again mostly managed to discipline its MPs, as Venizelos warned that “without a positive vote on the multi-law bill there is no reason to go to the Summit”, the country's bankruptcy naturally following (Stavropoulos 2011e). Despite a high-profile defection from Katseli, his former economics minister—who was then summarily expelled from the parliamentary group—Papandreou managed once again to muster the required votes. Losing one more MP, its parliamentary majority was now down to three, and many of them were in panic. Schäuble's summer message had disciplined MPs on the need to vote the new package. Instead, they channeled their energy into a flurry of legislative action on the side of the main bill, in a frantic attempt to appease escalating protests in any way.

On 19 October, 29 government MPs asked for an audit of sources of income and wealth for all MPs and government officials for the past 20 years, trying to address corruption grievances (Stavropoulos 2011c). Another forty MPs proposed a series of amendments, focusing on the favorable treatment of citizens stuck in dire financial straits due to mounting debts (Mpourdaras 2011b; Stavropoulos 2011c). On 21 October, after voting the multi-law bill, twenty-one PASOK MPs sent a letter asking for “softer” deregulation terms for taxi drivers (*To Vima* 2011e). On the same day, another group of twenty-eight sent yet another letter to the government, encouraging it to cease the political initiative and form an expanded government that would seek a “national” solution to the crisis, denouncing the “unjust and lopsided distribution of the crisis costs” (Stavropoulos 2011d; *To Vima* 2011f). While the government itself might no longer have been negotiating with protesters, MPs were trying to pry concessions on their behalf anyway.

Meanwhile, assaults and threats toward politicians were continuing. For example, even in the normally tranquil and prosperous island of Chios, local citizens surrounded the local MP’s office and warned they would smash everything inside if she voted for the multi-law bill, while anonymous callers warned her “not to set foot again on the island if she votes for the measures” (Xasapopoulos 2011d). When the riots began anew on 20 October, government MPs were resigned to passing the night trapped inside the parliament building. Garden escapades were no longer an option—any attempt to leave through the rioting crowd might prove perilous.

The conclusive feature of this period was disarray and disconnection in PASOK ranks. Under the twin pressures of rejection from mass protests and urgency from European creditors, MPs no longer threatened the government with abstention or rejection of the multi-law bill. Instead, they featured in an anarchic setting where each group of MPs tried to salvage whatever was possible, proposing its own strategy or trying to protect some of its associated interest groups. The protesters’ threat, both electoral and personal had taken them to their limits. The

conundrum they faced in June had returned and most of them were expecting the leadership to proceed with the institutional resolution of a national unity government or elections after the multi-law bill vote. As MPs stated to *Kathimerini*:

*It's gone... We will not make it through October. PASOK is collapsing, the government is sinking, the political system is being dismantled and society out there is boiling (Mpourdaras 2011a).*

*National consensus or a government of emergency or elections. Enough. (Mpourdaras 2011a)*

*No single-party government can manage. The PM has to summon other political forces and if they do not prove up to the circumstances, let the Greek people speak. (Mpourdaras 2011e)*

Their constant challenges to the party leadership transmitted the image of a fractured, dysfunctional, clueless and weak government, on the brink of collapse. In the midst of this, the government, focused on the threat from abroad, was largely dismissive of the threat from below. Assured that the prospect of default sufficiently terrorized its parliamentarians into obedience, the government prioritized fulfilling bailout goals. Absorbed by international negotiations, it emphasized its small victories and losses in those as its defining mission and it is dubious whether it understood the extent and depth of reaction to the bailouts. The gulf between the government's and the public's perception would become evident during the next week.

#### *The October parade and Papandreou's fall: 28 October–10 November 2011*

Despite the intensity of the strike barrage, contentious action after the passage of the multi-law bill deteriorated. The municipality workers' strike had ended and, by the leader's summit on 26 October, most of the lower-level unions had halted their activities. However, the

tension within the government was still palpable, as the latest round of uncoordinated initiatives by PASOK MPs indicated. A growing gap of expectations and perceptions about the leaders' summit grew between leadership, MPs and society. While the leadership was aware that debt relief would be associated by new measures, they had not properly communicated the extent of this to MPs and wider society. Most PASOK officials thought debt relief would be given as some sort of reward to the achievements of the first bailout and its mid-term adjustment, with some mild measures attached (Kroustalli 2011f). When they were confronted with the possibility of voting for more cuts, privatizations and rollback of the welfare state, most of them repeated their demand for forming a consensus government (Mpourdaras 2011a, 2011e). The government agreed that New Democracy needed to come on board, but due to the perceived urgency of the situation, it was resigned to once again passing any new deal with the marginal PASOK majority that remained (Nedos 2011c).

It took two European summits to reach the new agreement, signed late on 26 October. It cemented debt relief for Greece and the new financing (around 100 billion euros) required to recapitalize domestic banks that would otherwise go bankrupt due to the haircut on their holdings of government bonds. The trade-offs for conceding debt relief were exacting. At the insistence of the creditors, the new bailout and additional austerity would also be accompanied by the permanent installment of the Troika representatives in ministries in Athens, acting as local supervisors of the bailout progress (Kovaio 2011b). The formalization and voting of the new deal by foreign parliaments hinged on Athens' strict implementation of the remaining measures of the first bailout. Additionally, there was a provision that new divergences from the ongoing and future program would be dealt with further austerity (Tsiolis 2011).

Initially, the government assumed a semi-triumphant tone, insisting that the new agreement was a marked improvement over previous ones (*To Vima* 2011g), despite MPs remaining puzzled about the elusive demands of the new deal (Kroustalli 2011g). Immediately

after signing it, government officials claimed that the agreement was an undisputed success, arguing that much worst outcomes, like Eurozone expulsion or uncoordinated default, had been avoided (Papadopoulos 2011; Zoulas 2011e). In his televised address to the public, Prime Minister Papandreou described it in celebratory terms as “the successful conclusion of the sacrifices of the last two years” and “a great opportunity to turn the page and face the next day with hope” (Zoulas 2011d).

The cabinet, locked in tough negotiations with creditors and cognizant of the deterioration of the Greek economy and the constraints set upon them, undoubtedly saw this new deal as a relative success. Jubilant about debt relief, the government misdiagnosed the mood of MPs and the public—both groups being more focused on the prospects of a new bailout and resulting austerity.

This miscalculation was based on at least three factors. First, Papandreou had spent the entire first year of the crisis warding off the possibility of a debt default, demonizing this outcome as a national catastrophe. By embracing the haircut, Papandreou was shifting the goalposts, treating what he had initially portrayed as potential destruction as a grand achievement. The differences between uncoordinated and “structured” defaults seemed quite technical and abstract at this point. The second problem was—as Samaras rushed to argue (Ravanos 2011d)—that the new agreement would only make the debt resume the level it had in 2009 (the beginning of the crisis), accentuating the impression that the whole bailout had been a vain, senseless pursuit. This feeling was amplified by the (at the time) ubiquitous denunciations in the international press and among economists that the Greek bailouts were simply an exercise in frustration (Bloomberg 2011; Detrixhe and McKee 2011; Krugman 2011; Lauricella and Phillips 2011; Munchau 2011).

The third and arguably most important problem for Papandreou was that no one was listening anymore. Citizens, frustrated by successive austerity packages and almost two years

of economic vertigo simply did not believe that the government was capable of handling the crisis and did not trust Papandreou. While most citizens wanted to remain in the Eurozone in surveys, most of them also would vote against the new agreement if it were put on a referendum. Most of them believed this deal was against Greek interests (Chiotis 2011). Favorability of Papandreou had tumbled from 82 percent when he was newly elected in October 2009 to a paltry 23 percent exactly two years later, the lowest ever for a Greek prime minister (Public Issue 2011b). The announcement of the agreement on 27 October and the government's jubilation probably irked dissenters even more.

The reaction to the new agreement abruptly surfaced on the following day, 28 October—a national holiday and commemoration of the Greek resistance and refusal to submit to the Axis during WWII. As every year, twin military and student parades were planned for the day in the major cities of Greece, an idiosyncratic remnant of the militarist Greek state tradition. The commemoration resonated with the Greek anti-austerity movement, which saw many parallels between current events and the resistance to the Germans during WWII—underpinned by a (debatable) unity in the nation, both left and right, against the Nazi invaders. There was the expectation of some symbolic protest during the parade, as had happened on recent occasions. Indeed, at the student parade in Athens, several students made rude gestures or refused to face government officials. Other than those symbolic expressions of disobedience, nothing much happened. Police planning and limited access to the parade streets prevented any further protest.

In Thessaloniki, however, where the President of the Republic, Karolos Papoulias, was to preside over a military parade and fewer expectations of disruption existed, the state apparatus was caught unprepared. A large group of protesters, numbering in the thousands, overcame the police block and disrupted the parade. Yelling “traitor, traitor” at President Papoulias, they were a peculiar and heterogeneous mix of unionists close to Syriza, “Can’t Pay,

Won't Pay" activists, organized football fans, and, allegedly retired, military personnel with loose far-right links, who had seen their pensions and benefits savagely cut during the crisis (Elevtherotipia 2011; *To Vima* 2011h). Papoulias, an 82-year old former resistance fighter, remained in his place as the police tried to remove the protesters and resume the parade. However—in a crowd filled with families and children—riot police operations were impossible. Instead, as the chants and obscenities hurled at President Papoulias intensified, he decided to cancel the parade, and was hurriedly escorted from the podium under police protection. After his departure, the protesters allowed a pathway to open. While military units vacated the venue, some reserve units continued their march anyway, perhaps confused by the turn of events, cheered and joined by protesters who had replaced institutional representatives and the parading units.

Similar events and parade cancellations happened across the country. In Patra, Crete, Rhodes, Volos, Corfu, Trikala and other, smaller urban centers, parades were either cancelled or resumed only after politicians departed, hounded and replaced on podiums by indignant citizens (Elevtherotipia 2011). Throughout the country, MPs, mayors and other officials associated with the “old” parties had to flee the parade venues like hunted fugitives.

The parade events quickly smothered the government's enthusiasm for the new agreement and accentuated the sense of losing control. Government officials swiftly condemned the parade protests, along with most of the opposition parties<sup>53</sup> that disliked the uncontrolled nature of protest. Nevertheless, images of the Greek head of state—who, as a teenage boy, had joined the Greek partisans resisting Nazi occupation—being hounded off stage by a menacing crowd were deeply traumatic. The MPs who had also been chased away from parades and were receiving threats and abuse from everywhere, panicked and increasing

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<sup>53</sup> Except Syriza and the Communist Party, which regretted any extremism but declared it “understood” the “justified” wrath of the people.



signs of centrifugal tendencies developed within PASOK (Kroustalli 2011g; To Vima 2011i). MPs demanded action to quell unrest and reduce the outrage caused by the announcement of a new bailout. Papandreou hurriedly convened his parliamentary group on Sunday, 30 October. Within this assembly, the prime minister felt he had to capture the initiative and smother parliamentary turbulence.

#### *A broken prime minister and a referendum annulled*

Papandreou, in the charged atmosphere created by desperate party members and faced with an impasse, announced a referendum on the new deal. The turnaround due to the parade protest was apparent. On Thursday, he was talking about a landmark in the bailout process, determined to steer the new deal through parliament with his shrunken majority of 153. By Sunday, he was asking for popular legitimacy through a referendum. The government's commitment to his European partners had evaporated in the face of mounting dissent. The only intervening event was the parade protest and the sensation it caused among the party, MPs and the government. Papandreou himself confirmed that the parade events were critical, as he finally realized the extent that his government had alienated the public. He told his counterparts during the following days, trying to justify his decision, that "*everyone was saying the government were traitors...the situation was out of control*" (Spiegel 2011). Three years later, in an interview with *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ), Papandreou repeated his claims:

*[A]ll of the opposition parties were characterizing the bailout as destructive and called me a traitor...I understood [after the parade protests] that the situation could not continue as such...I had two*

*options, either form a coalition government or make a referendum*

*(Kathimerini 2014; To Vima 2014a).*<sup>54</sup>

Finally, images of protesters chasing the elderly president had impressed upon him the depth of the political crisis. The disruption of the parade revealed the wide disconnect between the government and the public's perception of events, as the former's enthusiasm for the debt write-down was quickly grounded by the latter's fury about the prospect of a new bailout. It was not the most massive or entirely spontaneous event, but the contradiction of expectations about the new deal's reception had finally forced Papandreou to doubt, hesitate and try something different lest he face further parliamentary mutiny and polarization.

The announcement of the referendum relocated action on the institutional level and was succeeded by frantic negotiations abroad and within the party. Of the twenty-three actions coded between 29 October and the installment of the new government, sixteen refer to third parties, almost half to foreign governments reacting to Papandreou's announcement. While it is uncertain how the referendum would have worked domestically, it is clear that top government circles were confused about the reactions of foreign partners. The EU creditors—who until now had been a major but somewhat monolithic agent, monotonously pushing for austerity and concluding new bailout deals and requirements—strode into the scene much more forcefully. Until then, they were mostly content that the government was, ever-more reluctantly, pushing through reforms in exchange for funding. Their main priority had been the stabilization of Greece within the context of a wider crisis. The news of the referendum rendered them furious, as it threatened that stability (*Kathimerini* 2014). By Tuesday, Merkel and Sarkozy had summoned Papandreou on a meeting at Cannes, where the G-7 was taking place. Sarkozy—feeling the agreement he had toiled for on 26 October was in a shambles—

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<sup>54</sup> In personal communication with Papandreou, when asked about his referendum turn, he gave the same answer almost verbatim.

became enraged and hurled expletives at Papandreou, while Merkel appeared desperate about the situation (Kathimerini 2014; Spiegel 2011).

Spiegel's (2011) detailed account of the meeting does not need to be repeated here, but the outcome bears no dispute. The prime minister, appearing lethargic, received the scolding of foreign leaders with a mix of perplexity and resignation. Back home, Papandreou found his parliamentary group in tatters; he had planned a confidence vote for the days ahead, but it was clear now he was not going to win it under the current circumstances. The group of MPs oscillating about the bailout had been joined in doubting the government by the pro-bailout faction of the party, which was now feeling Papandreou could jeopardize the European trajectory of the party (To Vima 2011i; Papadopoulos 2012a). They were asking for a new government of national unity rather than a referendum or elections. Health Minister Loverdos declared:

*If there are not immediately movements toward the direction of a national unity government, I will not have anything to do with political processes (Stavropoulos 2011a).*

Voudouris, another PASOK MP, explained the crux of the issue:

*It is paradoxical for the parliament to give a confidence vote to a government and its leader while it has lost the trust of Greek society and the international community...the process remains formally a "confidence vote"...but it does not signify confidence to the present government, but a mandate for the immediate achievement...of a national unity government (Stavropoulos 2011a).*

As Papandreou was sleeping after the exhaustive meeting at Cannes, his finance minister, Venizelos, announced that the referendum would be annulled (Kathimerini 2014),

essentially bypassing the acting prime minister and signifying his grip on power had slipped. Inconsistency, reluctance and hesitation had come at a great cost. Several of Papandreou's ministers and MPs, frustrated with his handling of the referendum, met with him or went public and asked for his resignation (*The Economist* 2011a). He accepted. Succumbing to pressure and overwhelming tiredness, Papandreou paved the way for a technocratic government, paralleling the ongoing developments in Italy, where Monti was handed the reins of government by a similarly besieged Berlusconi. The first Greek bailout government had collapsed.

New Democracy finally caved in, as debt repayment deadlines loomed, and creditor funding was nowhere in sight. The admonitions of its other foreign peers, parliamentary arithmetic and the rapidly unfolding collapse of PASOK forced the party to abandon its commitment to a traditional opposition role and participate in the formation of a new, technocratic government. Unlike what happened in June, its main demand, that Papandreou would not head the government, was satisfied, a development that could at least allow it to pretend something had changed. In addition, the far-right LAOS also agreed to support the new government. On 11 November after some days of haggling and false starts, Loukas Papademos, the former Bank of Greece governor, was sworn in as the new consensus prime minister.

*The Papademos government and PSI<sup>55</sup>: 11 November 2011–5 February 2012*

The tenure of the Papademos government was initially met with muted reaction on the streets. In the period between 11 November (when the government was sworn in) and the final agreement with European partners for the second Greek bailout in early February, there were only twenty-nine events. The pace of protest thus slowed to a crawl, compared to the previous

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<sup>55</sup> Private Sector Involvement, the plan to relieve some of the Greek debt owed to private creditors, mostly banks.

period. Most (18) of these events were continuing strikes, mostly by professional unions (e.g., pharmacists and taxi drivers) reacting to liberalization reforms. The only noteworthy activity otherwise was the continued struggle between power company unionists and the government, the latter trying to sabotage attempts to disconnect electricity supply to households that had not paid the newly introduced real estate tax. This new form of action (i.e., state employees circumventing official policy as an act of solidarity) was original and indicative of the declining capacity of an already weak state. It was, nevertheless, relatively isolated.

There was one last major outbreak of contention once the new bailout was signed (on 12 February), but apart from this the Papademos government signified the beginning of the end of the period of major contention. The massive demonstrations of the 2010–2012 period outside parliament were not repeated.

This is evident in the periodization presented in *Table 7-1* for this third episode, where the role of challengers dips after the parade events and the formation of the Papademos government and the pace of contention slows down, from an average of 2.3 mobilizations per day to effectively nothing. Even during Papademos' tenure, the pace of mobilization was a paltry 0.35 per day, contrary to the high pace of previous month. After 12 November (the first day of the Papademos government) and before 8 February 2012 (when the new bailout was agreed with creditors), there were only twenty-four union mobilizations, compared to the fifty-six between 5 and 28 October 2011. The Papademos government therefore was a clear turning point for massive industrial action, which subsided after its inauguration.

Instead, the main theater of operations is relocated to the struggle between foreign creditors, the constituting parties of the Greek technocratic government and the squeezed prime minister in the middle. The role of third parties increased dramatically during this period, from November to February, as shown in *Table 7-1*. The main culprits were the parties that supported the government, with twenty-four actions, and international actors with 34, only four below the

Greek government. The reason for this increase is that the mutual distrust between Greek parties and international actors had grown after Samaras' intransigence in the previous months and Papandreou's referendum announcement. To assure themselves that no further surprises would be forthcoming, the Troika and foreign creditors asked for *written* assurances from the parties participating in government, binding them to the outcomes of the Papademos negotiations and past bailout provisions. The pledge would have to be signed by all party leaders. Most of the coded sentences at the time refer to the back and forth between the creditors, the Papademos government trying to persuade party leaders to commit to the bailout, and the party leaders themselves, particularly Samaras, who refused to do so.

The pressure on Samaras was unbearable. Almost all foreign governments and institutions—the European Commission, the IMF and the Eurogroup—stood their ground and declared they would not disburse any more funds until the Greek opposition signed the pledge committing to the bailout. Within the government, an additional layer of complexity had been added to an already complicated situation, as Papademos had to negotiate on two parallel planes, with the creditors *and* the three party leaders supporting him. There were ten coded instances in which Samaras threatened to dismiss the government if Papademos proceeded into concessions to the creditors. The pressure was on Papademos to acquiesce to the reluctant party leaders' demands and on the party leaders not to exhaust the patience and limits of the Europeans and Papademos. Concurrently, there were some weak signs of the new government trying again to negotiate with protesters, as there were nine instances in which the Papademos government negotiated or conceded protester demands, smoothing the more extreme versions of wage and pension cuts and undoing parts of transport liberalization. Overall, though, the government retained most of its package and once again turned down claims for changes.

These were the main themes of the operetta that was staged during the Papademos government. Eventually, at the end of November, Samaras, under immense pressure from

markets and partners, agreed to yield to European demands and sign the pledge committing to the bailout, lest the blame for debt default fall on his shoulders. Nevertheless, his guerilla war inside the government continued, militating against any possibility that pension and wage cuts would be implemented. The play of “resistance” and demands for “renegotiation” by the coalition party leaders—asking Papademos to back down and renegotiate with creditors, only to then cede their positions at the last moment—would become a fixed pattern of Greek life for the following months, as the negotiations for the second bailout and debt write-down were concluded.

*The final major acts of contention: 8–21 February 2012*

Eventually an agreement on a new bailout was reached with creditors, accompanied by funding of 130 billion. This was accepted by all party leaders. On 8 February, the European partners signed off on the new agreement and it was rushed through Greek parliament in four days—the vote was on 12 February. The last major act of contention took the usual shape: a 48-hour general strike on 11–12 February, in which almost all top- and low-level unions participated. Once more, the crowds in front of parliament were unprecedented. Diani and Kousis (2014) claim half a million showed up, once again indicating the expansion of the circle of protest to a wider strata of Greek society. Similar to previous strikes and demonstrations, the event was disrupted by rioting—the most extensive to date. Almost all roads leading to parliament were destroyed during the night, as the police concentrated on protecting the parliament building, fearing another assault would take place, leaving rioters to run amok elsewhere. Many landmark buildings in the capital, such as the Attikon cinema that is housed in one of the few remaining neoclassical buildings, were put to the torch (Souliotis and Onisenko 2012). The realization that the technocratic government had not quelled the indignation settled in.

The situation was not much better inside parliament. Emboldened by the apparent buffer afforded Papademos by a huge, three-party majority, multiple MPs defected. MPs of the mainstream parties found an opportunity to register their dissent at zero cost, or so they thought. LAOS, the far-right small party that had initially supported the first bailout and participated in the Papademos government, abruptly opted in the last moment to vote against the second bailout and leave government, in fear of recent polls showing it ceding ground to new far-right challengers like Golden Dawn. This was to no avail, as the penalty for political inconsistency around the bailout issue cost the party: first to go were its MPs and, in May, its parliamentary representation.

The developments in the two mainstream parties were even more dramatic and unprecedented. In a major rebellion that had never occurred before, twenty-three PASOK and twenty-one New Democracy MPs voted against the new bailout or abstained and another eight voted against specific articles of the new legislation. Their parties took an extremely punitive stance, the former group being expelled from the party and the latter being excluded from future electoral lists. Many of the expelled MPs were incorporated into smaller parties of the left and right and provided experienced political personnel and networks to new challengers. It is characteristic that the two Syriza MPs gaining the most votes in the upcoming elections were both refugees from PASOK.

#### *Between the bailout and the May elections*

In line with previous patterns, once the second bailout was voted the surge in contention dissipated. From February to May, when the next elections were held, the focus shifted to institutional politics and, indeed, the campaign trail, as the engines of the electoral machines started to rev. There were few protest events during those months and none managed to amass the thousands seen before. However, the movements of the last two years lurked dormant but



vigilant, ready to vault into the light given the right conditions. And they would disrupt the electoral humming one more time before May.

On 4 April, as parties were already busying themselves with the upcoming elections, hurling recriminations at one other about the economic crisis and bailout legacy, a final solitary act of protest took place. People exiting the metro station just below parliament at Syntagma noticed a 77-year old man—a pharmacist, as it happened—quietly place an envelope at the base of a tree. They almost certainly did not expect to see him then pull out a handgun, turn it upon himself, and pull the trigger.

In the suicide note—left in the area in which most of the GI assemblies had taken place—he blamed the bailout for stripping him of his dignity and putting him in dire financial straits. He ended it by urging the Greek youth to revolt against the “national traitors”, whom he cursed with the fate of Mussolini at the Piazza Loreto. While the regularity of contentious action subsided, the tragic death of the pharmacist by his own hand at Syntagma square, and the wave of subsequent suicides (Kitsantonis 2019) all over the country, laid bare the emotional depth and resonance of the anti-bailout struggles. The issue had ceased to be about a calculus on Eurozone participation, austerity or economics, but had evolved into a tale of rage and despair and, indeed, of life and death. Rage manifested itself in the rioting that followed the suicide and the city was enveloped in flames once more, the last time before May 2012.

### ***Protest and institutions: Parallel transformations***

We have so far documented the narrative of this episode in such detail to clearly argue for its status as a transformative moment in the entire Greek drama, the point where institutional behavior changed as a product of its interaction with protest politics. I have provided the evidence for the contingency and symbolic nature of the October events, in line with Sewell (1996). I believe the October events, themselves an accumulation and product of previous

trends, are however distinct to preceding events because they delineate the moment in which durable transformations of the political system manifested.

Next, I substantiate the transformations in the protest field that constituted the origins of this event and the durable structural transformations in the institutional arena that arose from it. As such, I first talk about the changing challenger–MP relationship and challenger repertoire and its accumulative effect on the political system. I then return to the transformations produced in the MP–government, government–opposition and government–Troika systems, insofar as these bear on the evolution of Greek politics.

*The parade protest: Accumulation and culmination of the disruptive repertoire*

The origins of all these transformations can be traced in multiple events throughout the anti-bailout campaign of 2010–2012, but decisive action that shaped future events was undertaken between 26 October and 3 November 2011, during the second phase of this episode. From this initial domino, a chain of events was triggered that transformed the typical patterns of Greek politics, ending the “sleepwalking” period, but in an asynchronous way. Without the shock value of the parade events, their symbolic power, emotional potency and rupture with routine forms of protest, the top echelons of Greek policy-making would not have lost control so decisively and other, smoother pathways might have been followed. The restructuring was further solidified after the October events by the remaining events in the episode: the technocratic government and the second bailout. Before I describe the repercussions of the parade events themselves, I want to talk about their special character and placement in the general timeline and protest developments over the past years.

The parade events comprise actions that compressed the characteristics and development of protest during the past two years. They symbolized three main developments in Greek protest over the previous year. First, the participation and the formation of informal

coalition of protest among a wide array of citizens, social groups, unions and political spaces (Kanellopoulos et al. 2017). The heterogeneity of the parade protesters was remarkable; —they contained Syriza supporters, football club fans, retired military personnel, far-right militants and specialized movement activists, like “Can’t Pay, Won’t Pay”. Nor is it clear that there was any synchronization of the protest among those groups, other the shared belief that “something would happen there that day”. Whereas the first wave of protest had been supported primarily by unions and leftists, by now the expansion of protest had penetrated unexpected social categories, people and groups who did not regularly participate in protest—and definitely not together.

Second was the gradual expansion and dislocation of protest into non-routine forms and the development of a “disruptive repertoire”. While mass rallies persisted, the GI experience had spread doubts about their efficacy. Already during the previous episode, we witnessed the multiplication of confrontational incidents, like assaults on politicians and blockading of political venues, a trend which continued apace in this episode. To these a proliferation of disruptive actions were added in the current episode (i.e., protests that disrupted some state function or practice). Cutting out the electricity supply to household not complying with the real estate tax became difficult, as employees of the PPC would reconnect it, defying the ministry’s orders. Vital government buildings were seized by state employees, who used those occupations as an (admittedly inefficient) instrument to stop bailout implementation.

Both confrontational and disruptive protest practices were in full display during the parade events. Politicians as senior as the president were hounded by enraged protesters away from the podium. At Trikala, a provincial city, a protester physically attacked the local PASOK MP present. When the police arrested him, the crowd of protesters became enraged and laid siege at the police van, forcing his immediate release and the departure of local notables from the parade (Elevtherotipia 2011). In Volos, 100 fans of the football team started a skirmish with

the riot police, which caused the departure of the local politicians and the eventual destruction of the parade platform, which was thrown into the sea. With the authorities gone and the platform destroyed, the protesters made their own parade. Similarly, in Rhodes the police cordon sanitaire was breached and the police instead hurriedly escorted the minister present away from the parade venue. Also notable are the attacks on local politicians during church services, typically a sanctuary from politics (Tsigganas 2011). Both in Thessaloniki the night before the parade and in the western city of Patra the day after, PASOK politicians were confronted during religious services by flocks of the faithful and booed.<sup>56</sup> No longer content with expressing their dissent via ignored demonstrations, protesters were increasingly confronting and stalking politicians in their everyday activities, public and private.

The confrontational and disruptive nature of protests yielded the third main characteristic of protest, fully apparent only during this episode; the decaying legitimacy and capacity of the state to function and perform even routine practices like concluding a military parade. Already, the rogue reconnections of electricity supply, the disobedience of civil servants like Treasury and tax service employees—their occupation of government buildings and so on—had shown that the state apparatus was only partially responding to governmental orders (at best) and had taken things into its own hands (at worst). The already weak capacity of the Greek state was decaying further, as a round of strikes, occupations and disobedient behavior completely paralyzed the country. While the events that preceded the parade were typical strikes, their density and frequency—as well as the extent of low-level union participation—challenged the government’s capacity to perform even basic tasks, like gather the waste piling up on the streets of the capital. There was a profound sense that the government had lost control over the country.

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<sup>56</sup> Booing politicians during church services became a trend during 2011, with incidents reported at Easter, on 15 August, and on other religious holidays.

The events of the parade—combining confrontation and disruption—cemented this perception. The crowds of the protesters had maybe thinned to approximately 10,000 people (Diani and Kousis 2014), but the symbolic potency of its disruption acted as a magnifying lens, multiplying the impact of the gathered protesters. The parallels with the German occupation was the most obvious and trivial act of symbolism, apparent even to the least observant passer-by. But more importantly, the parade events stood as symbols of the loss of control by the government and its de-legitimization. Even where the parade was completed, students and musical bands parading were wearing black armbands and turned their face away from the platform where the official representatives of the state stood. Where the parade was disrupted, the government’s weakness and incapacity became evident to the naked eye. Not only that, but in many cases, the parade protesters replaced the political personnel, giving the impression of a popular authority replacing the official one. In Thessaloniki, reserve units even continued the parade under the gaze of those popular tribunes after the institutional officials had departed, creating a parody of the normal routine. The impression was that government authority was no longer particularly authoritative and that a power vacuum had emerged in the middle of the political system. In a poll conducted in the first days of November, respondents reflected this impression, with 60 percent saying that the state’s functioning had worsened, a jump of 15 percentage points off the flat line of the previous six months (Public Issue 2011c).

This vacuum was expanding on the back of the perception of an increasingly insulated and corrupt political caste that shouldered the blame for the road to the bailouts, but neither the costs nor the penalties. The shouts of “traitor, traitor” and the suicide note of the retired pharmacist in Syntagma square manifested the increasing revulsion toward the country’s political establishment. A large part of the public did not perceive them as legitimate representatives of the people anymore and considered their behavior unaccountable, and borderline treasonous. No less than twenty-nine percent of poll respondents claimed that the

biggest problem facing the country, ahead of soaring unemployment or the economy, was “politicians” (Public Issue 2011c). By comparison, “politicians” had been a pressing problem for only 3 percent of poll respondents on October 2009. At the same time, polls for the first time registered some novel answers to their typical questions (Public Issue 2011c; RASS 2011); 10 percent of respondents, when asked to rate their satisfaction with democracy, replied that democracy had been abolished. The fundamental pillars of the bailout issue—economic austerity and political class accountability—were finally becoming entwined in public opinion as different aspects of the same issue. What had started the summer of the GI and before with assaults on politicians was now reflected in public opinion polls, in which the bailout issue was now understood to be concurrently a policy *and* politics failure. The expansion of contentiousness in terms of participants, protest forms and claims had qualitatively and quantitatively changed the form challenges to the government took. As the government finally realized this, it panicked.

*Fear, tactics, confusion, sacrifice, and fatigue: The referendum that never was*

The reaction of the political system to the parade was one of shock. The government’s jubilant mood over the new agreement rapidly vanished. In conjunction with public polls, showing the agreement’s unpopularity (Chiotis 2011), it was now obvious the agreement of 26 October was not a stopgap on general dysfunction and dissent. The government’s knee-jerk reaction was again to blame Syriza and far-right circles for organizing a nationally choreographed show of dissent. Government MPs nevertheless, experiencing the parade events at close quarters, asked to see the provisions of the new agreement, and immediately warned the prime minister that the situation was not controllable. The government planned a convention of the cabinet and immediately after, on Sunday, of PASOK’s parliamentary group (Zoulas 2011e). The questioning of MPs about the new deal was not a reaction precipitated

solely by the parade events. It was the accumulation of dissent and many other similar episodes that motivated MPs to react with suspicion to the new agreement. Only a week before, the scrambling factions of PASOK has been trying to salvage their electoral audience by proposing a flurry of amendments to the multi-law bill. The prospect of new austerity was not exactly enthralling.

However, things deteriorated so rapidly in this instance because of the leadership's response. While so far, the government had treated challengers with repression or ignored them, in this instance, Papandreou felt unable to proceed and declared a referendum. In the face of an ever-growing challenge and signs of yet another parliamentary crisis percolating from the streets to his MPs, he opted for the most popular option in the polls (Chiotis 2011)—to call for a referendum on the new agreement. The social protest of the previous two years had finally culminated in the resignation of the PASOK leadership in the face of increasing social turmoil.

The ripples were immense throughout the bailout regime: Troika–government, government–MP and government–opposition relationships would all be affected tremendously. Before I go over the description of these transformations, it is worth asking: Why did Papandreou propose the referendum, renounced it and lost his premiership over it and how was it connected to the parade events?

Rather typically of leaders under pressure, Papandreou's gambit was probably an outcome of (mis)calculation, fear, sacrifice, confusion, and fatigue. The rational interpretation of the events would be something along the lines later claimed by Papandreou, focusing on sacrifice and calculated motives (Spiegel 2011; Kathimerini 2014; To Vima 2014a). He believed the referendum would push the mainstream opposition to support his bailout treaties, ending his isolation and providing relief from the party's massacre in the polls and quarrel in the parliamentary benches. With the opposition's support, he could have gained legitimacy for his economic policy, defanged criticism against him and deflated the street opposition. Even if

it cost Papandreou his job, it appeared that by that point, in contrast to June, Papandreou was willing to make that sacrifice. We could therefore perceive the referendum proposal as a self-sacrificial tactical move.

While tactical considerations aided his decision, Papandreou had also obviously become wary of the consequences of social protest, fearing the spiral of dissent. As seen, four days before the referendum announcement he was still ready to push the new deal through parliament with his remaining majority, striking a relatively celebratory mode. On 27 October, a day after the agreement was struck, he met with Venizelos but nothing forewarned his radical plans (Papadiochos 2011b). Instead, they both seemed to stress the urgency of legislating the 26 October agreement, noting that even asking for a super-majority would have been too risky due to time constraints. The 28 October protests were the only intervening event between his return from the EU summit and his decision to hold a referendum. Perhaps that decision was mediated through the feedback he was receiving from MPs and ministers, but the parade protests were their main source of anguish too. Even more accurately, the combination of a rebellious parliamentary group and his perception of the situation getting “out of control” (Spiegel 2011) show that the atmosphere of open social rebellion was giving him pause.<sup>57</sup> As Spiegel (2011) documents, he no longer believed he could go at it alone and his despair manifested itself in the referendum proposal.

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<sup>57</sup> Spiegel and some of the Greek press have reported that Papandreou also believed that a coup attempt was in the offing (Spiegel 2011; Quatremer 2011; Papadopoulos 2012b). It is difficult to assess how seriously the coup narrative can really be taken. Was it was an excuse invented by Papandreou and his circle afterwards to justify their oscillations (Quatremer 2011), or even was an attempt to ridicule him, as Papandreou himself claimed? Papandreou denied having any knowledge of a planned coup and it is not clear what a coup would have achieved in any case. The only evidence that PASOK ministers believed a coup was imminent was the rather unusual and rapid discharge of all top military commanders during the same weekend as the referendum announcement. However, that could be also interpreted (and the opposition interpreted it so) as a rushed effort by PASOK to appoint political friends to the military before the government’s collapse. Since the Greek intelligence agency, opposition press and Papandreou himself have denied there was any such information, I would rather avoid the discussion of how fears of a purported coup might have affected him.



The idea that the referendum might have been a panicked reaction as well as an impulsive tactical move is reinforced by the testimonies of other actors. Venizelos claims that Papandreou, later the same night of the referendum announcement, sent him an email asking “what would happen if we lost it [the referendum]?”, leaving Venizelos stunned (Smith 2014). While Venizelos’ long rivalry with Papandreou should make us reluctant to accept such claims at face value, it is probable that the top PASOK executives were miscalculating how broad the opposition to the bailout was and how toxic the issue (and Papandreou himself) had become. Years later, Papandreou still claimed he would have won the referendum (Papandreou 2015), a truly dubious assertion.

Many executives of PASOK and its friendly press agreed. They had a supply-side, top-down understanding of the protest and their electoral descent. To them, street and institutional opposition, led by Syriza and New Democracy respectively, were demonizing the bailout to score partisan points. If they were cornered into ending their exploitative campaign, most of the pressure would have been relieved. In the FAZ Papandreou himself had argued that if the Greeks were faced with a critical referendum that linked bailouts and Eurozone participation, they would choose in favor of the bailout, defusing the political situation (*To Vima* 2014; *Kathimerini* 2014). In his mind, if the overwhelming majority of parliament agreed to the bailout, it would then be consigned to a fringe issue on the left. Hence, Papandreou’s proposal was a mix of fear and calculation. He feared the way constant protest destabilized the party and government and thought he could solve this by marginalizing the opposition to the bailout. However, by now the genie was out of the bottle and the anti-bailout camp would not dissolve if New Democracy agreed to the bailout; instead it would be New Democracy that would suffer dissolution.

The few polls conducted in this brief interlude confirmed that Papandreou was at least likely to lose a referendum on the bailout (Chiotis 2011). In this context, Papandreou’s late-

night emails pondering on the possibility of defeat supports the proposition that the referendum was a rash gamble that he had not thought throughout. Confusion about the depth of the opposition to the bailout and miscalculation about the boost that would have been provided by the opposition's consensus were therefore also important factors in his decision. While this does seem unjustified in retrospect, at the time it was not an outrageous claim. New Democracy had also failed to grasp the unpopularity of the bailout, reassuring itself that despite its participation in the technocratic government, the winner-takes-all dynamics of the Greek electoral law could propel it to power.<sup>58</sup>

To conclude this part, Papandreou's reaction to parade protests, themselves an unexpected response to the government's new agreement, was a key step in the transformation process, as it led to an MP rebellion. On a much larger scale, Sewell (1996) has documented the lack of nerve shown by Louis XVI after the Bastille events, hesitating and continually deferring his response. Similarly, the hesitancy, perplexity and unresponsiveness toward the political crisis in previous episodes was succeeded here by its opposite—a rash reaction that led to the collapse of the governing party's cohesion and unity. I have outlined how this key decision was itself not a clear result of any one motive, but a mix of tactics, calculation, fear, confusion and tiredness, as the pummeling Papandreou received at Cannes dragged until the morning hours.

#### *Government–MP interactions and the referendum*

The first domino in the process of party-system unraveling was therefore the reaction of challengers to the new agreement, coupled with the general fact that the anti-bailout movement had acquired wider anti-elitist connotations. The second and most critical was

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<sup>58</sup> A testament to this is Samaras' continuous planning and pleas for a parliamentary majority (Terzis 2012a, 2012b), something that would require New Democracy to gain approximately 35 percent of the vote. It took 18 percent.

Papandreou's reaction, which determined the third—the rebellion of his and cabinet MPs. Government–MP interactions were by then already strained to breaking point, as multiple MPs doubted the efficacy of the bailout and were reluctant to support new measures with no obvious pay-off. However, another significant part of the cabinet and parliamentary group was insistent that PASOK had to drink this poisoned chalice for the country's sake. Papandreou's rash referendum decision distanced both factions from him; those who were doubtful about a new agreement would be difficult to persuade supporting it anyway. But those who perceived the new agreement as necessary thought that the referendum was probably the worst way to repair PASOK's electoral spiral and legitimacy loss. They opted for a national unity government instead, fearing that the referendum was too risky an option, or elections as a second-best option. It is indicative of the miscalculation of Papandreou that he announced a referendum surprisingly, without consulting his cabinet or close associates for it (Zoulas 2011f).

The crumbling of support for Papandreou—who appeared to his party's executives to be confused and lost—cost him his remaining authority. Government MPs, after almost forty years in which there had been only one major incidence of parliamentary rebellion,<sup>59</sup> withdrew their support from the government, essentially forcing Papandreou to resign and pave the way for the technocratic government. When he asked for a confidence supply, the whole process devolved into parody, as the MPs were providing their votes, but only under the explicit promise that the government they were voting for would soon give its place to a new, reluctant consensus government of national unity.

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<sup>59</sup> The culprit was Samaras in 1993, when he withdrew his confidence from a New Democracy government, causing its collapse. Even then, the government fell because of this one defection, as it held only a marginal majority.

*The reluctant transformation of government–opposition dynamics*

The first instance of MP rebellion in four decades thus led to a structural transformation of the government–opposition interaction. Since 1974, with a brief interlude in 1989, the country had been run by single-party governments, typically possessing ample parliamentary majorities. The usual mode of political competition was continuous antagonism and political conflict between the two main parties. The Papademos government, a reluctant coalition of the two major parties was an institutional and historical aberration. Up to that point, despite the particularity of the bailout situation, the normal patterns of political conflict held. The government, PASOK, was proposing a course of action and the opposition, New Democracy, disagreed and demonized it.

The parade protests and the collapse of Papandreou’s government, along with foreign pressure, finally undid this practice. New Democracy, and even the far-right LAOS, agreed to end 40-year-old adversarial relations and form a technocratic government. They all agreed that Eurozone participation had to be protected at any cost—but little else beyond that. The conflict between the habitual patterns of opposition and this new reality were not late to set in, hence my designation of the interactions in this episode as a “reluctant consensus”. Disagreements between government parties were frequent and made the Papademos government marginally more dysfunctional than the Papandreou one, who merely had to contend with non-cooperating but uncoordinated MPs. New Democracy, vehemently objecting to this arrangement that confined it to a premature cooperation with PASOK not on preferable terms, behaved like a caged animal, doing everything to break out of it.

While Samaras participated in the government, he insisted that the government had only a narrow technical scope. He saw Papademos as a caretaker specialist, tasked with finessing the technical details of the debt write-down negotiations and then proceeding to new elections.

After the elections, core aspects of the bailout had to be “renegotiated”. Unlike the Monti government in Italy, ministries in the Papademos government were not allocated to technocrats, but to executives of the participating parties. New Democracy chose to accept only high-profile but uncontentious ministries, such as the defense and foreign ministries. Furthermore, it managed to keep its formal status as the official institutional opposition by choosing non-parliamentary members of the party for these posts. As none of its parliamentary members were ministers, New Democracy was not formally part of government. Samaras kept trying to find institutional loopholes such as this to stay both in and out of the government, straddling the boundaries between support and opposition, avoiding the political cost of the bailout but averting the consequences of its non-acceptance as well. This task was becoming more arduous as time went on and eventually the demands for a written pledge forced him to reluctantly choose a side.

*The alignment of bailout dimensions with institutional divides*

Samaras’ reluctant embrace of the Papademos government and of the second bailout completed the process of party-system unraveling described in chapter four. While the bailout had acquired its political dimension of opposition to the “old party” practices already since the GI, its main subordinate dimensions, economic and political, were not then, yet, fully corresponding to the divides in the institutional arena. Samaras, a relative outsider to New Democracy, had spent two years contesting the bailout decision, encouraging the milder protesters against it, and denouncing its counter-productive politics. A party of the “old system” was in favor of the bailout, another one against it. The bailout was a thorny and extraordinarily contested issue for sure, but just like any other in Greek politics, it had the government and opposition at odds over it until that point.

When Samaras accepted formation of the national unity government, and subsequently voted for the second bailout against his former commitments, the pattern of political conflict changed radically. The brands of the two mainstream parties became diluted, as they converged on the bailout issue. The conflict over the bailout no longer pitted government versus opposition or left versus right. Instead, the participation of New Democracy and LAOS in the new government meant that all parties and personnel that partook in it, and were planning the new bailout, were also involved in past governments. The conjunction of grievances against the “political class” and anger at economic injustice, constituting the bailout super issue, was now fully reflected in the divide between “the establishment” and the challenger parties.

This is what I call the “reification” of the establishment, the attachment of the meaning of the nefarious concept of establishment to a concrete trajectory and action—namely, the trajectory of corruption and waste that led to economic crisis and proof of the establishment’s detachment in the bailout signing act. In the next chapter tracing the voting and public opinion trends throughout the bailout years, I will return to this qualitative change affected by the technocratic government. For now, it suffices to say that the transformation of government–opposition dynamics reverberated in both political supply and demand. As noted, the latent anti-establishment attitudes became much more pressing, with politicians being identified as the second or third most pressing problem of poll respondents and the start of the rapid descent of *both* mainstream parties in polls for the first time after the second bailout vote.

Additionally, the change in government–opposition dynamics further frayed the government–MP links and consequently affected political supply. Samaras’ MPs had for the past two years been carrying the anti-bailout banner in local societies, media and some protest. For some of them, the transition to support of the bailout proved a bridge too far. Kammenos, the standard bearer of New Democracy’s anti-bailout discourse, already voted against the formation of the Papademos government, earning expulsion from New Democracy’s

parliamentary group for his troubles. As noted, on the night of the second bailout vote, a record number of MPs from New Democracy and PASOK followed him. The tripartite support of the Papademos government provided enough parliamentary leeway to the government that MPs who were doubtful about the bailout could afford voting against it without any actual policy repercussions. The result was a historical record of forty-three defections from the mainstream parties, many of whom were expelled from their parties and later featured in the electoral lists of challenger parties. Many of them flocked to the Independent Greeks (ANEL), headed by Kammenos, formed a few days after the second bailout vote. The party became a thorn on the side of New Democracy as it appeared to be consistent with Samaras' original anti-bailout line and rhetoric. Their formation meant that now the anti-bailout and pro-bailout sides traversed the entire left–right spectrum *and* transcended it, much like the GI protests had in June. The protest scene was now reflected in the institutional one.

*The formation of the technocratic government: Asynchronicity in multi-level regimes*

If the Greek government–opposition conflict became so diluted by the technocratic government, what prompted mainstream parties to form it? Papandreou was pressured, but why did Samaras agree to this obviously inconsistent turnaround? The apparent answer is again found in the combination of pressure from above and from within, as outcomes came about due to divergences in perceptions and preferences between interacting agents, and their untimely demands, at various points in the multi-level regime.

To break this down, I am mostly referring to the sequence of interactions between the Troika and Greek parties. The Troika, alerted by Papandreou's sudden reluctance to implement an agreement signed only two days before, started forcefully intervening in Greek politics, in addition to Greek policy. Unaware of the significance of the parade events and prioritizing wider Eurozone survival problems, Papandreou's actions appeared to creditors as bizarre and

incomprehensible behavior. Within a context where they had to contend with Berlusconi's collapse at the same time, the crisis in their own countries, and adverse public sentiment in Germany toward bailouts, Papandreou's referendum announcement was an added source of uncertainty, concern, and injury. As distance grew, nuance about the turbulent developments in Greece was lost to them and the domestic troubles of Papandreou or the internal problems of Samaras were not their concern. Papandreou's referendum signaled to them that the Greek actors were unreliable. Rather than only ask for the implementation of specific policies, they now asked for the implementation of a specific type of government, to reassure them the bailout direction would not be perturbed again anytime soon. Perhaps they could also have believed that humiliating Samaras and forcing him to sign the document would concurrently act as an example to other potential challengers and deprive the street opposition of its most obvious institutional pillar.

To achieve all this, other than pressuring for the formation of a technocratic government, in parallel to Italian developments (*The Economist* 2011b), they also engaged in the theater of asking for the "written pledge" of all party leaders. Much like PASOK executives who were their main talking partners in Athens, foreign creditors thought that the anti-bailout rebellion would subside if the mainstream parties agreed to substantively support it. After all, their experience with a similar experiment in Portugal had been positive (Spiegel 2011).

These expectations were not outlandish. While blame about the bailout was initially shared between the international situation, the intransigence and malfunction of Europeans, the government and the last term of New Democracy in office, the winds had changed direction by late 2011. At the conclusion of the episodes, there was a shift toward blaming the bailout on PASOK and the perceived ineptitude of Papandreou and his government (Kosmidis 2013). Trust and approval of government and Papandreou's popularity had almost entirely crumbled by that point. The growing political disillusionment had caused the bailout to be perceived as



an issue grounded in Greek institutional weakness and the incompetence of its political class. The chain of events starting at the signing of the new agreement by Papandreou, the parade, Cannes and the final collapse of the PASOK government had further damaged the political system and the faith in its capacity to govern the country effectively.

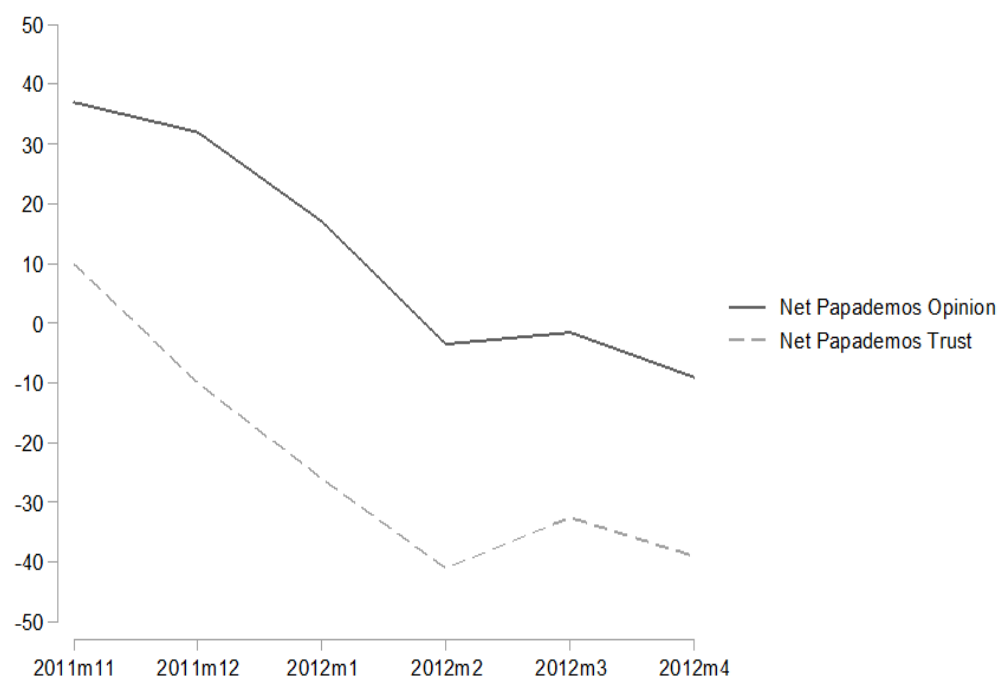
The technocratic government was at that point imagined also as a potential *solution* to political disillusionment. There was constrained sympathy and optimism in public opinion that things could improve once parties set their differences aside and decided to cooperate under a figure most people trusted and liked. Forming a national unity government was the most frequently suggested solution to the political conundrum of the bailout by voters in polls. Micro-politics and partisan rivalries were perceived as impediments to finding common-sense solutions to the crisis. From such a standpoint, the technocratic government was met with some relief. Between 55 and 70 percent of voters polled responded that they were satisfied by the formation of the Papademos government in early November, or that they thought of it as a positive development (ProRata 2015b; MRB 2012; Public Issue 2011c). Papademos' popularity itself was sky-high, positive opinions about him amounted to 55–75 percent of all those polled, far higher than any party leader.

Yet it did not last. Perhaps voters expected that it was simply gross incompetence that hindered PASOK from delivering better results and were further disillusioned when all Papademos could come up with was yet another version of PASOK's discredited policies. It is not entirely clear what their expectations were, but they were not met. Furthermore, Papademos' government provided a front row seat to the spectacle of dysfunction of the old political system, as his government appeared to be a hornet's nest of rivalries, conflicting interests and agendas, a new field of conflict and bickering among irresponsible party leaders. New Democracy's attempts at continuous government sabotage, and obstinacy in signing the "European letters" contributed to this sense, while PASOK was embroiled in an internal

leadership struggle after Papandreou's departure, the party becoming oblivious to anything else.<sup>60</sup>

If a national unity government and technocratic personnel were imagined as a way to circumvent conflict, provide consensual solutions and focus efforts at the task at hand, its actual life was a grand disappointment comparatively. As shown in *Figure 7-2*, dissatisfaction with Papademos grew even more rapidly than with Papandreou: in just four months, trust and net positive opinion had turned around by 40 percentage points. By the time the second bailout was voted, Papademos' political capital was almost entirely spent. As I describe in the next chapter, the last remaining nuggets of trust in the two mainstream parties went out with him.

*Figure 7-2: Net opinion and trust in Papademos by voters*



Source: Public Issue (2015).

<sup>60</sup> In fact, the vast majority of newspaper articles covering PASOK on the run-up to the second bailout offer reportage and quotes about the leadership race, rather than mentioning any contribution or stance of PASOK toward the ongoing negotiations.

This is where the miscalculation and asynchronicity factors come in. The high hopes for the technocratic government were probably associated with an expectation of substantive change in the bailout recipe. But, late 2011 was not early 2010. The goalposts had been shifted so many times by now, that the pro-bailout rhetoric had lost much of its appeal. The accumulation of austerity packages that were always supposed to “solve” the problem but never did, the debt–deficit–unemployment spiral, the growing anti-establishment climate and mass protests, the rising attribution of blame to the Greek government rather than international agents (Kosmidis 2013) had all reached a point where the bailout had become associated to something toxic. The expectation that the shift in political supply would recalibrate political demand was erroneous. Perhaps this could have worked in 2010. But in 2011, one and a half bailouts later with no end in sight, the perception that the consensus of New Democracy would make the bailout palatable, without some substantive amendments to its policies, was simply a miscalculation. Instead, it made it easier to designate New Democracy also as an integral part of the establishment and the resulting convergence and parliamentary group fragmentation gave political entrepreneurs an opportunity and the personnel to seize the acres of political space ceded by the official opposition.

Of course, maybe from the creditors’ perspective, it did not matter much. As it was later proven, whoever came to power could be reasonably persuaded, baited and cajoled to toe the bailout line. Nevertheless, it is impossible to know how a possible election of Syriza in 2012—before the Eurozone had taken steps to “firewall” itself and before Syriza “matured” through three years in opposition—would have worked out.

Irrespective of counterfactual narratives, their demands, asynchronous to the public opinion and electoral dynamics, caused a poorly-timed reaction that restructured the Greek political system, as government–MP, and most durably, government–opposition patterns transformed. I hope this narrative helped solidify the idea the events of October 2011 were a

“historical event” in Sewell’s (1996) framework, a domino of contingent events with long-lasting structural legacies, imbued with symbolism. The events narrated here were a clear turning point that transformed Greek institutional structures significantly. This transformation would only be completed in the May 2012 elections, the subject of the next chapter.

## 8 May 2012 – Equilibrium Punctuated

### *Introduction*

The 2012 elections were the peak moment of fragmentation, disarray and collapse of the Greek party system. The well-established equilibrium of the bipolar party system that had existed up to that point would be punctuated by the May 2012 elections, a true electoral tsunami (see chapter 2). In this chapter, I would like to periodize the phases of electoral collapse leading to May 2012 and then focus on the 2012 elections as a turning point for the party system. These elections have been analyzed in depth in terms of their campaign themes and the attitudes, identities and profiles of voters (Voulgaris and Nikolakopoulos 2014; Dinas and Rori 2013; Teperoglou and Tsatsanis 2014; Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou 2013; Verney 2014; Katsanidou and Otjes 2016).

Rather than revisit themes already explored by these researchers, this chapter will discuss three specific topics. First, it will re-examine the trajectory of mainstream party collapse in tighter relationship with what has been discussed up to now. Second, it will study the associated, but distinct, trend of challenger-party rise and the eventual dominance of Syriza in the “challenger race”. Third, it will analyze the restructuration of Greek political space in the bailout period and the surge of Syriza, by reference to events in the preceding episodes but also the positioning of challenger parties on the campaign trail. By doing so, I will try to highlight that neither mainstream collapse nor Syriza’s success were pre-determined, being entirely predicated on the preceding protest wave and economic crisis, but also relying on the critical choices of agents—their strategic blunders, miscalculations and innovations—during the examined episodes. Combining polling and survey data on the demand side with core sentence analysis data on the supply side, I will sketch how Syriza eventually usurped

PASOK's place and Greek political conflict became entirely reconfigured in terms of actors and issues at the May elections.

### ***The road from 2009 to 2012: The three stages of collapse***

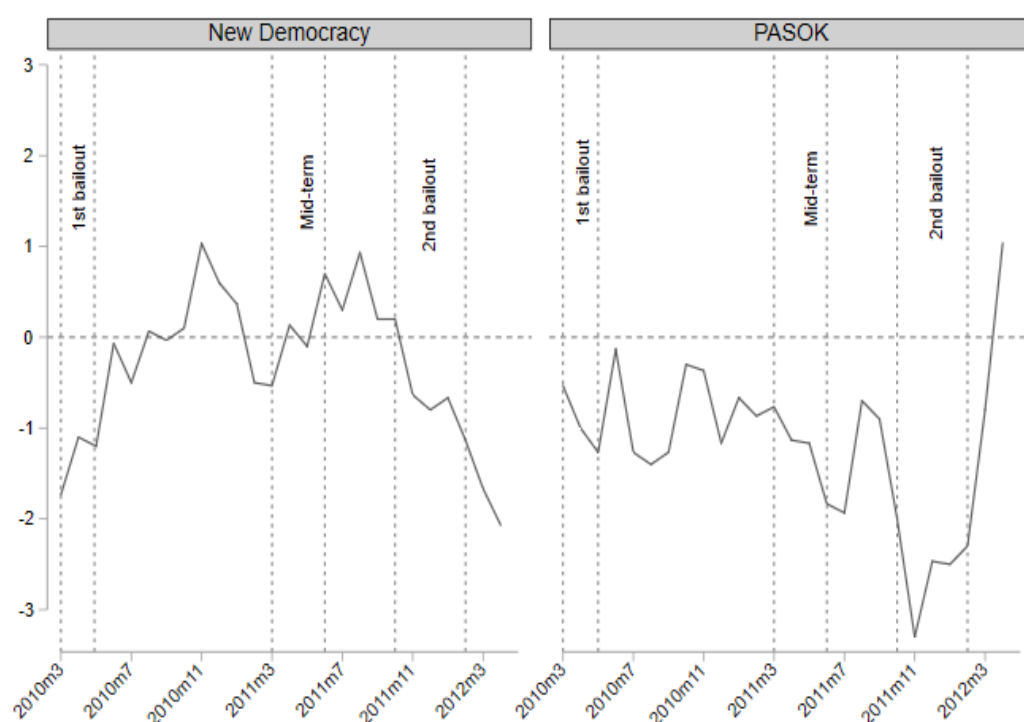
Through the preceding chapters, I have tracked the escalating conflict unfolding around the bailout super issue and noted the steady decline of support for mainstream parties (see the trend of voting intentions in *Figure 5-2*). However, I have only provided implicit hints about the links between this trajectory of decline and the critical junctures of interaction between institutional and protest politics. In this chapter, I would like to further examine the pace and rhythm of mainstream decline and its association with the events narrated previously.

To do this, I propose a periodization of the pathway to the 2012 elections based on the velocity and relative trajectory of mainstream party voting change. A timeline of the velocity of vote change, i.e. the average vote change smoothed over a three month period, from March 2010 to May 2012<sup>61</sup>, is shown in *Figure 8-1*. I believe that *Figure 8-1* reveals three distinct phases of mainstream party decline. The first was one of *asymmetric gradual decline*, extending almost from the first episode up to the end of the GI. Within this period, only PASOK declined steadily, by an average of one percentage point per month, dropping from the low 40s into the high 20s by the end of the GI. At the same time, New Democracy remained almost entirely stagnant, hovering around 30 percent, surpassing PASOK at the end of this period.

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<sup>61</sup> Each data point in *Figure 8-1* is smoothed (i.e., an average of the last three months' poll changes, the current one inclusive, or in mathematical terms  $Y = \frac{x_t - x_{t-3}}{3}$ ).

Figure 8-1: Timeline of three-month average vote loss velocity for mainstream parties.



Source: Compiled by the author

The second period lasted from the end of the GI until the end of the Papandreou government, and was a period of *asymmetrical rapid decline*. PASOK started hemorrhaging in polls, the party losing on average 2.7 percentage points per month. New Democracy actually followed the opposite trajectory, recording very small gains at an average monthly rate of 0.3 percentage points.

Finally, the last period, beginning with the Papademos government and ending with the May elections, is one of *joint rapid decline*, as both parties follow the same trajectory, losing potential votes rapidly, this time with New Democracy in the lead on the loss column. The right-wing party averaged a 1.6 percentage point loss during this period, a pace that was initially much slower but accelerated rapidly after the second bailout vote, as the party shed 2.3 percentage points per month between February and May 2012. PASOK's decline subsided somewhat, at 0.9 percentage points per month, as the party became relieved from its single-

party government duty, but also because it had already touched rock bottom, dropping even to single digits.

### *Episode themes and the road to the 2012 elections*

How does the pace of the two mainstream party's trajectory fit with the narrative of the previous chapters? I briefly argue that changes in vote intention for mainstream parties and its velocity corroborate several arguments presented there. First, the criticalness of the process of conflict expansion, triggered by the GI and the disruptive repertoire of the second episode, in contrast to the relatively narrower contention associated with the first bailout. Second, the destruction brought on mainstream parties by the transformations of government–opposition and government–MP dynamics, themselves triggered by the pressure from abroad and below. What could have been a relatively uneventful alternation in power, was transformed into systemic collapse.

The criticalness of the expansion of conflict triggered by the GI, but also the assaults on politicians and the general climate of indignation that appeared around the second episode is evident by the acceleration of PASOK's decline around that time. While the challengers of the first episode gathered in numbers equivalent to those of the second, the expansion of actors, coalitions and protest forms heralded a much deeper and more profound disillusionment with the country's political class. In the first episode, PASOK was still dominant in polls and grievances were with its implemented policies; by the second episode, grievances were not about PASOK choices, but about PASOK *itself*. Of course, this change was not triggered only by protest, but also by persistent economic deterioration and the continuous shift of the goalposts by the Papandreou government. Nevertheless, it is only after those latent grievances manifested in the streets that economic deterioration and government blunders transformed into changes in voting intention.



But, as I mentioned, accelerating losses during this period were one-sided. PASOK was losing some votes to DIMAR and Syriza, but it was still a long way from electoral annihilation. Concurrently, its rival party was feeling vindicated for its anti-bailout position, arriving at first place in the polls while also recording small gains. It is only after the installation of the technocratic government—and particularly during the few months between the second bailout vote and elections—that PASOK’s crisis became a fully blown *systemic* political crisis, as New Democracy was drawn into the vortex.

New Democracy’s voting intentions might not have been affected directly by the GI, which the party had quietly encouraged, but the movement had an impact in the long term. The expansion of the bailout issue into the political domain and its association with chronic institutional deficiency and the struggles of the political class, rendered the issue ever-more toxic. When New Democracy was cajoled into joining the technocratic government, providing written pledges and voting for the second bailout, the anti-bailout chickens came home to roost. On top of the arrest of its growth after it provided its consent for the technocratic government, the party entered freefall mode after having voted the second bailout.

This was equally due to supply and demand-side reasons. As I will show later in the chapter, on the demand side the bailout was perceived extremely negatively, as a sign of gross error and incompetency. On the supply side, the vote for the second bailout and the subsequent expulsion of 23 MPs from New Democracy provided the ingredients for the formation and growth of the main right-wing anti-bailout party at the time, ANEL. ANEL’s image as the “consistently” anti-bailout New Democracy, cost the latter dearly with the anti-bailout crowd. Concurrently, New Democracy suffered with the more “responsible” part of the electorate as well, as the latter perceived the party as a bulwark against Eurosceptic adventurism and was aggrieved by Samaras’ obstinacy and obstructionism toward Papademos. Eventually, this part

of the electorate started fleeing toward the smaller liberal parties, buoyed by New Democracy's inconsistency.<sup>62</sup>

This brief foray into mainstream party polling mostly served as an illustration of the way episode themes were tied to the wider trajectory of party-system collapse. Before turning my attention to the challengers, this is a convenient point to momentarily think about counterfactuals and how the multi-level game in which Greek parties and governments were engaged did not allow them to occur.

Many PASOK MPs had long been pressing for elections as an alternative to a government of national unity, passing the hot potato to New Democracy, rather than holding it together. The poll evidence presented here suggests that their idea would have caused less party-system decomposition. If elections had been held before November 2011, the Greek explosion would have been much more contained, as an uneventful alternation in power would have taken place, with New Democracy swapping places with a weakened PASOK, much like it happened in Portugal in the 2011 summer.

It was the explicit will of the creditors, however, to not deal with unruly Greek parties piecemeal but to tie them all to the bailout chariot concurrently. As reflected in the contemporaneous emergence of the Italian technocratic government, the idea of a grand coalition, expertise-based government was in fashion that fall as a solution for troubled Mediterranean countries. The creditors had their reasons, as the Eurozone system was extremely fragile at that point, the ECB backstop was not yet in place and elections would certainly cause more uncertainty and turbulence. A technocratic government to carry through some unpopular reforms seemed like a relief of stability until some Eurozone-wide buffers

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<sup>62</sup> According to survey data (Andreadis, Chadjipadelis, and Teperoglou 2016), approximately 20 percent of New Democracy voters simply did not revote in May 2012. Among those who went to the polls again, 15 percent went to ANEL, 7 percent to Golden Dawn, with another 7–8 percent directed toward smaller liberal parties. Only half of New Democracy's voters in October 2009 returned to vote for the party.

were built. However, while it made sense from their macro-perspective, it made no sense from the Greek mainstream parties' perspective.

As such, a long list of critical choices paved the road to collapse. Had Samaras, rather than stoking the fires of dissent, provided his consent to the bailout, he might have smoothed the bailout's reception. Nevertheless, once his conflictual stance had been chosen, it would have probably been better to stick with it, avoiding the pitfalls of the technocratic government. If elections had been chosen as a safety valve within 2011, rather than the Troika persisting with its myopic demand for a technocratic government, it is possible that both Greek mainstream parties would have survived the storm—that, at least, is what the polls indicate. And if Samaras had not miscalculated on how deep the resistance to the bailout was, he might have been motivated to show some clemency to his dissenting MPs after the second bailout vote, rather than presenting them as a gift to the far-right, anti-bailout formations lurking in the background. But none of those paths was taken, the two parties choosing a reluctant consensus at the end that served none of their purposes, their troubled cooperation further discrediting them in the eyes of the electorate and opening a path for potential challengers.

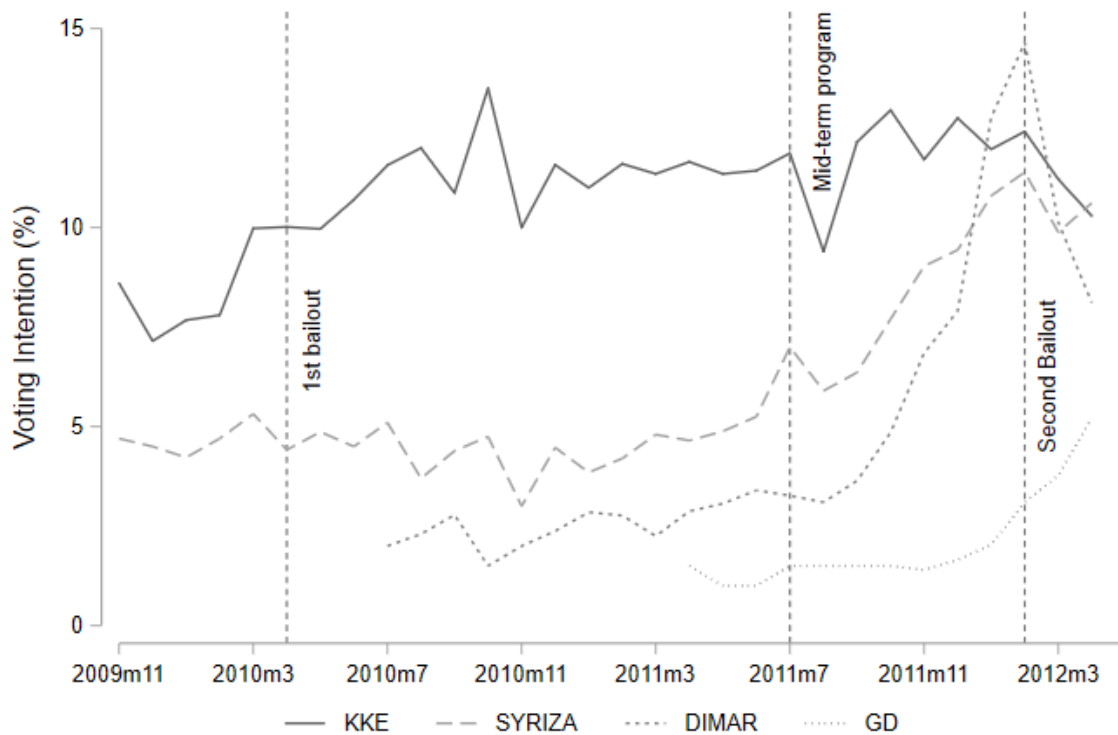
### ***The rise of the challengers in the polls and its correlation to protest activity***

Yet, if the old was dying, there was too much of the new being born. A host of smaller, fringe and extra-parliamentary parties<sup>63</sup> had sniffed the impending mainstream explosion, yet it was not clear that any of them was ready to usurp their throne. As shown in *Figure 8-2*, the polling trends for challenger parties in the bailout era show no linear rise of Syriza, nor any certainty it would become the heir for PASOK's voters, nor indeed that there would be a successor at all.

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<sup>63</sup> Alongside the challenger parties that entered parliament, there were plenty who did not make it. Overall, exactly 25 percent of valid ballots cast were for parties that did not achieve the 3 percent threshold, like the three smaller liberal parties, LAOS, the Greens and ANTARSYA, another radical left formation.

Figure 8-2: Race to the top, voting intentions for challenger parties



Source: Compiled by the author.

Like the periodization for mainstream parties, almost the same three phases can be used to describe challenger growth. The first refers to the period after the first austerity measures up to the GI, when no new parties arose and the KKE remained the only surging left-wing challenger. It rose from its usual 5–7 percent share to double digits already after the first bailout, as the capitalist crisis the party had always warned against finally arrived in 2010, and some voters defected to the KKE, vindicating the Herculean consistency of its approach. After this initial surge, however, support for the KKE flatlined.

The second phase was the period between the GI and the second bailout. During this period, the KKE retained its elevated vote shares, but DIMAR and Syriza began their upwards trajectory as well. Coinciding with the phase of PASOK's most rapid descent in the polls, DIMAR, at the moment of the second bailout vote, appeared to be the biggest winner of the bailout period, surpassing KKE in the polls for a brief time, gathering a 15 percent vote share.

This was also the time when Golden Dawn first registered in the polls and the smaller far-right LAOS also doubled its percentages to approximately 10 percent, before rapidly deflating after its inclusion in the Papademos government.

Finally, there was a third phase, the electoral campaign period, within which both DIMAR and KKE start losing votes and Syriza rises in their stead. ANEL also made its debut then, receiving double digits almost immediately, while Golden Dawn rose more swiftly, the two parties completely displacing LAOS. It is only in this final period that Syriza's rise occurred and the party outcompeted all other challengers and then only during the last weeks of the electoral campaign. Overall, then, there are two significant nodes in this story: the GI and the election campaign.

#### *Protest and the challengers' race*

The large wave of protest that began in 2010 was associated with an initial surge of the KKE. For most of the time until the elections, the Communists appeared to possess the lead among challengers, but in the end did not exploit this advantage in initiative and momentum. While they benefited from the first leakages from the mainstream parties (after the first bailout), they failed to do so after the GI, when mainstream losses accelerated.

The reasons for this can be roughly traced to issues of rhetorical, organizational and substantive rigidity. The KKE's anti-bailout campaign was focused on labor rights, wages and taxes (i.e., on the economic dimension of the bailout) but was tone-deaf to anything else. It understood the bailout as a continuation and logical extension of capitalist logic, not a particular oddity or exception to it. The criticism that started unfolding during the GI campaign—much more anti-establishment in nature—flew right by the party, which refused to engage with it. The accusations of incompetence and corruption hurled at the political establishment were alien to it. Corruption was a feature in capitalism, not a bug, and ceding to the “incompetence”

argument was naïve—the Greek establishment had not triggered bailout because it was incapable of finding a better solution, but because both bailout and establishment served the purpose of capitalist profiteering. A deeper, more radical and systemic break was necessary to overcome the bailout. Within this larger scheme, the GI anti-party and anti-establishment demands were a hindrance to the labor movement, as they shunned party-based organization. As its general secretary protested about the GI gatherings:

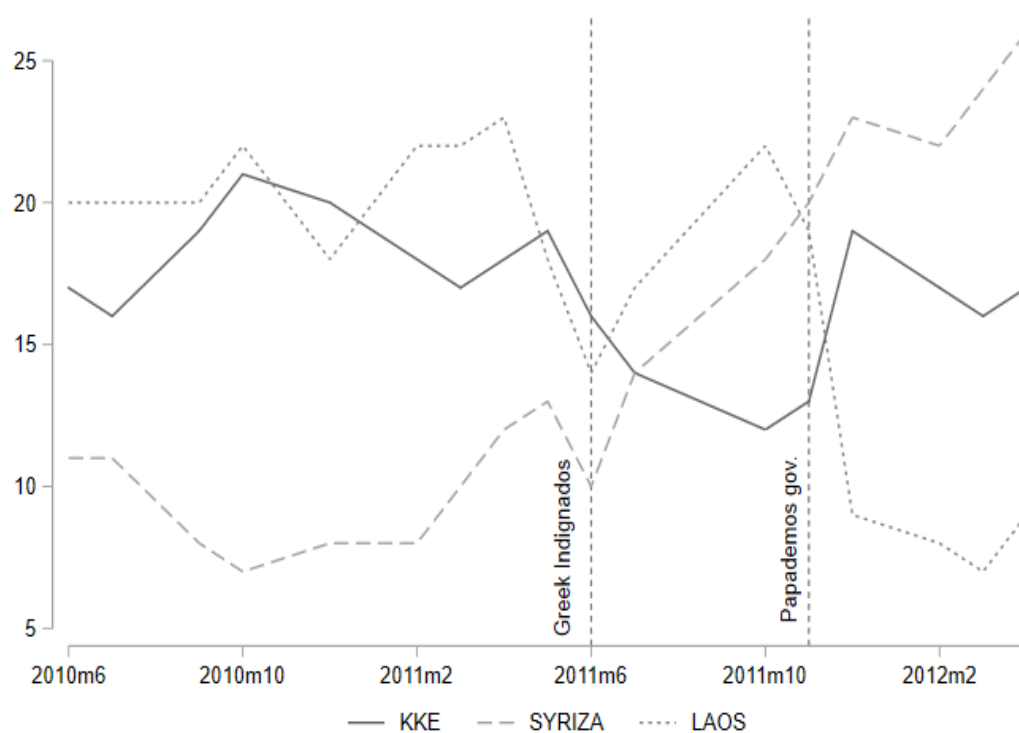
*We are troubled by this: some who run the place [the GI], because it is run, repeat “no parties”...I do not understand how we divide ourselves. Among those in parties and those outside parties, is that the division of Greek society? Or between workers who suffer and the dominant politics and employers? (Papariga 2011).*

This quote encapsulates the two basic elements of the KKE’s reaction to the GI: its hostility toward the “immaturity” of the anti-establishment demands and its belief that the GI was orchestrated by other parties (mainly Syriza and ex-PASOK members). The latter, KKE held, were simply pretending to be non-partisan citizens, and were embraced by the Greek establishment and media because it distracted from the wider labor mobilization (see e.g., Bogiopoulos (2011)). As such, the party looked at the GI, like anything that did not originate from within, with some contempt. KKE refused to mingle with external organizations even in demonstrations and strikes, keeping its protest blocks distinct and policed from outside interlopers, at a physical distance to GI assemblies. Naturally, it could not benefit from a movement it did not participate in and was actively antagonistic against.

Syriza’s initial rise is indeed concurrent with the GI period, as evident in *Figure 8-2*. The party’s stance, as outlined before, was one of openness toward protests (i.e., free mingling with other organizations and wide overlap of membership in Syriza and other GI-led initiatives). By embracing the GI protests and participating in the “disruptive repertoire” of

2011, Syriza managed to become a much more salient antagonist of the government. In *Figure 8-3*, I have drawn the time-trend of replies to the poll question “which is the best opposition party?” It can be clearly seen that Syriza, around the time of the disruptive campaign of the GI and the assaults on politicians (which the party was widely blamed for), already established itself as the most salient opposition to the bailout among challengers.<sup>64</sup>

*Figure 8-3: Aggregated time-trend of poll responses to the question “Which is the best opposition party?”*



Source: Public Issue.

So far, a direct link between protest and electoral behavior could suffice to understand KKE’s stagnation and Syriza’s rise. Syriza participated and embraced the GI, hence it benefited, while the KKE did not. The party’s openness toward protesters helped it recruit new activists, strengthening it on the way to elections (Petropoulos 2014; Kotronaki 2018), while the KKE remained stagnant. But such a theory—based on direct transfusion of resources from

<sup>64</sup> ANEL, GD and DIMAR were not consistently included in PI’s questionnaire, hence it is difficult to form a full image of public opinion perceptions.

protest to institutions—gets us only so far. The picture is complicated by the fact, as we have seen in *Figure 8-2*, that in the period after the GI and before the electoral campaign, it was actually DIMAR, Syriza’s splinter, which gained vote share at the fastest pace, without really participating massively or decisively in the GI, being ambivalent toward the movement.

The rise of DIMAR, I argue, at this time, can be understood only in terms of what I have described as the expansion of the bailout super issue into a political dimension via the Greek Indignados. The large outflow of voters from PASOK, did not turn to New Democracy or Syriza directly at the time, but to the ideologically most proximate party in political space – a party that essentially shared PASOK’s political priorities but had the distinct virtue of *not being* PASOK—untainted, newer, humbler. Syriza’s rise should be seen partially within this frame as well. Both parties, irrespective of their actual participation in the GI, were able to grow because they encapsulated the GI demands (i.e., they were radiating some sort of “newness”, an anti-establishment vibe). They represented and expressed what we call a demand for “political renewal”. DIMAR, as the less radical one and closest to PASOK, was at first the largest beneficiary.<sup>65</sup> Again, protest did not work directly as a feeder for institutional agents, but through the mediation of the issues it introduced on the agenda. Growing anti-mainstream sentiment had led to the search for alternatives and voters oscillated between various parties as the appropriate vessels of their indignation.

It was only during the electoral campaign, after the events recounted in the episodes, that DIMAR shrank again and Syriza took the challenger lead. I now turn to this campaign in more detail, as the second crucial point for the emergence of Syriza as the hegemonic challenger.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> This is also reflected in the MPs fleeing from PASOK to challenger parties, of whom eight went to DIMAR compared with four to Syriza.

<sup>66</sup> I am not going into detail about right-wing challengers here, as PASOK was marked by a much more profound, early and rapid decay. This, along with little spillage of votes across the left–right divide, meant leftist parties got a clear head start. It could have been different if the technocratic government lasted longer and



## *The electoral campaign of May 2012 and Syriza's rise*

Syriza had not acquired even a narrow edge over other challengers until late April/early May as shown in *Figure 8-2*. Ahead of the May 2012 elections, the poll average of the party was 9.3 percent in March and 11 percent in April—much improved compared to 2009, but still at best two-thirds of its eventual result: 16.8 percent. How did the party climb the challenger ladder so fast and effectively during the electoral campaign?

Arguably, the answer to this question has two parts. The first is related to what I call the party's *Goldilocks positioning* against the bailout relative to other challengers that was *just* radical enough given the context. The second is the exploitation by the party of the anti-establishment ambience *in a positive direction*; rather than exclusively focus on denouncing the establishment, Syriza offered a tangible, popular (yet imaginary) alternative to the establishment, the coalition of the left. I will begin this section by offering a general supply-side image of the election, presenting the themes and structure of political space based on our core sentence data and then proceed to show how Syriza's rise is connected to those two aspects.

### *The supply side of the May 2012 elections*

In *Table 8-1* I present the themes of the 2012 elections, categorized according to scheme already introduced in *Table 3-8*.

*Table 8-1: Categories of aggregated issues and core sentences for the May 2012 elections*

Aggregate Issue	Sub-Issues	Share of cs (%)	Maximum Distance <sup>67</sup>
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ANEL were given more time to organize and become visible for the next elections, but that counterfactual is also pure conjecture at this point.

<sup>67</sup> +Maximum distance is a measure of the polarization of the party system on each issue, as it measures the distance between the positions of the two further removed parties on a given issue. It is calculated as follows: for each party and issue, I calculate a net position on a given topic, based on its aggregate direction as coded in the core sentence analysis. Afterwards, I standardize the measures of those positions across all issues and weigh

Bailout	Bailout (general)	7.2	27.9	1.02
	Eurozone	7.8		
	Bailout negotiation	3.2		
	Bailout policies/terms	9.7		
Political issues	Political Renewal (Old/New)	3.2	19.1	0.57
	Valence/ability	1.6		
	Personal Attacks	5.3		
	(anti-) Corruption	1.9		
	Political reforms	6.6		
	Democracy (general)	0.5		
Government formation	Coalition speculation	16.5	20.3	0.29
	Government Stability	3.8		
Economic Issues	Economic Lib./Welfare	11.2		0.25
Cultural Issues	Cult. Lib./Nationalism	8.6		0.24
Campaign style	Campaign	6.0		0.14
Others	Others	7.0		0.19
Total		100.0		-
N		1673		

Source: POLCON

Before delving further into the data, it should be noted that the bailout “super-issue” in *Table 8-1* is further divided into four categories: the bailout as an abstract object of political conflict, fights about specific bailout policies, Eurozone-related discourse and arguments about bailout negotiation/ability to manage it. Political issues are also split into six categories. The first one refers to recriminations about the record of parties in past governments (mostly in the first three) and the discourse around “new” and “old” parties (mostly present in the later 09/2015 election). The second one deals with issues surrounding the valence and ability of parties and their executives and the third one contains personalized attacks. The fourth sub-issue encapsulates conflict about who is best able to deal with corruption, while the fifth one revolves around political reforms that would improve the institutional setup. Finally, the last category is deeply intertwined with bailout issues, as it captures themes of concern with the democratic deficit created by the bailout regime.

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them by the relative share of sentences of each party on each issue. Finally, I deduct the minimum weighted standardized position from the maximum weighted standardized position to find the standardized distance depicted on this table. The measure itself is meaningless and is only meant to convey the relative width of the political spectrum on different issues.

Those two issues, along with speculation on the form of the future government, together formed the majority of what Greeks saw in the print media. Each party's distribution of sentences, split among the most dominant issues, is shown on *Table 8-2*.

*Table 8-2: Issue share in each party's core sentences for the May 2012 elections: percentages*

Party	Bailout	Government	Political	Economic	Cultural	Others	Total	Party share
<b>Mainstream Parties</b>								
PASOK	32.2	18.2	23.9	10.3	2.3	13.1	100.0%	34.4
New Dem.	20.3	17.2	20.0	11.4	16.7	14.4	100.0%	24.0
<b>Challengers – Left</b>								
Syriza	33.6	35.5	13.2	5.2	2.6	9.9	100.0%	9.2
KKE	26.6	29.2	8.9	18.6	1.8	14.9	100.0%	6.9
DIMAR	32.1	21.4	5.4	20.9	4.8	15.4	100.0%	11.4
<b>Challengers – Right</b>								
ANEL*	42.6	11.1	18.5	7.4	14.8	5.6	100.0%	3.3
GD*	6.8	0.0	18.2	6.8	68.2	0.0	100.0%	2.7
Liberals*	15.9	26.1	38.6	5.7	0.0	13.7	100.0%	5.4
LAOS*	42.6	2.1	4.3	6.4	23.4	21.2	100.0%	2.9
Average	27.9	19.1	20.3	11.2	8.6	12.9		100.0%
N	1646							

Notes: \*Small sample sizes, 40<N<100.

+Liberals comprise three small parties which all got approximately 2 percent in 05/2012 (Dimiourgia Xana, Dimokratiki Anagennisi and Drasi). Source: POLCON.

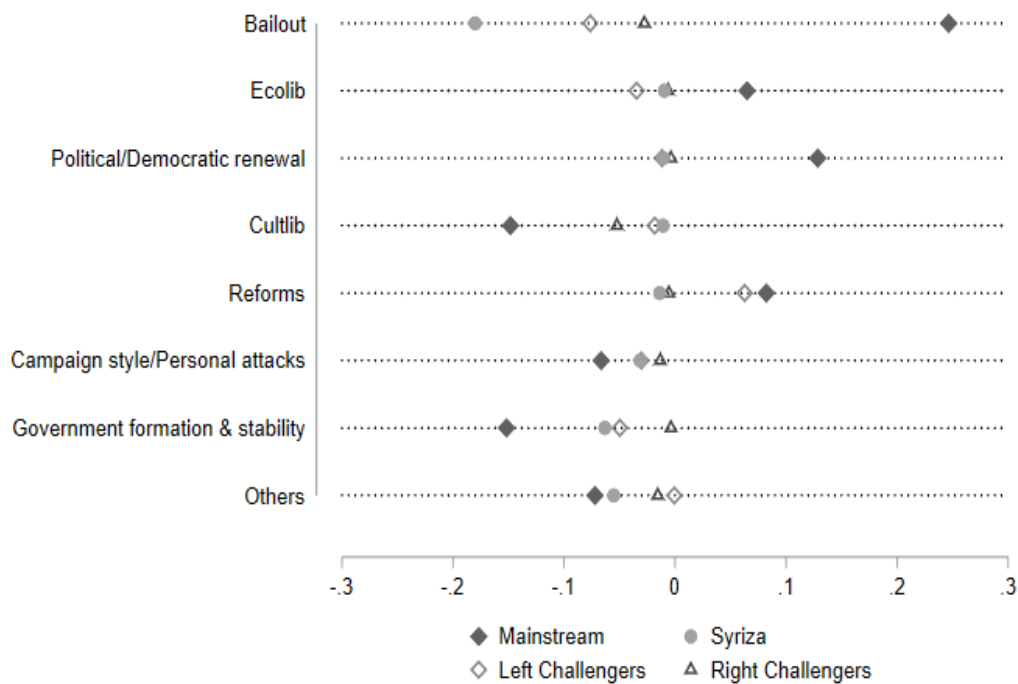
The table contains few surprises. For almost all parties, the bailout was either the most or the second-most salient issue, usually followed by political issues and speculation about the future government composition<sup>68</sup>. The bailout is additionally the most polarizing issue by far. In *Figure 8-4*, I have drawn the distance between party groups<sup>69</sup> for each issue to indicate the degree of their polarization. The bailout is by far the most polarized issue. The only other issue that is more polarized than average is the conflict over political renewal, which pitted the mainstream parties against all challengers and newcomers. This confirms the notion that the

<sup>68</sup> It is noteworthy that cultural issues are almost entirely absent and what exists is mostly confrontation between New Democracy and Golden Dawn about the violent practices of the latter. Centrist and left-wing parties almost never explicitly mention cultural issues during the campaign.

<sup>69</sup> See *Table 8-2* for party categories and *Table 8-1* for distance measures.

issue space of the elections of May 2012 incorporated the 2011 protest claims, involving the expression of indignation at austerity and the political class.

*Figure 8-4: Positioning and distance of Syriza, mainstream and other left and right-wing challengers on all aggregated issues in the May 2012 elections*



Source: Compiled by the author

It should be noted, however, that the lion's share of core sentences focused on political issues did not concern condemnation of the mainstream by smaller parties, but mainstream parties themselves trying to prove that they were able to self-cleanse after the new elections. Venizelos for example, by then PASOK leader, ten days before the elections pledged to reform the political system in a bid to persuade voters that the old parties could be salvaged, promising limited party financing, abolition of MP privileges and legal asylum and reorganization of ministries (Kechagia 2012). Party financing and its sources, corruption and government transparency and MP privileges were indeed the most common topics within this theme, as the mainstream parties promised political reform before the next elections. Mainstream parties were conscious of the seething anger of the electorate at the political establishment and tried to

turn the tide. That they failed, has a lot to do with the successful campaign of the challengers, and particularly Syriza, to which I now turn.

*Syriza's successful campaign: Goldilocks anti-bailout positioning*

Within this general context, I return to the idea of Syriza's strategic positioning on the bailout issue. There are three major elements in its treatment of the issue, namely *consistency*, *vagueness* and *issue insulation*.

Consistency is the most evident in terms of the party's positioning vis-à-vis the bailout in *Figure 8-4*. Syriza was the most disciplined anti-bailout party, emitting the most persistent anti-bailout signal in juxtaposition to the mainstream parties. Stubbornly, the party targeted the bailout as the culprit behind economic calamity. This is captured in our core sentences by the amount and direction of Syriza's sentences on the bailout. Syriza, compared to the KKE and DIMAR, talks about the bailout slightly more frequently. But more importantly, in contrast to DIMAR, it also does so in an explicitly negative way, more than 90 percent of its sentences on the issue going in the anti-bailout direction.<sup>70</sup> DIMAR meanwhile had an equal share of positive and negative sentences on the topic.

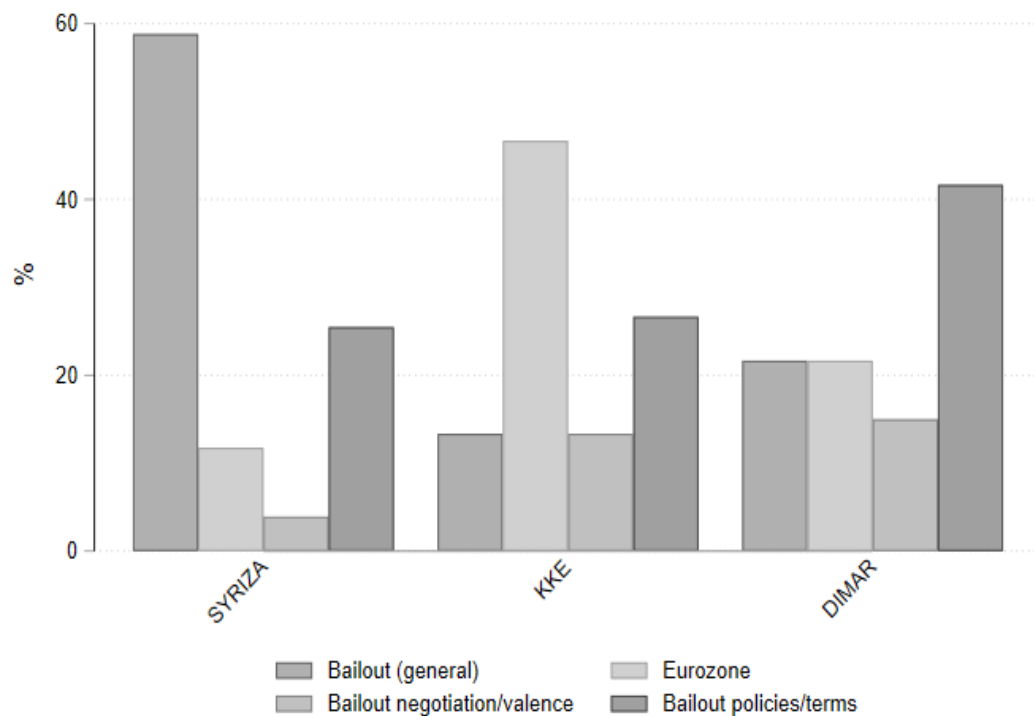
The second characteristic of Syriza's bailout discourse was *vagueness*. Syriza mostly talked about its battle against the bailout in the abstract and in principle, but seldom offered specifics, alternatives, reasons or unbundled the bailout package<sup>71</sup>. *Figure 8-5* presents the recipe of each left challenger's anti-bailout dish.

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<sup>70</sup> The remaining few sentences concerned Eurozone exit, which the party considered unnecessary and damaging.

<sup>71</sup> Stavrakakis and Katsambekis (2014) and Porta et al. (2017) also mention how, around 2011, Syriza shifted its rhetoric from its original monolithic persistence on neoliberalism and its focus principally on the economic aspect of the bailout toward a more generalized populist scheme. The party tried to create "chains of equivalence" (Laclau 2005; Stavrakakis and Katsambekis 2014) between different groups afflicted by different aspects of the bailout and to succeed in that it was critical to treat the issue as an undifferentiated, abstract entity.

Figure 8-5: The composition of the bailout issue for each left-wing challenger



Source: Compiled by the author

As theorized in chapter 4, the bailout afforded a large degree of evasiveness once a positive/negative stance was adopted toward the fixed referent. The reasons of the overall stance could remain nefarious. Syriza's abstract anti-bailout account contrasted with that of DIMAR and the KKE. DIMAR, unlike Syriza, spread its discourse more evenly but mainly focused on specific policies and *bailout terms* rather than reject the overall framework. DIMAR argued that amendments to the treaty were necessary, without however openly opposing the logic of the continued funding for policy reform exchange. DIMAR, in short, *specified* its opposition to the bailout as an opposition to the terms of the treaty, but not to its signing, not willing to jeopardize the Eurozone membership of the country. Within the bailout issue sub-categories, it was on aggregate positive on the first two, on Eurozone participation and the bailout in principle, but negative on the bailout terms and negotiation performance.

On the other hand, the KKE's stance allows us to also talk about the third element in Syriza's discourse: *issue insulation*. KKE emphasized the aspect of Eurozone membership, something Syriza did not do. KKE argued that an exit from the bailout meant an exit from the Eurozone and arguing in favor of both. Unlike Syriza, which insulated the two issues, KKE linked them explicitly. At the party's foundational conference in 2013<sup>72</sup>, Syriza was content to wink both ways, appealing to the party's traditional pro-European stance while at the same time adopting the motto of "no sacrifices for the Euro". The party's leadership insisted that Eurozone membership and an end to the bailout were compatible goals. Given the rigid opposition to leaving the Eurozone in public opinion, but also the non-negligible part of the electorate who favored it (around 20–25 percent), it is evident that Syriza's optimism about the possibility of reconciling bailout opposition and tepid support for the Eurozone was the most agreeable solution for a wide spectrum of indignant citizens. Furthermore, the party tended to avoid the issue overall, focusing on the responsibility of domestic elites for signing the bailout as well as their passivity and meekness in negotiations with the creditors. For Syriza, the bailout was not necessarily a logical outcome of Eurozone integration, but an outcome brought about by the domestic elites' negligence and borderline criminality, by their inability and unwillingness to shape and bend European partners and institutions appropriately.<sup>73</sup>

These three elements form the core of what I called *Goldilocks positioning*; radical enough to reject the bailout thoroughly, as an abstract plague befalling the country, but at the same time not too radical as to claim that this should lead to further ramifications for the country's status quo in the international scene. Clear in principle, vague in the specifics, it was a wholesale rejection of the bailout, but not *only* of the bailout—it also rebuffed the domestic

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<sup>72</sup> Syriza existed before as a coalition of parties and groups, but only became a united party in 2013, when it held its first convention.

<sup>73</sup> See Stavrakakis and Katsambekis' (2014) account of Syriza's discourse for some examples of quasi-conspiratorial rhetoric against the political establishment.

establishment, whose quasi-treacherous stance caused the bailout. Unlike DIMAR's position, Syriza believed the bailout had to go in its entirety; it was a humiliating framework that was reducing the country to a financial colony. Unlike for the KKE, however, for Syriza the bailout was the only thing that needed to go. Grexit, NATO abandonment or an overthrow of the capitalist system were not necessary or associated conditions. Contrary to what its opponents claimed at the time, Syriza did not advocate simply for a return to the pre-2010 period, to life before the creditors. Instead, it advocated for a country that at the same time would cure its domestic, chronic institutional pathologies and annul the externally-imposed bailout while maintaining its status on the EU and whatever role remained for it in the global production chain.<sup>74</sup>

Returning to the discussion in the theoretical chapter, this is what I meant when pointing out that the super issue had the potential to turn strategically-minded parties into floating signifiers. Syriza—vague on the specifics and the reasons of its bailout opposition, while loud and clear in its principled rejection of it—could project to be many things to different people, just as its protest openness created links and connections between various protesting groups. Nationalist, anti-establishment, anti-capitalist, Eurosceptic, or Keynesian narratives and logics could all be projected back at the party, which stood in front of the diverse audience of people opposing the bailout, simply nodding and winking at them.

*Syriza's successful campaign: The "coalition of the left"*

A peculiar result of our data is that while Syriza spoke about "political issues" (i.e., accusations against the political class and anti-establishment rhetoric more often than other left-wing challengers), the frequency with which it visited the topic was not particularly high.

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<sup>74</sup> Again, the similarities with some Brexit rhetoric is eerie.



Contrary to common perceptions about the proliferation of populist elements in Syriza's discourse (Aslanidis and Marantzidis 2016; Stavrakakis and Katsambekis 2014; Mudde 2016; Porta et al. 2017), "political issues" that would include this type of discourse comprised only 13 percent of Syriza's core sentences during the campaign. If one goes searching for populist rhetoric in the slogans, speeches and posters of Syriza and other challengers (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis 2014) one is bound to find it, but if one examines the campaign in general, it is a much less dominant theme than suggested in the literature on Syriza.

The reason for this is not so much that Syriza did not deploy populist schemes, but that it did not need to draw from them outright. As I have highlighted, talking about the "bailout" in the abstract already contained an anti-establishment dimension without the need to explicitly state it. But most importantly, Syriza—rather than directly tap into indignation with populist rhetoric—did something different. It engaged in a positive vision that implicitly encapsulated the anti-establishment mood, without having to explicitly make it a dominant theme. With much bravado, unlike the other challengers, the party stated that it was ready to govern—and, more than that, it was ready to govern without the mainstream parties. Unlike DIMAR, which envisioned becoming PASOK's partner, Syriza excluded any alliance with the mainstream parties. The party had proposed to form a government or coalition of the left already since May 2011, at the time the Greek Indignados were forming, a position it came back to with increasing frequency and salience in the campaign (Porta et al. 2017). The coalition would comprise KKE, Syriza and potentially DIMAR and the Greens, but most important was who was *out*: the establishment parties.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Tsipras also made an overture to Kammenos and ANEL to at least tolerate a coalition of the left approximately a week before the elections. This caused some internal party friction at the time, as many Syriza members did not want to cooperate with the far-right Kammenos. Subsequently, talk about a possible cooperation with ANEL was shelved until 2015.

Government form was the second most frequent topic in the May 2012 elections, one that journalists and politicians incessantly speculated about. As shown in *Table 8-1*, it dominated most actual policy issues apart from the bailout. The media fixated on the permutations of government coalitions and their stability the day after the elections. Initially, believing that the losses of the mainstream parties would be much more contained, the discussion mostly concerned potential partners for PASOK and New Democracy. Given the corrosive progression of party-system decay though, Syriza's suggestion came to dominate the agenda of government formation. Apart from handling the bailout issue better than its opponents, Syriza also managed to corner the other challenger parties when it came to the issue of the next government's formation.

The salience of the coalition of the left idea for Syriza is first apparent in *Table 8-2*, where the high frequency of Syriza utterances about government formation, the party's most salient topic, overwhelmingly focused on this suggestion. Out of Syriza's coded core sentences about this issue, 80 percent were in a positive direction and 75 percent were about its proposal for a government of the left. Syriza was even proposing that the general secretary of the Communist Party could become prime minister, trying to appear as open as possible to alternative possibilities (Daliani 2012a). The negative sentences were mostly about rebuking PASOK's proposals of post-electoral cooperation or exorcising the possibility of a grand coalition between ND, PASOK and LAOS. Only toward the end of the campaign, at his final rally, Tsipras attacked the KKE and DIMAR on the issue, but only to lament their unwillingness to cooperate:

*[W]ho benefits and who loses from the stubbornness of some leaderships of the left, and mainly the KKE, that we remain divided?*

*Only the establishment, moneylenders<sup>76</sup> and the oligarchy benefit...we also do not understand the insistence of Fotis Kouvelis to deny the proposal for a government of the left, while he lately speaks about the need for a progressive government (Daliani 2012b).*

This complaint reflects the fact that the suggestion was pure fantasy sold by the party, as there was no actual possibility of the coalition materializing. The response from the other left parties was outright rejection from the KKE, which was dismissive toward all requests for cooperation, as was the norm for the party ever since 1990 (Rizospastis 2012a, 2012b). All coded sentences of the KKE to Syriza's overture were negative. But the impact of Syriza's plan did not lie so much with its (expected) rejection, but with its salience and the fact it dominated the agenda of left challengers. There was almost no interview or mention of the KKE in news articles without an accompanying question or mention of Syriza's coalition suggestion. Almost all the sentences involving coalition speculation that involved the other leftist challengers were about Syriza's proposal and their attitude toward it. Syriza's coalition of the left magnified the party's salience, as it was lurking behind every interview and coverage of the other parties too. Despite this pressure, the KKE remained steadfast in its rejection, claiming that Syriza was not really different to PASOK and the bailout could not end without a more generalized rebellion against the structures that kept it afloat, such as the European Union, discounting other alternatives as mere illusions.

DIMAR appeared more receptive toward this possibility, as its net position on this issue within our database remained close to zero, reflecting the party's ambivalence. Kouvelis, after the elections stated he would participate in a Syriza government if Syriza found a majority, fully knowing however that this was an impossibility given parliamentary arithmetic. In

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<sup>76</sup> A term that in Greek has a clear but implicit referent: hedge funds, vulture funds, currency speculators, etc.

general, though, DIMAR demanded that the country's European trajectory be guaranteed, something that made any attempt to form a government of the left a stillborn project. Syriza, as noted, mostly wanted to avoid and dodge the European question, and thus would not provide any assurances on how it would respond to creditor intransigence, which it viewed as a product of the non-credibility and passivity of domestic elites anyway. Furthermore, DIMAR and KKE could not coalesce with each other, as they were also completely at odds about the European question. DIMAR actually tended to agree with the much more hardcore KKE about the paradox and incompatibility of the coalition of the left from a reverse perspective, one of its core executives stating that:

*[S]ubstantially, there are two lines on the Left about the bailout: that of the KKE and that of DIMAR. Syriza's line consists in a pleasant delusion and a dangerous illusion (Bistis 2012).*

The two parties hung on to the notion of policy compatibility, the one demanding robust anti-EU credentials, the other the opposite, arguing that everything else was misguided. What they failed to grasp was the fact that Syriza's proposal was not so much targeted at finding a policy solution, as to signal the party's juxtaposition to the political establishment. It was highly ironic that Syriza was using the vision of a united left to its great advantage at the exact same time that the bailout conflict was punctuating and corroding the left-right division. Perhaps KKE's and DIMAR's attitude was honest, but Syriza's path was more popular, a theme to which I now turn.

#### *Demand-side reception*

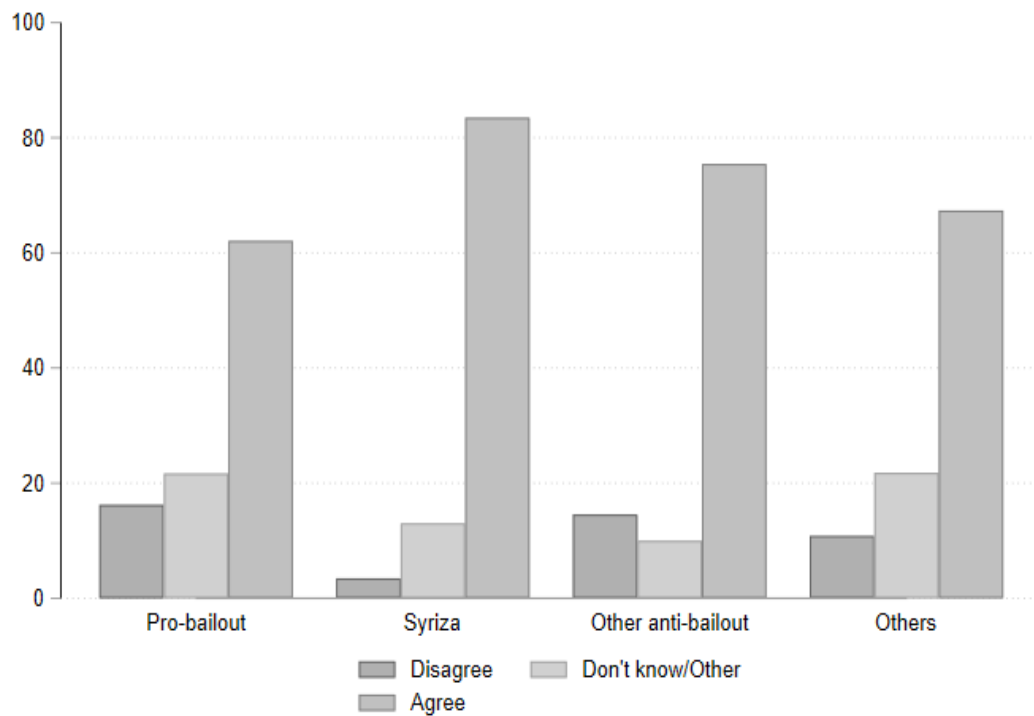
Ultimately, Syriza's strategy was successful because it resonated with voters who were attracted to the party in vast numbers for the first time. In this section, I want to look at the ways the various elements of Syriza's offer were attractive to voters.

The first and most obvious reason for the rise of challengers during the 2012 campaign was that the bailout was widely unpopular, potentially rewarding Syriza's consistency. Syriza's principled stance reflected the dominant view on the issue, that of a loathed policy recipe. To show this, using individual-level data from a post-electoral survey of the 2012 elections (Andreadis, Chadjipadelis, and Teperoglou 2016), I separated May 2012 voters into four blocks: **pro-bailout voters** (i.e., PASOK, New Democracy and DIMAR voters); a **block of Syriza voters**; a group of **voters of other challengers** (KKE, ANEL, GD and some smaller fringe parties); and finally **all other voters**. In *Figure 8-6* below, I chart the agreement or disagreement of each group to the statement that "It was wrong of the PASOK government to accept the bailout from the Troika agreement".<sup>77</sup> The anti-bailout sentiment was close to a national sentiment, the bailout was at best perceived as a poisoned chalice the country had to drink from. There were very few actual defenders of the bailout and almost the entirety of Syriza's voters held a hostile stance toward it, which makes it unlikely they would be attracted to DIMAR's ambivalent stance.

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<sup>77</sup> While the question has some bias, as it frames the bailout in reference to PASOK<sup>77</sup>, it is indicative of the overall mood, as all group of voters disagreed with PASOK's choice. It is telling that even a majority (53 percent) of PASOK voters who *still* voted for the party in May 2012 also think it was the wrong choice.

Figure 8-6: Percentage of each group of voters who agree/disagree on whether PASOK was wrong to accept the bailout



Source: ELNES, 2012.

Furthermore, there is some indirect evidence that Syriza's *issue insulation* managed to tap onto a large strand of public opinion which saw the bailout as a product of the incompetence of mainstream parties rather than a systemic issue stemming from wider capitalist or European institutional features. In the same survey, respondents were asked whether "the PASOK government should have been able to get much better terms on the loan from the Troika". A majority of ninety-three percent agreed, throughout all blocks, showing that there was a widespread belief that the Troika had "cheated" the Greek government in the preceding negotiations.

The problem for mainstream parties was that the corruption and tarnished reputation of the last governments had allowed the public to imagine that an alternative course had been possible but not taken. The debacle of Papandreou at Cannes, the cacophony within PASOK, and the confusion and lack of coordination under Papademos tended to create the impression

that mainstream parties were just incompetent rather than simply constrained. But, as the initial positive reception of the technocratic government showed, voters were eager to believe that a silver lining existed somewhere. This aligned well with Syriza's idea that with a new leadership and a determined and spirited stance, things could change. In another poll (MRB 2012), 13 percent of citizens—when asked what should be done about the bailout—affirmed the country should just implement the bailout because it could not do otherwise, as the mainstream parties and DIMAR demanded. Another 13 percent believed the country should immediately leave the Eurozone, as urged by Syriza's left wing and the KKE. Fully 67 percent, however, were convinced that remaining in the Eurozone (while charting a different direction outside the bailout's confines) was a feasible option. Syriza might have been selling an escapist imagination, but imaginative escapism was the dominant mode of thinking.

This is also suggested by the fact that Syriza's voters were overwhelmingly on the fence about Greece's relationship to the EU. Syriza is often portrayed as a Eurosceptic party, mostly because of its aggressive rhetoric against creditors. But the party leadership never outright suggested leaving the EU would be a priority or a solution (even if some factions did). Syriza attracted a large amount of people who were at most ambivalent about the EU, and, for the most part, squarely focused on the culpability of the Greek government for the turn of events.

To demonstrate this, I conducted a multinomial logistic regression analysis on the assessment of EU integration by the voters of each voting bloc, controlling for gender, age, education, union membership and interest in politics. The specific question asked, functioning as a dependent variable with three levels, was whether “the integration of Greece in the European Union is something positive, something negative, or something neither positive nor negative?” with the base outcome being the last, neutral assessment. The results are displayed in *Table 8-3* and reveal the relative “middle ground” on which Syriza supporters stood.

Pro-bailout voters were more likely than Syriza voters to assess EU integration as something positive, while anti-bailout voters were more likely to assess it as something negative. Syriza thus attracted a crowd that was possibly either agnostic, ambivalent, calculative or confused about European issues at large. The assessment of those voters probably hinged on what was yet to come and the party managed to reflect that ambivalence on its discourse, by evading and dodging the Euro question.

*Table 8-3: Multinomial logistic regression on the assessment of Greece's EU integration*

	EU integration negative		EU integration positive	
DV:EU integration evaluation (ref. category: neutral)				
Pro-bailout vote	−0.55	(0.52)	1.05**	(0.35)
Syriza vote	(ref. category)		(ref. category)	
Other anti-bailout vote	1.51**	(0.57)	0.77	(0.49)
Other vote/non-vote	0.08	(0.50)	0.09	(0.37)
Gender	−0.34	(0.31)	−0.49*	(0.24)
Primary Education	−0.52	(0.47)	−1.41***	(0.31)
Secondary Education	(ref. category)		(ref. category)	
Tertiary Education	−0.20	(0.46)	0.51 <sup>+</sup>	(0.29)
Age: 18–25 (small sample)	−1.86**	(0.66)	−0.28	(0.44)
Age: 26–40	−0.02	(0.51)	0.12	(0.33)
Age: 41–64	(ref. category)		(ref. category)	
Age: 65+	0.54	(0.41)	−0.10	(0.33)
Union member	−0.40	(0.31)	−0.59	(0.39)
Interested in politics	0.76	(0.39)	0.46	(0.26)
Constant	−1.35*	(0.57)	−0.04	(0.41)
N	983			

Notes: Robust standard errors in parenthesis. +  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . The regression is using the weights suggested by the ones who conducted the ELNES study, due to imbalances in the sample, as described in Andreadis (2012). For the descriptive statistics of the variables, see Appendix *Tables A2* and *A3*. Source: ELNES (Andreadis, Chadjipadelis, and Teperoglou 2016).

What Syriza voters were not agnostic about was their indictment of the Greek mainstream parties. A common perception of the voters attracted to Syriza in May was that PASOK and New Democracy were relatively indistinguishable with regards to crisis management and near consensus on their responsibilities for the bailout. Again resorting to the same survey, I performed two more logistic regressions to provide evidence for this point. In



the first regression the dependent variable is a dichotomous one, taking the value of 1 when respondents agree with the proposition that “a New Democracy government would have been able to deal better with the Greek economy during the respective time period” in *Table 8-4*. The second regression uses, as a dependent variable, the degree of responsibility assigned to the Greek government for the economic situation, trimmed from five levels down to two, taking a value of 1 when a respondent said that the government was “very” or “extremely” responsible for the crisis versus all other, less strong opinions.

*Table 8-4: Logistic regression results on assessment of a New Democracy counterfactual and perception of government blame.*

	New Democracy better alternative (1=Yes)		Government Responsibility (1=High)	
Pro-bailout vote	3.17***	(0.54)	−1.67**	(0.58)
Syriza vote	(ref. category)		(ref. category)	
Other anti-bailout	2.44***	(0.57)	−1.16 <sup>+</sup>	(0.67)
Other vote/non-vote	2.26***	(0.56)	−1.17*	(0.58)
Gender	0.37	(0.25)	0.23	(0.26)
Primary education	0.36	(0.33)	−0.50	(0.31)
Secondary Education	(ref. category)		(ref. category)	
Tertiary education	0.03	(0.30)	0.15	(0.32)
Age: 18–25 (N<100)	−1.16	(0.74)	0.90	(0.68)
Age: 26–40	−0.94**	(0.34)	0.26	(0.39)
Age: 41–64	(ref. category)		(ref. category)	
Age: 65+	0.17	(0.33)	−0.17	(0.30)
Union member	0.19	(0.42)	−0.34	(0.37)
Interested in Politics	0.23	(0.31)	0.65*	(0.28)
Constant	−4.12***	(0.61)	2.42***	(0.59)
N	914		983	

Notes: Robust standard errors in parenthesis. +  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . The regression is using the weights suggested by the ones who conducted the ELNES study, due to imbalances in the sample, as described in Andreadis (2012). Source: ENLES (Andreadis, Chadjipadelis, and Teperoglou 2016).

The regression reveals that Syriza voters were less likely than all other voters, including other anti-bailout voters to view New Democracy as a solution to the crisis, indicating their detachment from the mainstream system and the improbability they would simply switching to the opposition. Additionally, they were somewhat more likely than voters of other parties to

assign blame to the past PASOK and technocratic governments<sup>78</sup> for the economic situation, a stance that fits the profile of voters whose main grievances lay with domestic parties. In sum, the party's positioning and rhetoric chimed well with the beliefs of its voters; firmly against the bailout in principle, treating the issue's linkages to wider Eurozone issues in an ambivalent manner and crediting the domestic establishment in its entirety with the responsibility of the bailout's mishandling.

Finally, the various evidence showing Syriza voters' anti-establishment position also helps explain why the coalition of the left idea became so popular, as masses of ex-PASOK voters lost faith in the mainstream system and sought alternative solutions. Initially, circa 2010–2011, the public's preferred solution to the extraordinary crisis was a government of national unity or a grand coalition, as shown in *Table 8-5*.

*Table 8-5: Poll responses (%) to the question of the preferred form of government in selected months*

	PASOK single-party	New Democracy single-party	National Unity	Grand Coalition	Coalition of the Left
May 2010	13	3	15	15	not included
April 2011	8	6	23	12	not included
July 2011	5	7	24	21	not included
October 2011	5	9	18	18	2
March 2012	3	9	10	12	21
April 2012	2	9	8	10	26

Source: Public Issue data aggregated by author.

When the fruits of such a project were revealed to be not as tasty as presumed during the Papademos term, the electorate turned to the next best imagined alternative, Tsipras' idea of a coalition of the left, which exploded in popularity out of nowhere the last month(s) before the election, coinciding conspicuously with Syriza's meteoric rise as well.

<sup>78</sup> Even if it should be stressed that again all types of voters are likely to do so, Syriza voters just have an extreme distribution, with 98 percent saying New Democracy would not be a better alternative and 96 percent saying the government should be held "very" or "extremely" responsible for the crisis, compared to 75 percent on average among the rest of the voters holding those opinions on both questions.

Also in almost all other contemporary polls, the idea of a government of the left was either the most or the second-most preferred form of government (Marc 2012a, 2012b; MRB 2012; ALCO 2012). In contrast, the prospect of a New Democracy and PASOK grand coalition was supported consistently by fewer voters, trailing even the sum of the power of the two parties combined.

By the simple act of proposing a coalition of the left, Syriza was additionally antagonizing the loathed establishment parties and rendering itself the focal point of the protest vote. This was crucial, as for many voters, the May elections had a decisively punitive and negative character. Fully 25 percent of the voters claimed they would vote to punish a party, while 29 percent would vote for the least bad party (Public Issue 2012). Fifty-seven percent of Syriza voters chose those as their main voting criteria.

But punishing the mainstream parties required that the protest vote remain concentrated rather than fragmented evenly into various little parties, given Greek electoral law, which promotes centripetal tendencies. As such, if Syriza became a focal point due to its government formation proposal, it also became the party most likely to disrupt the establishment and hence the most appropriate recipient of strategic protest votes. The coalition proposal then served two equally important functions; at once it lured voters who yearned for an alternative to the mainstream parties, but by doing so it created a “bandwagon effect”, as other voters with simpler punitive instincts would have also become more likely to vote for the party. Indeed, only 50 percent of Syriza voters had made up their mind much earlier than the last two weeks of the campaign (Marc 2012a), compared to 61 percent for the two mainstream parties, 66 in the case of the KKE and 72 for Golden Dawn, a low percentage comparable only to DIMAR and ANEL. The late vote for Syriza at the end was also a product of protest vote coordination, as the party’s narrow lead over other challengers, further tipped the scales in its favor.

## *Conclusions*

To recap, the May 2012 elections were a turning point in the bailout era. They punctuated the bipolar equilibrium of Greek politics that had held sway for the previous thirty years and resulted in profound fragmentation and polarization over the bailout and the culpability of the country's political system.

In this and preceding chapters, I have sketched the multi-step process through which this momentous outcome was reached, and hopefully have shed some light on the function of movements and the mix of agency and structure that led Greece there. Let me quickly recap here, before we take a large temporal jump to the next significant policy episode three years later.

Concerning the role of movements, I have hopefully shown their most significant role—as a signal and enabler of the quantitative and qualitative expansion of conflict on the bailout issue. As grievances and opportunities for protest grew, particularly during the GI episode, so did the coalition opposing the bailout, the reasons and the connotations of doing so. The GI movement did affect directly PASOK's spiral of vote loss and the challengers' growth, but its most important contribution was in the way it expanded and framed the bailout as the trademark of elite error, incompetence and detachment.

The period of joint descent of the mainstream in the polls further justified my previous characterization of the October episode as a series of “historic events”. It is not only the transformations of government–opposition and government–MP systems that began there, but also the transformation of the PASOK crisis into a mainstream party crisis. Once the two parties joined forces and shared responsibility for the bailout, their parallel, vertiginous collapse started unfolding. I also hope to have argued persuasively that it need not have been so—it was the interactions between creditors, Greek parties and the technocratic government and the non-

alignment of their priorities and preferences that eventually resulted in an outcome that was existentially threatening for everyone involved.

Syriza's rise, the biggest story perhaps though, can only be partially accounted for in that narrative. While its mode of participation in the large contentious cycle of 2010–2012 imbued it with momentum and salience, one should be cautious in attributing too large a role to protest. We could imagine the entire process of the challenger rise as a job vacancy. The movements helped the challenger applicants enrich their curriculum, but this could only help them get their foot in the door and get an interview.

It is only in the electoral campaign, using not movements as a vehicle, but conventional channels of election campaign communication that Syriza landed the job of the arch-challenger, due to its strategic positioning on the bailout issue. If the party had been less competent electorally and less lucky to have elections happening at the low point of the mainstream tide, it is not certain that it would have managed to propel itself to dominance so forcefully. If October 2011 was the time when agents' choices doomed the Greek political establishment, March–May 2012 was the time when they helped Syriza come forward. Again, there was nothing inevitable about Syriza's rise and different choices or point of emphasis could have led to fragmentation all the same but not to a viable challenger.

From the moment Syriza emerged first amidst a row of vying challengers, political developments were reattached to familiar rails for a while again and under the gravitational pull of the electoral law, the party's path to government became much more straightforward. In the June elections, Syriza and New Democracy, the two leading parties in May, would each add 10 percent to their vote shares, the anarchy and fragmentation of the May election giving way to consolidation and the crystallization of the bailout camps around two institutional pillars. The May elections also effectively ended the contentious cycle, as protest never recovered to previous levels. I speculate about the reasons for this in the final two chapters, as

I leapfrog over Syriza's journey to power to land directly on the third bailout episode—a negative case, in which developments similar to the ones in previous episodes failed to trigger either contention or institutional disarray.

## 9 The third bailout – denouement

*Here we see the difference between the political leader and the amateur. Methodical action, in any sphere, means taking a measure not when its efficacy is needed, but rather at the moment when it is possible, with a view to when it will be effective. The good intentions of those who do not know how to use these wiles with time are the sort that pave the path to hell.*

—Simone Weil, *Meditations on a Corpse*

### **Introduction**

The third bailout episode is delimited by the period between the announcement of the referendum on June 27 and the call for elections, the dissolution of parliament and the formalization of the split in Syriza on August 21. Within this period, the third and final Greek bailout was signed, while the final elections of the bailout era were announced. After the second victory of Syriza on September 20, a new routine of institutional politics, akin to the one reigning before the bailout era, was reconstituted.

This episode's exceptional characteristic is how *non-contentious* it is, in stark contrast to what preceded it and particularly the 2010–2012 cycle of protest. It is the falling action part, the period in which contentious action was finally eclipsed and an uneasy compromise between creditors, the Greek government and the public was reached. The episode symbolizes the retreat of the anti-bailout movement from open confrontation to a form of mostly rhetorical institutional guerrilla warfare against the bailout. Titular opposition, substantial capitulation are the main lines of the episode, with the main actors occupied by an institutional battle within parliament, while protesters had become too exhausted, frustrated and confused to return to the streets.

Exhaustion is most evident in the lack of contentious events. There were fifty-five events coded for this episode (see *Tables 3-2* and *9-1*), a hair less than one event per day in the period of almost two months. However, most of them were not occurring in the streets. Forty-

one involved institutional action and statements by government rebels and party members disagreeing with the new deal between Syriza and creditors. Another five concerned the mobilization of the pro-bailout camp before the referendum, against the government's proposal for a No vote. There were only six actual contentious events against the new bailout throughout the whole episode. The most important one was a strike by the civil service union, ADEDY, right after the new agreement, on July 15, joined by the KKE's union, PAME, pharmacists and transport workers for a brief part of the day. The event was poorly attended compared to previous episodes: protesters hailed mostly from the Communist Party and members of the extra-parliamentary left, along with some trade unionists. The riot police, after a seven-month hiatus, during which it remained enclosed in its barracks, reappeared and the teargas rain resumed in a small-scale riot. Apart from this event, there are four more rallies; one by anarchists on July 12, on the night the new agreement was reached and three more organized by ADEDY, on July 13, 22 and August 13, all of them gathering a few thousands at best, in the midst of summer.

*Table 9-1: Challenger mobilization and institutional challenges share for the fourth episode, June–August 2015: percentages*

Period	Mobilization actions	Other challenger action	Gov. rebels actions	Pace (mob./day)
28/06 – 05/07	36.3	12.7	7.3	0.50
05/07 – 12/07	18.2	16.4	17.1	0.25
12/07 – 21/08	45.4	71.0	75.7	0.12
Totals	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	-
N	11	55	41	-

Source: POLCON

Considering a new, painful dosage of austerity was coming, challenger reaction was decidedly muted. Unions and civil service dissenters who had been so pivotal in the previous episodes' movement did not stage a comeback in this one. No government buildings were occupied and Syntagma remained empty. Instead, a summer lull settled all across the land and Greek contentious action finally appeared defeated.



Well, not all of it, as one small village of approximately forty indomitable Syriza MPs, located at the top left corner of parliament, still held out against the third bailout. It was within parliament that most of the drama of this period took place, while the rest of the country was glued to its television screens, watching the unfolding parliamentary spectacle. Syriza's internal minority and its approximately forty MPs undertook most of the burden of resistance to the third bailout. As in other episodes, these incidents were classified as contentious action, as they constituted a break in the routine pattern of MP-government relationships. Some of them contained additional dramaturgical elements, as normal parliamentary function was disrupted by vain efforts to procedurally block the bailout, holding endless filibusters and meetings before a vote was allowed.

This episode then sticks out as an almost fully institutional drama, a faint and desperate small-scale replication of previous incidents of contention, this time exclusively within parliament. The only noteworthy contentious action that is original in this episode is the mobilization of support of the pro-European faction in the streets during the referendum campaign. Two contradictory tendencies dominated the episode: during its initial phase, the descent of institutional opposition into the streets; and in its final stage, the main trend—the ascent of anti-bailout dissent from the street level into parliament. In between, there was the referendum—standing as both the climax of the institutional drama and a last surge of contentious action—before the conflict was substantively resolved, passions and tensions diminished, and some semblance of normality was restored.

If the main theme of the episode is non-contentiousness, this episode deviates from the rest in that I try to explain this lack of contentiousness and general lack of voter shifts. To do so, I delve deeper into the institutionalization of protest, the role of Syriza in this crucial period, as well as the discourse of its leadership that was sufficient to hold everything together for just

long enough. I now turn to the narrative, starting with the culmination of the bailout/anti-bailout divide: the referendum.

### ***The Timeline of events***

#### *The referendum campaign: 27 June–5 July 2015*

The negotiations for a “new” agreement between Greece and its European creditors reached an impasse on the early morning of 27 June, as the European summit of leaders reached no conclusions. Tsipras was unwilling to sign a new bailout and the creditors were unwilling to offer anything less than that. Strict conditionality, austerity, supervision, the main thorny issues of the bailout era were still off the negotiating table. Tsipras was cornered. The country’s reserves were depleting rapidly, as even pension fund savings and municipal funds had been used to keep the country alive during its negotiation with creditors (Nafteboriki 2015).

A decision had to be taken within the week, sign a new bailout or default and possibly leave the Eurozone. Trapped within these tight quarters, Tsipras relaunched the referendum idea that Papandreou was forced to annul almost four years before. He appeared on national television and declared a referendum would be held next Sunday, 5 July. The object of the referendum would be the agreement proposed by the European partners and the answers could only be its rejection or acceptance, No or Yes, OXI or NAI in Greek. Tsipras denounced the Troika proposal as unacceptable, a violation of the democratic mandate of his government against austerity and called for a No vote.

The European counterparts firmly and immediately made clear that a rejection of the agreement and a victory for No would almost certainly end with expulsion from the Eurozone (Elliott, Wearden, and Smith 2015), as Greece’s banking system—already on the brink of collapse—would no longer be able to rely on ECB funding. All seven actions by international actors in this period repudiate the government’s referendum and its proposal to vote no. An array of Europe’s institutional figures would attempt, during the referendum campaign week,

to negotiate with Tsipras, counsel against the referendum, and cajole the government into submission. EU Commission President, Juncker, and his deputy, Moscovici, criticized the hasty referendum multiple times and urged Greeks to vote yes. The IMF tried to bring the different sides back to the negotiating table, advising the Greek government to accept austerity and the European creditors to embrace debt relief, but the referendum announcement had burned the bridges. In a choreographed sequence, foreign governments—French, German, Italian and others—lamented the Greek government’s decision, while most crucially, ECB President Mario Draghi announced that Greek banks were no longer eligible for the ECB’s emergency liquidity assistance mechanism on the next day after the referendum’s declaration. With spare cash reserves left, the clock was ticking for the banks and the Greek economy in general.

Shortly after Draghi’s announcement on 28 June, the outflow of money from Greek banks multiplied and queues started forming outside branches, as depositors rushed to withdraw their savings. The government’s only possible response to limit the flow was capital controls, setting limits on money withdrawn or sent abroad. It was duly and promptly imposed on the same night (Spilioti 2015). On the first day, any individual had a daily withdraw limit of 60 euros, although online payments were still unrestricted. The economy was at a stop, as the flow of cash almost completely froze.

Capital controls were adequate to secure a lifeline to the Greek economy until the referendum on 5 July. With the immediate danger of default receding, at least for a week, economic developments gave way to an intense, polarized and unrelenting campaign on the referendum. The first reaction of the opposition to the government’s plan was to debate the legality of the referendum. Venizelos declared the referendum unconstitutional, while New Democracy argued that the time until the referendum was too tight for any informed decision to be made. As Juncker noted in his personal address to the Greek people, the referendum’s

wording was also highly ambiguous and based on a version of the new bailout that had been already superseded in the negotiations. Nevertheless, the government's proposal of rejecting the agreement was naturally supported by its junior partner, ANEL, but also by the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn, while the Communist Party demanded that the scope be expanded to include rejection of any agreement, otherwise it would abstain (as it eventually did). As the government was undaunted by capital controls and the economy's tailspin, the opposition by Monday had refocused its attention on supporting the Yes side, setting aside its rhetoric about the referendum's constitutionality. As some Syriza officials argued, in a way it was not a week Greek citizens were given to decide and inform themselves—they had, in fact, had the past five years. The foreshadowed showdown of the bailout era had arrived, a referendum to settle the issue once and for all—bailout or anti-bailout, a clash of worlds. This was the last glimpse of contention, as the pre-referendum rallies of the two camps filled the streets one last time.<sup>79</sup>

The day that capital controls were implemented (Monday, 29 June), a large demonstration supporting the government's proposal was held at Syntagma square. Enthusiasm returned after stagnation and months of fruitless negotiations. For many of the most ardent opponents of the bailout, the referendum announcement was a final confirmation that Syriza's wavering and hesitant government would not back down. Tens of thousands gathered at Syntagma square on that Monday.

More unusual were the first massive demonstrations organized by opponents of the government, wishing to maintain the country's European status quo. An umbrella organization, called "Menoume Evropi" or ME ["We Stay in Europe"], comprising most of the opponents of the government's policy of putting Greece's Eurozone participation in peril, served as the focal point of the Yes side. After five years of solely institutional presence in Greek politics, the pro-

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<sup>79</sup> Being consistent with the conceptualization of challengers as opposing the government, only YES side rallies were counted as contentious events in *Table 9-1*, even if the pro-government rallies are narrated too.

bailout, or pro-Europe side as they labeled themselves, showed up on the streets. A movement that was initiated abroad by Greek students in Oxford during the first months of the Syriza–ANEL government, ME expanded during the referendum campaign to integrate most organizations supporting Yes and organize protests against the referendum and the government’s proposal. Its rallies were attended by GSEE, the overarching labor union, whose PASOK-affiliated leadership sided with Yes, the employers’ associations, the mayors of Athens and Thessaloniki and various other citizen committees that supported Greece’s European future. Encouraged by the shock effect of capital controls and limitations on withdrawals, the ME movement gathered approximately a hundred thousand people on the streets of Athens on Tuesday, 30 June. They mostly chanted in favor of Europe and against Syriza and Tsipras. It was a landmark for the pro-Europe side, one of the first times it mobilized massively on the squares.

The two camps would hold alternate rallies in Syntagma square in the following days, their activity peaking on Friday 3 July, when both gathered concurrently—No in Syntagma square, Yes in Athens’ old Olympic stadium. Television broadcast both rallies, pundits trying to estimate which was largest. The No rally in Syntagma square won handily, as hundreds of thousands—in a demonstration reminiscent of the 2011 protests—flooded the square (Efsyn.gr 2015b). One of the main advantages of the No campaign was that it was headed by the extremely popular prime minister. The Yes campaign, on the other hand, was headless, as the opposition parties and leaders, PASOK and New Democracy, Karamanlis and Papandreu had become so discredited, they were nudged to avoid being seen fronting the Yes campaign. Instead, Yes’ informal leader was the mayor of Athens, Karamanlis, a centrist reformer who had won re-election twice in the capital. He was tapped to deliver the final rally speech of the Yes side on 3 July.

Along with the gravitas of the prime minister's office, the framing of the referendum was another of the strong assets for the No side. Tsipras' continuous presence and reassurance about his intentions to use the referendum as a renegotiating instrument were soothing for many ambivalent voters afraid of the possible consequences of the No vote. As several scholars have noted, the representations of the No voters were significantly different to those of the Yes voters (Tsatsanis and Teperoglou 2016; Walter et al. 2018). While most Yes voters believed a No vote would lead to Grexit, most No voters believed in Tsipras's claim that a No vote would simply increase his negotiating strength and provide a better deal prospect. Tsipras repeated this point often, insisting that a deal would be reachable "within 48 hours after the referendum" (Efsyn.gr 2015a)—he made it several times on live television and finally at the big No demonstration on 3 July (*Kathimerini* 2015a). In any case, despite the warnings of his European peers, he ruled out Grexit and insisted that a sustainable, mutually beneficial agreement was within reach and a No vote in the referendum would help him achieve this. The opposition, to its detriment in full alignment with the creditors, claimed this was a fraudulent frame and voting No would soon lead to Grexit, as European partners turned their backs on Greece. Tsipras instead argued that voting Yes would turn Greece into a colony and implied he would be forced to resign if the result went against his wishes (Efsyn.gr 2015a).

The result was a triumph for the No campaign, which took 62 percent of the vote and gained a majority in all of the Greek provinces and electoral districts, even traditional strongholds of New Democracy. The voters in the referendum aligned almost perfectly along party lines and the main bailout and anti-bailout division that by now dominated Greek life. As shown in *Table 9-2*, based on the aggregation of responses about referendum voting from six polls conducted prior to the September 2015 election, voters followed their party cues relatively faithfully.

Table 9-2: The splits of party voters on the referendum vote

Party	Left/Right	Bailout	Yes	No	Other
Antarsya	Radical Left	Anti-Bailout	0.03	0.90	0.07
KKE	Radical Left	Anti-Bailout	0.11	0.62	0.27
Syriza	Radical Left	Anti-Bailout	0.17	0.75	0.08
DIMAR	Center Left	Pro-Bailout	0.51	0.32	0.16
KIDISO	Center Left	Pro-Bailout	0.58	0.30	0.12
PASOK	Center Left	Pro-Bailout	0.65	0.27	0.08
Potami	Center Right	Pro-Bailout	0.72	0.20	0.08
New Democracy	Center Right	Pro-Bailout	0.77	0.12	0.11
ANEL	Radical Right	Anti-Bailout	0.19	0.72	0.09
LAOS	Radical Right	Pro-Bailout	0.38	0.47	0.14
Golden Dawn	Radical Right	Anti-Bailout	0.20	0.68	0.12
Others/Non-voters	—	—	0.21	0.30	0.48
Totals	—	—	0.34	0.46	0.19
N	—	—	2,172	2,974	1,224

Note: Parties are sorted from left to right. Party vote is designated according to 01/2015 vote. Source: ProRata (2015b).

This first intuition is confirmed if we run a logistic regression predicting a NO vote in the referendum on a series of demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, education and whether one voted for a left/right party or a pro-/anti-bailout party in the January 2015 elections.<sup>80</sup> As shown in *Table 9-3*, prior vote for an anti-bailout party is the most important factor for referendum voting. One can see that votes for what was commonly defined as “right”

<sup>80</sup> The left-wing parties are Syriza, KKE, Antarsya, PASOK, DIMAR and KIDISO. The right-wing parties are New Democracy, Golden Dawn, Potami, ANEL, and LAOS. The pro-bailout parties are New Democracy, PASOK, Potami, DIMAR, KIDISO, while the anti-bailout parties are Syriza, KKE, Antarsya, ANEL and Golden Dawn. Only those voters voting in both contests were counted and then only those who votes YES or NO in the referendum.

or “left” before the crisis does not have such a strong effect as an anti-bailout vote for predicting a vote for the No side.<sup>81</sup>

*Table 9-3: Probability of voting NO in the referendum*

DV: Log-odds of voting No in referendum		
	Coefficient	Standard Error
Gender (Female=1)	0.19	(0.15)
Age (18–34)	0.55*	(0.23)
Age (55+)	–0.33 <sup>+</sup>	(0.17)
Primary Education (Ref: Secondary Education)	0.21	(0.38)
Tertiary Education	–0.14	(0.21)
Anti-bailout vote in January	2.76***	(0.18)
Primary education & anti-bailout vote	–0.16	(0.24)
Tertiary education & anti-bailout vote	0.42*	(0.18)
Left vote in January	0.27 <sup>+</sup>	(0.15)
Left vote & Pro-bailout vote	0.64**	(0.20)
Constant	–1.71***	(0.16)
Observations	4,262	
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	0.31	

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses. +  $p < 0.10$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

The re-structuration of Greek politics around the bailout/anti-bailout divide during those years reached its expressive peak during the referendum campaign. On the one side, sat the “old” parties that had embraced the bailouts; on the other, the “new” parties that had embraced the movements against the bailout. The melting of the old left–right structuration and the dominance of the bailout conflict culminated in this campaign.

At the heart of this transformation was Syriza, by now the dominant actor in the restructured party system. In the few short months between the Syriza takeover of power and the referendum, Greek politics appeared rejuvenated. Trust in government skyrocketed from historic lows (see *Figure 9-1*). The governing party reached polling highs of almost 50 percent, separated from New Democracy by at least 10 to 20 percentage points, reminiscent of

<sup>81</sup> Of course, one could argue that left and right were relevant, in a “horse-shoe interpretation” of the political system. As shown in *Table 9-2*, it is the radical left and radical right party voters that overwhelmingly supported the No side and the centrist voters mostly voted for Yes. But that overlooks the fact that most of the radical left and right voters were voting for centrist parties just a few years before the referendum. If one supports the notion that the divide was between centrists and extremists from left and right, one has to explain the inflation of the extremes, inevitably returning full circle to the bailout issue.



PASOK's 2009 honeymoon period (Public Issue 2015b). After five years of governments that did not stray from the demands of the Troika, the air of resistance propelled Syriza's wings. In a poll in January, 24 percent of voters thought the country was heading the right direction (Public Issue 2015a). After Syriza's election, it went up to 64 percent. Hope became the dominant feeling among the electorate, describing the emotions of 29 percent, up from 10 percent before Syriza's election.

The party's dominance during its first government term also decided the referendum, as its support for No influenced voters, by then almost the majority of the Greek population. The Yes, pro-Europe, pro-bailout camp had shown its face and managed an unprecedented mobilization, but in the end, it was not enough. The No victory was surprising and astounding in its scale, as the polls had predicted a tight race for the entire week.<sup>82</sup> The immediate political consequence of the referendum was the resignation of Samaras, his tactic of polarizing the campaign considered co-responsible for the heavy defeat and the predicted ensuing national catastrophe. The decisive result foreshadowed the escalation of the confrontation with the Europeans and possibly Grexit, Syriza's hand strengthened by its surprising resilience. In Syntagma square, site of the last years' mobilizations, some Syriza members erupted into dance to celebrate the anti-bailout victory. Tsipras and his circle had other plans.

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<sup>82</sup> The poll average of twenty-nine polls between the announcement of the referendum and its conduction gave a 5.7 percentage point advantage to No. The poll average of eighteen polls after the imposition of capital controls, on June 30 and the referendum gave a marginal average 1.2 percentage point advantage to No (author's own calculations).

Figure 9-1: Trust in government, parliament and satisfaction with democracy, 2009–2015



Source:

*Eurobarometer.*

#### *The new agreement: 5–12 July 2015*

In the very same night of his unexpected—and, to a degree, personal—triumph, Tsipras dismissed Varoufakis, the finance minister who had played second fiddle to Tsipras during the past six months’ negotiations. Their relationship had become frigid. Varoufakis claimed that Tsipras had already lost his resolve and nerve in the preceding months of negotiations and they had grown apart (Varoufakis 2017). The dismissal also made sense given the way Tsipras had framed the referendum; by then, per Varoufakis’ own admission, he had become a red flag for his European counterparts. Tsipras, if he was going to deliver an agreement within 48 hours (as he had promised) needed someone Europeans would listen to. Nevertheless, considering that Varoufakis was a symbol of the confrontational stance toward the Europeans, and the referendum the main outcome and victory of that stance, it seems odd that he would be dismissed so quickly after results came in.

In fact, as later became apparent, Tsipras had been honest about his intentions. He had promised to avoid Grexit at all costs and to reach a new agreement. The promise to do it within 48 hours would be broken, but within the week after the referendum, he managed to sign a new agreement with the European partners and the IMF. In a surreal series of events—on 5 July people in and outside Greece assumed the country was on its way out of the Eurozone, the bailout regime ending with a popular bang. One week later, Greece was saddled with a new bailout, more firmly inside the Eurozone than ever.

This phase of the episode revolved around the renewed negotiations of the Greek government with foreign governments to achieve a new deal. Almost all actions coded during this week were initiated by those two actors. The only other actions were the first forewarnings from Syriza's internal opposition that support for such a deal was waning, some shows of international support for the Greek government, and the opposition's desperate plea to Tsipras to sign a new agreement, giving him a mandate and an assurance that they would also commit to any such outcome. What was lacking was any street action, as the country's population was glued to its screens, awaiting events to unfold in one direction or the other.

On the night and day following the referendum, a Eurogroup session which excluded Greece was held, ready to discuss the details of Greece's imminent departure from the club. Merkel and Hollande both shot down Tsipras' proposal for a new bailout on favorable terms for Greece. Among all international actors coded during these days, very few were supportive and jubilant about the Greek referendum, mostly out-of-power parties from left and right that could not provide material assistance to Greece, like Podemos, the Labour Party in the UK, UKIP and the Front National.

The seriousness of the situation was understood by the Greek officials. Very rapidly (by 7 July) they delivered a counter-proposal to the creditors for consideration. It was duly rejected, but it was a sign that the talk during the referendum campaign about achieving a new

agreement were not really a fig leaf to cover a secret Grexit plan, but a genuine preference to maintain the Eurozone status quo. A new proposal on 9 July, brought the Greek government much closer to a new deal, mostly on the terms rejected a few days earlier and was seen as a serious step of progress (*Kathimerini* 2015b).

Of course, the internal domestic opposition, within and outside the party, was not pleased with this turn of events. On 9 July, there is a foreshadowing of how this episode was going to evolve, as approximately fifteen Syriza MPs and four ANEL MPs warned the government they would not vote any agreement like the one proposed to the European partners, containing significant dosages of austerity and privatizations with only a vague promise of future debt relief (Sideris 2015a; *Kathimerini* 2015c). Nevertheless, their dissent was not crippling for the government, which, at that hour of the crisis, found support from PASOK, Potami and New Democracy, who gave it a parliamentary mandate to negotiate with the Europeans on the basis of the deal it proposed to them. The opposition parties, desperate to avoid Grexit and suspicious of the capacity of Syriza to resolve its internal disputes, did what New Democracy did not do five years before: they provided their full consensus to the government to achieve a new deal, an outcome they considered much preferable to default and Grexit, even while ridiculing Syriza for its abrupt change of heart. Perhaps the departure of Samaras from the helm of New Democracy facilitated this outcome. The lack of clear opposition leadership provided a rare opportunity for consensus—as Samaras’ polarizing style had by that point been blamed internally for the referendum defeat (Terzis 2015) and no one wanted to assume the responsibility for sabotaging the fragile attempts at reconciliation during this critical juncture, Syriza got some breathing space to operate as the opposition presented a most rare gift to the government. New Democracy’s transition leadership under Meimarakis quickly recognized and accepted Tsipras’ mandate to negotiate a new agreement.

With the support of the opposition and the opposition of a quarter of his own MPs, Tsipras finally achieved a new deal with the Europeans during an exhausting leaders' summit that lasted for seventeen hours on 12 July. The opposition centrist parties—New Democracy, PASOK and Potami—all agreed to support the new deal. Meanwhile, Syriza's left-wing faction pledged to do everything to oppose it. The stage for the “contentious” action of the next weeks was set.

*The institutionalized opposition and the road to elections: 12 July–21 August 2015*

In the days following the agreement, the only actual contentious events were the aforementioned rallies of civil servants' peak unions. Barring those infrequent and poorly attended protests, for the remainder of this episode, contentious action was almost entirely institutionalized, occurring within parliament and party. It was spearheaded by Syriza's minority left-wing faction, in a rearguard attempt to block the new deal. There were thirty-nine contentious actions between the signing of the new agreement and the call to elections, thirty-one of which were taken by government rebels (see *Table 9-1*).

On 13 July, the next day after the decisive European leaders' summit, between twenty and thirty-five Syriza MPs stated their unwillingness to support the government's new agreement. The immediate repercussion if this threat materialized would be the loss of Syriza's parliamentary majority, as it held 162 out of 300 seats at full strength and would therefore fall below the 151 threshold for single-party government. One day later, 109 out of the 201 members of Syriza's central committee signed a proclamation expressing their disagreement with the new bailout and Syriza's capitulation, asking for the immediate convening of a session of the central committee so further decisions to change course could be taken (Sideris 2015b).

The Tsipras government was thus faced with an instant loss of its majority in parliament and in the party. The first was potentially more threatening, but the danger was diminished by

the opposition's support, which would ensure the passage of all legislative packages required to implement the agreement to sail smoothly through parliament. The party's "mutiny" was also problematic for Tsipras, but there he had two great advantages. First, there was no real alternative leader whom both party and society would embrace, and no one in the party disputed his leadership even if they disputed his policies. Since the dissenters were unwilling to seriously challenge his hold on the party, they were consigned to pleading for an alternative course of action rather than try forcing their will. Second, the party's model of a leadership without real constraints (see chapter 5), afforded Tsipras much operational space. He had no willingness, or urgency to submit to party demands if it did not suit him. The central committee dissenters asked for an immediate session, but he simply did not grant their demand. Indeed, the central committee session occurred approximately two weeks later, on July 30, by which time Tsipras had regained some control of the situation.

While Tsipras could afford to buy time within the party, he had no time within parliament. The new agreement hinged on legislating under tough deadlines. The first was on 15 July, when a vote on the "pre-requisites" of the new bailout was called. Thirty-nine members of Syriza, including Varoufakis, several ministers, and the parliament's president, Zoe Konstantopoulou, refused to vote in favor and either abstained or rejected it. Nevertheless, the dissenters neither quit their ministerial posts, nor withdrew their support from the government. This created a paradoxical situation, as a significant portion of MPs and even ministers continued to support or even be part of the government, while they were voting against its legislative proposals in parliament. Only 110 out of the 149 Syriza MPs could be relied upon. The government would have fallen below the constitutional threshold of 120 MPs for its continued existence had ANEL's leader, Panos Kammenos, not managed to discipline all his MPs on time. A total of 123 MPs of the Syriza–ANEL coalition voted in favor, along with 128

opposition MPs, a great majority, standing on feet of clay. This was an institutional anomaly that could obviously not sustain itself for long. Tsipras had to regain the initiative.

On 17 July, he started with the cabinet. A reshuffle took place, and ministers that had resisted the new bailout were replaced with loyalists (Smith 2015). On the next legislative session for the new bailout's conditions, on 22 July, again, thirty-one MPs voted against it and five abstained. However, Varoufakis and some other MPs who had rejected the previous package, voted in favor this time, hesitating to continue the spectacle of divided government. Tsipras was doing everything he could to contain the damage, admitting that he would never "own" the reform program they were voting, but it was nonetheless necessary to avoid the downfall of the government of the left, a constant theme in his rhetoric, analyzed below. Consecutive votes in parliament followed the same format—dissenters were neither willing to withdraw their support from the government and force elections, nor prepared to vote for its proposed legislation. On 27 July, twenty-nine Syriza MPs once more voted against a bailout condition—the privatization of peripheral airports.

However, Tsipras' sequential strategy bore fruit. As the two conditional packages and the privatization package were voted by the convention of the party's central committee, he had already cemented the passage of the new bailout and had decisively steered the country in this direction. While dissent and party intervention could have been critical when the new agreement was signed, by the time the party could hold a hearing on it, its major tenets had already become law with broad parliamentary support and almost zero street action. His reassurances that the party would never embrace the bailout—that it had only been a tactical compromise—and that the party would be asked for its approval in the near future all assuaged some of the worried members, resulting in a relative calm when the central committee session finally took place on 30 July.

The dissenters were confined to the party's minority, while other peripheral groups, oscillating between support and dissent, had been drawn back into Tsipras' orbit. Only seventeen members of the central committee, out of the original 109 dissenters resigned on that day (Efsyn.gr 2015c). All of them came from small communist groups previously allied to Tsipras.

The main internal minority, the Left Platform, stayed on and continued to denounce the government's plan, while also trying to steer it leftwards. Lafazanis—leader of the Left Platform, Syriza's leftist tendency—would still bring forth proposals for leaving the common currency, a suggestion he would repeat almost daily during the initial days of August, believing the government could be nudged toward that solution. Rather than bringing down the government or leaving the party, he would ask for the party to hold a special convention as soon as possible to settle the issue.

The minority's tactic during this period, therefore, was to corner the leadership by initiating party procedures that would reject the leadership's policies. Their approach was to invoke the need for the party to acquire voice in this process, in line with the democratic and organizational traditions of the left. They aimed to trigger a "permanent" party convention, a smaller scale replica of the party's supreme instrument, its convention, that could be summoned immediately and override the leadership's decisions. Tsipras agreed that party voice was necessary, but instead supported the idea of an "emergency" convention (i.e., a normal but unscheduled convention) to take place later in the fall. Most opposition groups understood that this would mean the convention would occur after all bailout laws had been voted and implemented, hence it would simply be a way to reaffirm premade decisions. However, for many oscillating members of the central committee (and the party in general), this was a sufficiently democratic proposition, allowing the government to act according to the urgency



of the situation, thus showing some comradely trust in leadership, but also affording the party a role in shaping decisions in the near future.

Almost all coded events during this final period concerned parliamentary exchanges between Syriza, the Syriza internal opposition, and the institutional opposition. The creditors returned to their usual behavior, only nudging Syriza to move forward, reassured that calm and order had been restored in the Eurozone. The typical creditor support for the Greek government present in almost all episodes quickly reasserted itself. The only times this Troika–government relationship was disturbed were the two referenda, the one annulled and the other carried through.

The piecemeal implementation of the bailout, the prime minister's rhetoric and the promises of a renewed role for party democracy afforded Tsipras some time, as party members hesitated on what to do. Those who disliked the new bailout but trusted the prime minister and the party were persuaded to stay, until the party resolved the conundrum in fall. Until the final vote for the new bailout on 14 August, the minority continued to make its case for not implementing the bailout and leaving the Eurozone, but to no avail. Dispirited and cornered, it made its last stance within parliament on the final vote.

Zoe Konstantopoulou, the parliament's president and a prominent dissenter, took it upon herself to use her institutional authority to block the bailout vote by procedural tactics. First, the sessions of various preparatory parliamentary subcommittees were prolonged for up to nine hours, the internal opposition obstructing the process from proceeding to the plenary. When that obstacle was finally overcome, Konstantopoulou demanded that a council of the parliament's presidents be held to decide aspects of the plenary process. She took the floor approximately twenty times—in a Greek version of filibustering—to denounce the government, her party, undemocratic processes, and the bailout legislation's deviation from institutional normality and propriety. While Konstantopoulou—armed with the president's

gavel—waged her battle inside, Syntagma square outside was empty of protesters, the last of the few thousands having left the square before the session even started. Once another Syriza hesitant dissenter decided to defect and provide the marginal vote allowing the plenary session to begin, the resistance to the third bailout was stillborn. The vote for the new bailout began at 1:30 a.m., and 230 out of 300 voted in favor at 9:30 a.m., at the conclusion of the all-night session. Syriza’s dissenters increased to 44, essentially stripping the government of its majority.

In the week ahead, after the bailout was voted, the Syriza dissenters finally realized that the internal party rift was permanent and not amenable to persuasion or procedural maneuver. They decided to form a new anti-bailout “movement–front”, heralding their eventual split from Syriza. They were overtaken by events, though, as Tsipras—now without a functioning majority and with frayed relations among his parliamentary group—called for elections. The party convention that was promised to deliver a verdict on the bailout that fall never took place. Instead, most of the dissenters left and formed a new party, Popular Unity, which did not even achieve parliamentary representation in the upcoming elections. With Syriza’s capitulation, the political marginalization of the anti-bailout faction and the emptying of the streets, the bailout era was coming to an abrupt end.

#### *Themes of the third bailout episode: Non-contentiousness*

This episode serves as the resolution of the main drama of the past five years. In line with its designation as the denouement phase, it is almost lacking any action, especially after the referendum (see also *Figure 2-7*). The social movement that mobilized hundreds of thousands up to 2012 lay dormant as another bailout was voted. I have described the challenger–government relationship as one demarcated by passivity on the part of movements and indifference on the government part. Why did only a few thousands bother to register their dissent with yet another bailout? I suggest some possible answers and survey the literature,

without definitely concluding on what caused demobilization and the non-reappearance of movements.

The most obvious blow to contention came through the staging of this episode deep in the summer, causing a lull in protest. Marching under forty degree heat was never an enticing protest—even for the most ardent bailout opponents. As I have already outlined in chapter 4, beyond the summer lull, some mechanisms of demobilization—*institutionalization* of anti-bailout radical claims in parliament by Syriza, *frustration*, *exhaustion* and channeling of activity into more localized movements—might have resulted in a post-2012 dearth of contentiousness that continued throughout this episode.

Institutionalization and frustration were two sides of the same coin, the defeat of the anti-bailout side in the 2012 double elections. The participants in the anti-bailout movement helped bring the Greek party system to its knees, but the pro-bailout camp still assembled a majority, one that grew at the June 2012 elections. After two years of frequent violent confrontations with riot police, massive demonstrations that failed to force any concessions from the government and constant economic deterioration, mass protest proved ineffective. Less people participated in protests, reaching a bailout-era low of 9 percent of poll respondents in September 2012 (Public Issue 2013). Once protesters demobilized, it was hard to re-ignite the engine of dissent.

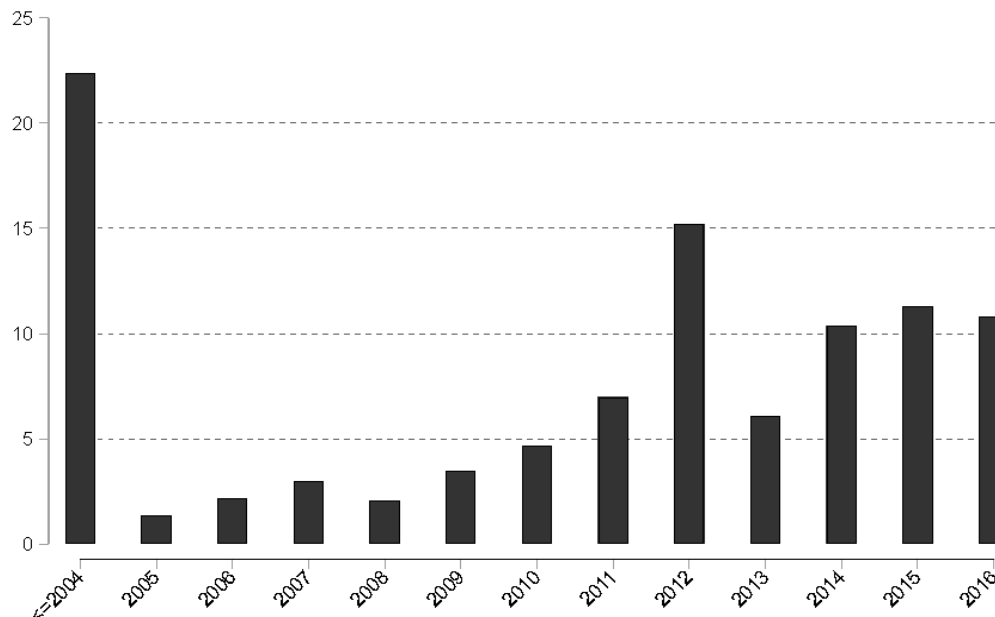
Additionally, the populist claims of past mobilizations contained the implicit assumption that almost the entirety of the Greek people had revolted against the isolated political class that brought them here. The 2012 elections falsified that expectation, showing that support for the bailout was supported by a relative plurality nonetheless. This sent some of the protesters back home, disrupting the informal coalition and network of protest formed during the previous years (Kanellopoulos et al. 2017). Others meanwhile, as mentioned in chapter 4, focused on more local and particularistic mobilizations, like the environmentalist

demonstrations against gold mining, the closure of the public broadcaster, anti-toll protests, LGBT struggles. Additionally, as Kouki (2018) describes, after three years of economic tailspin and with no refuge in sight, social survival and solidarity, the creation of localized alternatives to crumbling public services became a focal point that captured time and resources of the anti-bailout camp. Cooperative, producer markets, solidarity funds, social medical centers, and local collectives to save flailing industries started dominating the attention of dissenters.

Yet for others, the ineffectiveness of protest and the close electoral result made the case for participating in institutional life, particularly Syriza, bolstering the ranks of challenger parties. There was an influx of members into Syriza after the 2012 elections, even if at its peak party membership never exceeded 30,000 (Kemanetzi 2017; Kouki 2018). Still, the growth of the party was significant and correlated with its electoral success, as can be seen in *Figure 9-2*, where the influx of new members was situated after the party's 2012 surprise success rather than in 2010/2011—or, indeed, in 2008 when the greatest mobilizations occurred.

But even for those protesters who did not enroll into the party, the growth of Syriza and the increased representation of the anti-bailout camp post-2012 restored their voice in parliament. In the classic terms of voice and exit (Hirschman 1970), having Syriza as the official opposition re-equilibrated parliament to more accurately reflect social trends and rendered exit through protest a less attractive option. Within the Greek leftist community this was known as the “assignment” [“ανάθεση”] of movement goals to the party (Kotronaki 2018). Syriza tried to exorcise the logic of assignment (Bregianni 2015; Kouki 2018), whereupon it was charged with representing movement objectives, arguing that continued mobilization was necessary to strengthen the joint movement-party goals.

*Figure 9-2: Distribution of Syriza members by year of entry into the party: percentages*



Source: Syriza's second convention (October 2016) statistics as presented by Avgi (Klavdianos 2016).

Nevertheless, as the movements never recovered, the logic of “assignment” and the growing overlap of Syriza supporters and members with the cycle of former protesters led an increasing number of politically orphan voters to attach themselves and identify with Syriza's anti-bailout project. Coming back to 2015, this contributed to the non-contentiousness of the episode, as growing identification with Syriza impeded dissenters from eagerly making the switch back to non-institutional channels. By 2015, things were moving in the opposite direction than in 2011. While in the latter, protesters became increasingly radicalized and de-linked from existing parties, by 2015 they were going the other way. In Syriza, they had found the voice in parliament that resonated with their claims during the GI and beyond.

Indeed, one reason why mobilization waned further in 2015 was the restoration of some measure of faith and trust in the parliamentary system and government, at least during Syriza's first blazing term in government. At the two last polls before the referendum, Syriza was supported by 41 percent of the electorate, well above the 35 percent it had received in January. New Democracy meanwhile trailed at 24 percent. Trust in the party and its bizarre negotiating

strategy did not only contribute to increased polling numbers, but even to an increase in trust in government and some rejuvenation of satisfaction with democracy and trust in parliament, as shown in *Figure 9-1*. A context where the governing party was increasingly popular, and a higher percentage of the population supported it is the mirror opposite of the PASOK term in 2011. The political system was regaining its representational role and there was less appetite for exit and protest.

Additionally, trust in Syriza and its leader even after the end of the negotiations remained high, a key difference with the mobilization against PASOK, where by 2011 Papandreou had lost all credibility. Even when the deadlock was fast approaching in June, Tsipras had a +47 popularity net rating, almost the mirror opposite of Samaras' -41 (Public Issue 2015b). As will be seen in the next chapter, the majority of its electorate trusted that the party had exhausted all negotiating options and this was the best deal that could be signed within the confines of the Eurozone. While the public became increasingly pessimistic, as the part of it thinking the country was heading into the right direction decreased from 80 percent after Syriza's election to 42 percent in June, it was nevertheless more sympathetic to Syriza than to any alternative.

To understand this manifestation of trust in the party, we have to return to the founding pillars of the "anti-bailout" camp. I have extensively argued that the anti-bailout issue only constituted itself as an extensive "super issue" during the Greek Indignados, when its two intertwined fundamental axioms became integrated (i.e., the antipathy toward the country's "old" political class and grievances against austerity). I claimed that the technocratic government was a turning point, because it was the moment when all anti-bailout issue dimensions became fully aligned with institutional parties. "Old" parties with a past government record supported the bailout, while "new" parties without government experience stood against it.

In 2015, this alignment was no more and the bailout super issue's dimensions were no longer integrated. Syriza remained a "new" party, freshly arrived in government, but had now become a reluctant pro-bailout convert. This opened a wedge which Syriza would fully exploit, by emphasizing its credentials as a "pure" party, unassociated with the corruption of the past, setting aside references to the bailout that had acted as a signifier of those political grievances so far.

Potential mobilization organizers therefore had to overcome the hurdle that most of them had become associated with the current government, which also remained quite popular and still considered a potential candidate to "cleanse" Greek politics. Many of them, now organically linked to Syriza, thought it best not to waste this accumulated political capital and to voice their dissent and grievances within the party instead. Occupied with internal struggle, they did not contribute anything to the launch of a new round of mobilization that proved stillborn. Instead, they focused on the internal machinations, thinking that perhaps the outcome had not yet been decided. The following month of mid-July to the end of August was one of intense debate and fighting within the party and the parliamentary group of Syriza, aiming to alter its course rather than pressure it from the outside through demonstrations. In this institutional arena though, Tsipras and his group won handsomely.

### ***The battle for Syriza***

#### *Defanging the internal opposition*

As already narrated, most of the coded contentious events of the 2015 summer occurred within the parliamentary group and central committee of Syriza. Looking back at those events, it is slightly hard to fathom how weak the internal opposition was and how little resistance it provided to Syriza's change of direction. Considering that Syriza was a party that rose on the anti-bailout theme and had led its voter base to a triumphant victory at the referendum to reject

the bailout, it is bizarre that so little was done to prevent or reverse its eventual surrender to the creditors. Perhaps the voters had supported Syriza because it represented a new break, but the party's members were mostly lifelong radical leftists. How come that the party did not mount a more competent resistance?

I argue that the answer is two-fold. The first aspect is the hesitation, non-coordination, confusion and general amateurism of the organized internal opposition. The second is Tsipras' institutional capacity and personal ability to utilize timing and persuasive rhetoric to divide and if not conquer, then at least stay afloat.

Starting with the organized internal opposition, by hesitation and confusion I mean its inability to determine how decisive Tsipras' decision to move forward with the bailout was and consequently, how it should reply. The internal opposition had three basic options. Accept the bailout and continue in Syriza, quit and start a new party, or try to change the bailout decision by challenging the leadership internally. The different groups of the internal opposition could not agree and coordinate on what their stance would be, eventually losing the internal party battle.

The Left Platform, headed by Lafazanis, constituted the bulk of the internal opposition and vacillated between disobedience, withdrawal and persuasion. They refused to vote for Syriza's new agreement, but nevertheless did not quit their ministerial posts, nor did they withdraw their support for the government. Like someone stuck in a bad relationship, they could neither stop fighting, nor could they break up. Departure was in their minds, but it was delayed by their attempts at persuasion. They believed they still had a fighting chance to change the direction of government. This is attested by the gathering of 109 signatures of central committee members, which they hoped could overturn the power balance within the party and force a convention. It is unclear how they could believe that after the bailout had been agreed upon, after the conditions had been voted, a party convention could actually undo all of this.



This was doubly puzzling because they had no alternative leader to Tsipras and never proposed one. All their nudges and pleas were for Tsipras to do something different, not to elect someone else who would better represent the party. After the first dissident group (KOE<sup>83</sup>) emerged, Tsipras resigned on July 30, challenged his detractors to propose a new leader or alternative, to which he got no reply (Antoniou and Zoulas 2015). Overall, they appeared shell-shocked, overtaken by events and clinging to the party in a desperate hope that something changed, while at the same time refusing to act decisively.

If they ever had a hope of reversing the bailout outcome, coordination was required. The 109 members of the central committee who signed the statement against the bailout were a majority in the committee. Inside and outside the party apparatus, the ones who initially opposed the new bailout extended far beyond the Left Platform's orbit. Groups and prominent MPs formerly allied to Tsipras turned away from him. In parliament, Konstantopoulou, the chamber's president, and Varoufakis, the ex-finance minister, voted against the new agreement. They were followed by Sofia Sakorafa, an MP from PASOK who received the most personal votes in Attica in 2012 and Manolis Glezos, the octogenarian resistance fighter symbolic of Syriza's link to the left's legacy, who later apologized for his prior support to Syriza and departed with his small group. Smaller communist groups that were previously aligned to Tsipras, like KOE and small Trotskyite groups also reacted against the new agreement. Members of "the 53", a loose left-wing tendency within the fold of Tsipras' loyalists that included the new finance minister, Tsakalotos, and other key government officials also oscillated between resignation, disobedience and challenge (Efsyn.gr 2015d). Nineteen of them also signed the call for a convention of the central committee. The party's secretary, Koronakis, resigned his post in late August and left the party in October (iefimerida.gr 2015; *Kathimerini*

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<sup>83</sup> Communist Organization of Greece, a small communist group that had joined Syriza and formerly supported Tsipras against the Left Platform.

2015d). The candidate for mayor of Athens and government spokesman, Sakellaris, pondered leaving, doing so only in November (Sverkos 2015). At the same time, mass departures from the party base were occurring, with daily letters of resignations sent to party committees. There was general uproar in the party. In *Table 9-4*, I have assembled a list, detailing the composition of the 109 dissenters, the relative size of their components and their eventual stance.

*Table 9-4: Syriza Central Committee dissenters' composition, number of resignations, date of resignation and final destination*

Syriza Tendency	# of dissenters	# of resignations	Resignation date	# to Popular Unity
<b>Left Platform (former party minority)</b>				
Left Platform	56	53	26 August 2015	53
DEA	3	3	26 August 2015	3
<b>Union (Tsipras' ex-allies)</b>				
KOE	19	19	30 June 2015	0
"The 53"	18	6–10	21–29 August 2015	0
Smaller groups	3	3	28 August 2015	0
Communist Tendency	2	2	1 September 2015	2
Others	9	8	28–29 August 2015	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>109 (of 201)</b>	<b>86–90</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>59</b>

Notes: Dissenters are those members who signed a declaration on 15 July condemning the new deal and asking for the convention of the Central Committee. The second column counts those in this group who eventually resigned and the third the most common dates they did so. The final column counts those who went to Popular Unity eventually. Source: Compiled by the author.

No one moved to harness all this energy. The majority of 109 assembled within the central committee of 201 that could have supported an alternative plan withered fast. It is apparent that the Left Platform could not force anything on party leadership without the support of at least some of the other tendencies, like KOE and "the 53". However, the three major groups of dissenters failed to coordinate.

KOE opted for resignation from party and parliament without taking any initiative for a new party or movement. Its three MPs resigned (Kostaki 2015), duly replaced by Tsipras loyalists and its seventeen central committee members, crucial for any majority within the party, resigned their posts when the central committee first convened on 30 July (Efsyn.gr 2015c). On the September elections, KOE would abstain. The Left Platform stayed behind, still trying to persuade the party to chart a different course or hold a convention, only to finally

leave a month later (Efsyn.gr 2015d). Lafazanis has been coded as insisting that his alternative path was viable for almost every day until 7 August. He and some small groups decided to finally resign their party posts on 26 August (Sideris 2015c), almost one full week after elections had been called and their plan for a convention had been entirely shattered. Among the oscillating members of “the 53”, the most prominent—like Koronakis and Sakellaridis—only left the party *after* the September elections. Among those of “the 53” who had signed the call for a central committee session, most were lured back to the Tsipras camp by the promise of an “emergency” convention to settle the issue of the new agreement<sup>84</sup>. Others decided to support the government anyway, persuaded by the rhetoric of Tsipras. Of the eighteen dissenters of “the 53”, only six resigned eventually and four more seemingly returned to their private lives.

Nor did they agree on what to do once they all had resigned. As *Table 9-4* makes apparent, the passage to Popular Unity was followed only by the most hardcore organizations, the Left Platform and small Trotskyite groups. Neither the independents, nor KOE, nor even the members of “the 53” or Varoufakis followed in the formation of a new party. The internal opposition wanted to stop the bailout, but its organizational skills and ability to act cohesively failed when put to the test.

On the other side, Tsipras used his institutional capacities skillfully. He managed to impose the timing and sequence of parliamentary and party events that suited him. First,

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<sup>84</sup> That the more moderate members of “the 53” were “tricked” by the promise of the convention is evident in their resignation letters, all published on 28–29 August 2015. Laskos, a member of “the 53” and the central committee, notes in his resignation letter: “I was available, despite all my important disagreements for an ‘honest and painful’ compromise, to give a chance for maximum unity through the decision of the Central Committee on July 30 for an ‘emergency’ convention, according to the President’s decision. This opportunity was violently cancelled [by the call for elections]” (left.gr 2015a).

Another member of “the 53”, Nikolaou, notes: “The unprecedented decision to call elections...before the convention took place is an act of authoritarianism that shows contempt and destroys the party, wasting the last chance to create a coordinated disengagement plan [from the bailout]” (left.gr 2015b).

Finally, Patrikiou, a non-committed Syriza central committee member wrote in her letter: “Ignoring the decision for an ‘emergency’ convention, a decision he had imposed via extortion on the Central Committee, the comrade ex-prime minister announced the decision of his own little group for early elections” (left.gr 2015b).

immediately after the agreement, on 15, 22, and 27 July he passed the conditions for signing the new bailout, taking advantage of the breathing space given to him by other parties. The support of New Democracy and PASOK on the bailout and the non-withdrawal of support of the internal dissidents to his government allowed him to inhabit the best of all worlds. He could pass the bailout unperturbed by internal Syriza developments, but at the same time maintain the “wall of purity” that separated him from “old” parties of government. His parliamentary support and government composition was still based on Syriza–ANEL MPs and the continuous support of Syriza’s internal opposition to the government meant it did not have to include the discredited establishment parties to survive and move forward. It was only after those fifteen days that he summoned the central committee meeting to take place, once he had the opportunity to quell some of the unrest and lure most of “the 53” and non-committed members back to his side via the promise of the “emergency convention”.<sup>85</sup> The result was the division of the internal opposition, as KOE resigned and the rest signed on to his plan for an emergency convention. The impression was that the internal opposition was weak, uncoordinated and at the party’s fringes. When the Left Platform and the rest finally appeared to consider secession, only after the new bailout was passed through parliament, he used his office’s prerogative to call for elections, giving them less than a month to organize and contest them. As noted by Syriza dissenters, he subsequently asked for the confirmation of his decision by an informal convention of party notables (*Ta Nea* 2015), completely outside the party statute. The joint assembly of the party’s regional committees, central committee and parliamentary group, which the internal opposition boycotted, essentially rubberstamped his decision to call for an election a week earlier.

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<sup>85</sup> As Patrikiou claims in her resignation letter, it is indicative of the Syriza leadership’s tactics that they refused, as was admittedly usual in the party, to count votes for the “emergency” convention solution they proposed, instead asking for the decision to be confirmed by voice (left.gr 2015b).

During the episode, then, the party developed strong centrifugal tendencies and eventually almost all of the dissenting members abandoned it. But Tsipras managed to stem the flow of party fragmentation and peel the internal opposition off like onion layers, one by one, rather than all together. First KOE left, then the Left Platform stayed until it departed after a further twenty-five days, finally followed by many of “the 53” only after the elections. Partially because of Tsipras’ tactical flexibility and ruthlessness, partially because of the internal opposition’s incompetence and non-coordination, he never faced a concerted challenge of his leadership or policies. Beyond his skill at seizing the moment, much of Tsipras’ competence lay in his success at *persuading* a critical mass of party members and executives. He managed to win back the majority of the central committee and his MPs by convincing them to extend their support toward him. I now turn to this rhetorical effort.

***The rhetoric of non-action: Displacement, conspiracy and reversal***

Persuasion is a word I use for lack of a better alternative, aiming to express the ability of circles of party leadership to perform the three rhetorical feats in the title.

First, *displacement*. Syriza argued that the new deal was not as bad as other alternatives/past bailouts but most importantly, shifted the goalposts by displacing the success of the new agreement to a different plane. The second was *conspiracy*—a claim that the new agreement was actually better than the counterfactual, by suggesting that the alternative to the agreement, Grexit, was actually the concealed desire of Syriza’s enemies all along. The third was *reversal of means and ends*—the new agreement and its contents were de-emphasized, and priority instead was given to the objective of government survival. This was further achieved by framing what had happened within a more abstract and wide historical frame, forging mental associations between the current situation of political defeat and retreat and historic examples that politically, culturally and emotionally resonated with the party faithful. Tsipras and his

circle addressed a shocked audience of perplexed party members that watched a glaring contradiction develop between their acts and deeds and promoted narratives that, whether they believed them or not, smoothed their cognitive dissonance.

### *Displacement*

The first part—arguing that the agreement was bad, but not as bad as previous ones—had to strike a delicate balance. It had to persuasively demonstrate that the new bailout was progress, but not in a manner all too triumphant, lest it face the same backlash and disbelief Papandreou experienced when he returned from the leaders' summit in 2011. However, considering a similar agreement had been rejected a week ago, with the pretense that it would strengthen the government's negotiating hand, Syriza had to show the final agreement was at least a marginal improvement.

The weaker and least important effort involved claiming that the new agreement signified progress. As Tsipras argued, there were three areas of potential improvement to the proposal rejected in the referendum. The first was on the terms of austerity, the second on debt write-down and the final one on the terms of funding (Tsipras 2015c). His main claim afterwards was that the new bailout ameliorated the latter, assuring funding for three years rather than five months, as it guaranteed 83 billion euros in European funds, an amount sufficient to navigate the next rocky years under capital controls. Additionally, it contained some vague notions of debt relief at a future date, subject to strict conditionality, which Tsipras also presented as a mark of progress. As he admitted however, there was little or no substantial change in the terms of austerity (Tsipras 2015a, 2015b, 2015c). The requirement for structural surpluses of 3.5 percent in the medium-term, and hence the prospect of never-ending austerity, remained unaltered.

Instead, Tsipras chose to focus, especially within party contexts, on the effects of the agreement in terms of politics and movements. For Syriza, movements were (or were at least perceived to be) the main linkage to citizens and voters. Their journey in the world of movements had started with the transnational, anti-globalization movements (Kotronaki 2015), which the party credited as their first step into the path of success. As such, speaking about the transnational effects their negotiating effort had on pan-European movements chimed with members' memories, concerns and hopes. Tsipras and others did everything they could to play up the “cracks on the wall” this new agreement had caused on the European discourse of austerity. As he said on different instances, in parliament and media:

*A week ago, I found myself in the European Parliament and I became conscious of the great crack – ideological and political...do you know since when it has been that we have seen in Europe, demonstrators, in the great cities, in the streets, the squares, come out with Greek flags and express their solidarity to the Greek people? Since the dictatorship and this is a touching development that should honor us all! (Tsipras 2015a)*

*I do not regret it [the protracted negotiation] even for one instant! It was worth the trouble for Greece to be the headlines' protagonist; it was worth the trouble for the [Greek] flags to wave in solidarity demonstrations in Europe (Tsipras 2015c).*

*Europe will not be the same the following day. Already Europe is not the same after July 12...the dialog has started about the future of Europe and its prospects. The articles of leaders, of Hollande, the interventions of Renzi, but also the upcoming elections in the countries of the South, point to expectations and potential...It is a constant*

*struggle between forces of progress and conservatism...a struggle that has already began, in which the peoples will play a determinant role. The forces of conservatism achieved a Pyrrhic victory against the Greek government, the Greek people, against Greece. But they know very well they lost something extremely precious the hegemony, the sense of hegemony in European and global public opinion (Tsipras 2015b).*

These quotations from different speeches all aim to show the *displacement* of the gains from the agreement from the *present, economic* field of negotiations to the *future* field of *movements and politics*. For party members, this line of reasoning resonated to a degree, as they could feel that the whole exercise was not a pointless effort, but an actually fruitful process. Coating it in the Gramscian language of hegemony—a mainstay in Syriza discourse—added further gravity to the notion that something particularly important had happened.

Even if Syriza had not won the bailout negotiations, it had won the ideological debate. A pan-European movement of solidarity had developed, which would plant the seeds for the eventual victory of the party's ideas. This was not about the immediate agreement, but about the medium- and long-term gains for the entire European left. There was not much to support this. Public opinion in the creditor countries remained as hostile to Greek bailouts as ever<sup>86</sup> and (to the best of my knowledge) no creditor solidarity movement beyond Syriza's sister parties has emerged.<sup>87</sup> The most important ally of Syriza, Podemos, was actually at best unaffected and at worst hamstrung in the elections the following winter in Spain, as Syriza's failure

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<sup>86</sup> For example, in a German poll conducted just before the third bailout agreement, 68 percent of Germans thought the Greek government was responsible for the chaos and the percentage of those who wanted Greece to remain in the Eurozone was unaltered, while 49 percent were against the third bailout versus forty-six in favor (Infratest Dimap 2015).

<sup>87</sup> In fact, the opposite seems to have happened. Tsipras recently advised Di Maio, in his negotiations about Italy's deficit with the EU, to "give in quickly or it will be worse later" (Fubini 2018).



seemed to break its rapid ascent in the polls. However, to Syriza members looking for anything to make sense of the new bailout and looking through the lens of demonstrations and movements, this narrative could provide some reassurance that not all was in vain.

Another instance of displacement was a reverse shift from the supranational negotiation losses to the domestic front gains. Tsipras and his circle reminded the party again that the most important struggle was not abroad, but within the country. A two-pronged strategy emphasized the fight against the political and economic establishments of Greece, the “old” parties and the Greek oligarchs. This came naturally to the party, which had always thought most of the impediments to its program were domestic. Foreigners were perceived to be mostly rational and would eventually strike a sensible deal. But domestically, the two intertwined establishments were akin to a vindictive hydra lashing out at any challenge to the corrupt and clientelistic patterns of Greek crony capitalism. Disciplining the oligarchs, making them pay their taxes, fixing the biased media landscape, cutting loose the links between media, banks and politics, those were Syriza’s new and critical objectives. Once again, Tsipras in parliament:

*And I would like to remind everyone, I am one of those politicians who never believed that foreigners are responsible for all the evils in this place. The great opponent, and I speak in class terms, for the forces of progress and the Left lies within the walls [of the country] ...They are the forces of oligarchy, cartels, state-fed businessmen, the forces of corruption and interweaving interests, of generalized tax evasion, those forces that were favored in the previous years by bailout policies, but also by those who ruled this land. Let us not forget this (Tsipras 2015a).*

*Our primary responsibility now is to go into battle to counterbalance the negative consequences from this deal...Within the country, this*

*battle does not take the shape of only parliamentary conflict, but also conflict with small and big established interests, mainly with those we name as “organized and interweaving oligarchy” that until today unfortunately did not pay during the crisis years (Tsipras 2015d). ”*

The Greek “διαπλοκή” [“classe dirigente”]—the nexus of politicians, businessmen, banks and media that managed the country—thus became the focus of Syriza’s discourse. If the bailout could not be avoided, they should at least contribute more to it. Syriza targeted the shipping magnates and their constitutionally enshrined tax relief along with the public contractors, whose strong connections with politicians, loose bank credit and ownership of media afforded them the possibility to overprice projects and charge excessive tolls and fees, raking in great profits. The robber barons of Greek society would now be reined in.

While this might have been a more achievable promise, not much radical action eventually came out of this either. The constitutional provision that allows the shipping industries to pay no tax has not been challenged. An effort to set new rules for media licenses, organize a tender and achieve transparency in media ownership was blocked by the Supreme Court and Syriza settled for a much less ambitious media legal framework. Bank boards were eventually changed and the old guard that had allowed loose credit to domestic businessmen and parties was indeed removed. However, their replacements were appointed by the new “Fund for Financial Stability”, the vehicle for bank recapitalization entirely controlled by Europeans, with the prime objective of containing risk rather than growing the Greek economy. As for public procurement, the profiteering of contractors via tolls and artificially highly-priced contracts remains intact, as anyone taking a casual trip on a Greek highway can attest.

Again, it was not the tangible measures against the Greek oligarchy that mattered, as much as the symbolic opposition and juxtaposition of the party to it. On the one hand, those who brought the crisis to Greece by their greedy and illicit ways. On the other hand, a wave of

moral and democratic renewal spearheaded by Syriza and Tsipras. The new agreement might not have been ideal, but its real benefits were in allowing Syriza to move forward with its domestic cleansing act, the actual battle that mattered rather than the sideshow of European negotiations, at least according to its leadership.

### *Conspiracy*

Syriza not only shifted the goalposts for the accounting of the gains from the new agreement, but also retrospectively revised the counterfactual losses that the country avoided by signing it. It did so in *conspiratorial* terms, the second theme of its rhetoric. Delving briefly into literary territory, we can say Syriza used a standard trope in crime novels and comic books—which I will call the “babushka plot”. In this twist, the villain’s ostensible plan—which the reader has up to a certain point in the narrative understood as the main threat—proves to be a mere distraction to lure the protagonist away from the actual (but concealed) objective of the villain. Like a babushka doll, one plot is nested within another.

Such was the case here, as government members started spinning a different narrative about the bailout, treating it as a lesser evil, subordinated to the actual conspiracy that was the “Schäuble plan”. The “Schäuble plan” was the threat of the German finance minister to have Greece leave the Euro and provide it some funding to do so (Spiegel 2011). Syriza drummed this (fairly well-known, by that point) preference of Schäuble up to the status of a plan that was actually the hidden, but real, goal of the creditors and “neoliberal Europe”. In an absurd reversal, signing the bailout became not a capitulation to European demands, but almost an *act of resistance*, as it averted the success of the conspiracy of Europe’s innermost conservative circle surrounding Schäuble. This was a rhetoric move aiming to exploit Schäuble’s status as

the Greek bogeyman, a figure universally hated almost across the entire Greek spectrum.<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, it suited Tsipras' aims, as it discredited those advocating for Eurozone exit within the party. They might have been well-intentioned, but ultimately useful idiots facilitating the *actual* neoliberal plot for Europe and Greece. Again, some of the many Tsipras quotes on the issue:

*[L]eaving the Eurozone was not a project that concerned me or Francois Hollande or Vladimir Putin. It was Wolfgang Schäuble's project; a project which failed, especially thanks to the capability of cooperation between the progressive governments of the European Union, as we were able to convince Angela Merkel to move against this project (Tsipras, 2016).*

*Greece's exit from the Euro was not a progressive plan...despite the fact this plan was a choice, the persistent choice of a minority within our party; which acted as a party within a party. This plan, we all know by now was not a left plan...neither was it a radical plan...neither was it a progressive plan, it was simply the plan of the finance minister of Germany, the plan of Wolfgang Schäuble! [applause] (Tsipras 2016).*

Thus, the catastrophe that the party had tried to avoid for six months was replaced with the hidden but actual catastrophe of the conspiracy of Wolfgang Schäuble.<sup>89</sup> Syriza did not innovate in using the Schäuble threat, which PASOK had also warned against before, accusing its detractors and Syriza in particular that they were serving the desires of the conservative

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<sup>88</sup> In Public Issue polls measuring the popularity of foreign officials, Schäuble consistently scored the highest and most durable aggregate negative opinion, typically above 80 percent (Public Issue 2015b).

<sup>89</sup> One finds strong parallels with Hirschman's rhetoric of perversity, a common trope in politics, where proceeding with some action is bound to cause the exact opposite consequence of what was intended (Hirschman 1991). The title of this sub-chapter is obviously a homage to Hirschman's book.

German with their opposition to the bailout. However, it became a much more concrete and repeated element in Syriza's discourse. Furthermore, it was ironic that Syriza and Tsipras resorted to this conspiratorial rhetoric, using it against their own party, to justify, unlike PASOK, moving forward with a bailout while having been elected on the premise of doing precisely the opposite. It was doubly ironic because it was used to silence internal dissent, coming from a party that was heralded as the bringer of democratic deepening and renewal.

The second type of conspiratorial thinking propagated by Syriza leadership was the "left parenthesis" scenario (Tsipras 2015a, 2015b). The idea was that the local establishment had set up a trap for Syriza, forcing them to negotiate the closure of the previous program and adopt measures inimical to the party's profile and ideology. As Syriza was forced to take unpopular measures, public disappointment and outrage would grow, party fissures would appear and European demands would prove unbearable for the party. The Syriza-ANEL government would collapse after only a few months, becoming a "left parenthesis", long before it could disturb the domestic establishment. This was not conspiratorial in the general diagnosis of the pitfalls that could befall a left government, but in the exaggeration of the motives of its opponents, their cohesion and their capacity to execute. In any case, the truthfulness of the conspiracy did not matter as much as the frame of mind transmitted to members: a state of siege and enemies lurking everywhere—at home and abroad—forcing Syriza's leadership to navigate a minefield while being goaded in the wrong direction by its own misguided comrades. Now was not the time for criticism, now was the time to rally the troops to withstand the onslaught.

### *Reversal*

Now that the conspiracies of the conservative priesthood of Europe and the domestic establishment were revealed, what logically followed was a reversal of means and ends.

Members had to be reminded not only of the dangers that lurked, but to reorder their priorities. Until now, undoing the bailout and cleansing domestic politics had been the objective of the Syriza government. The instruments were power and government. Now that the bailout objective had come undone, means and goals switched places—in the rhetoric of Syriza, the survival of the government of the left became the strategic goal, while the bailout faded into the background, a necessary sacrifice to ensure that the old political regime did not stage a comeback. The conspiracy theme interacted with the reversal theme. Since the goal of their opponents was to bring the government down, the ends of the government should be survival.

What to do with that government became unfocused in Syriza's discourse. The innate moral advantage possessed by a leftist government, a vague promise of redistribution within the bailout confines, the development of the European solidarity movement, dealing with corruption and crony capitalism were some of the implicit and explicit goals, but for the most part displacement onto the future reigned. Survive and see. The whole enterprise was coated in abstraction, symbolism and metaphors, as the ends became unmoored from the means. Again, Tsipras speaking:

*[T]he Greek people ended up as a prison fugitive, who tries to escape from austerity and supervision, fights to escape, but in the end they arrest him at the time of his escape and put him in a more asphyxiating cell...some say, the way to escape is to jump in the moat with crocodiles or on the electrified fence. No, this is not the way to escape; it is the way to commit suicide. The only way to leave isolation is to create a huge and international solidarity movement for the Greek people's liberation from the austerity chains (Tsipras 2015c)".*

*I will not try to dress up the situation, presenting a virtual "success story" like my predecessors. I want to tell you though that despite the*

*difficulties and fiscal constraints, in this country a lot of things can be done that will serve the interests of the social majority and will restore the injured pride of Greek society (Tsipras 2015a).*

Phrases and metaphors like “prison fugitives”, “we bled so the Greek people did not [have to]” (Tsipras 2015c), “restoring the injured pride”, “dignity” proliferated government discourse. The perspective of government officials transcended the tangible objective of ending austerity, adopting instead a kind of chiliastic frame that shifted the benefits of the left government into the realm of moral sentiments. The hard and protracted negotiations, the 17 hours Tsipras stayed locked and besieged by European leaders,<sup>90</sup> the outbreak of a European solidarity tweetstorm—all these things contributed to a moral and symbolic victory. In the end, the difference was not one of ends, but one of moral procedure toward the bailouts. The logic was foremost that dignity and pride had been restored by this negotiating exercise and as long as the government of the left remained, nothing would again be surrendered without a battle.

Nothing can stand on entirely symbolic grounds though. This mostly abstract, metaphoric discourse was complemented by the promise of “the left’s bailout”, of redistribution within those constraints. It was vague by necessity, as the bailouts were not some headline target of deficit or debt, like the fiscal constraints of the Maastricht Treaty. They were a specific program of mostly liberalizing and austerity-based reforms, most of which inevitably affected inequality, poverty and run counter to redistributive efforts. The dismantling of collective bargaining, the wage and pension cuts, the liberalization of professions and fire-sale privatizations of assets could not be compatible with any radical left program. Even if attempted, the Troika would veto most of the policies the government would want to achieve, like reinstituting the minimum wage, nationalizations or hiring for the civil service. Yet this is

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<sup>90</sup> Tsipras repeated ad nauseam his feat of only yielding to the third bailout after enduring 17 hours of negotiations, exhausting the limits of his mandate, personal endurance, and the patience of his interlocutors.

what Syriza hinted at, promising that it could tilt the burden of fiscal austerity toward the richest and most privileged. At minimum, some of the most extreme and hurtful measures could perhaps be averted by the actions of the government of the left.

In some cases, this was not entirely imaginary, but was always located on the margins. A five-euro fee for admission at hospitals was abandoned and health care access was again entirely free for the poorest. Corporate taxes and rent taxes were raised, averting what would have been another lopsided carrying of the tax burden by the workers. Public television, the object of the previous contentious episode, was re-opened. But for the most part, the direction of policy was unchanged. VAT was increased for hundreds of products by 10 percentage points, the regressive effect of this act alone enough to undo all other sources of relief. Payroll taxes were raised and trained professionals were required to pay fixed sums as tax contributions to combat wide tax evasion, treating rich and established doctors, lawyers and engineers the same as young and inexperienced ones.

Adding to all this, one should ponder how much a different, counterfactual government would have differed from Syriza. Considering that the most savage parts of deficit cutting had already taken place and that world economic conditions were improving, it is not impossible to assume that Syriza had the good fortune to sail under more favorable winds than previous governments. If any loosening of austerity took place, it is very possible that it happened simply because of timing rather than some impressive negotiating effort. Yet it is quite possible to imagine that austerity even deepened due to the cost of the failed negotiations and the imposition of capital controls. Overall, it is difficult to adjudicate how much Syriza might have affected austerity on the margins. But it cannot be disputed that the general direction of the program remained the same.



## *Radical legacies*

For all those three rhetorical elements to work on members, it helped to summon historical examples of radicals and revolutionaries that found themselves in similar conundrums and took painful decisions, as Tsipras did with the bailout. The left's history was a rich garden from which species of retreat could be harvested. Tsipras and others started summoning the spirit of Lenin. In Tsipras' own words, in an interview two weeks after the new deal:

*You know, compromises are an element of political reality and revolutionary tactics. It was Lenin who first spoke about compromises...to explain that compromises are part of revolutionary tactics...we faced a blackmailing dilemma...either a compromise, difficult, painful compromise or an economic catastrophe...that would not be manageable for Greece and the Left" (Tsipras 2015c).*

Several other prominent members argued that the new agreement was "Syriza's Brest–Litovsk", referring to the historical compromise of Lenin's Bolsheviks that ceded parts of Russian soil to end the First World War and guarantee the survival of the nascent communist regime (To Vima 2015; Nedos 2015; Kostopoulos 2015). Brest–Litovsk signified a painful compromise that nevertheless allowed the government to maintain its grip on power. The Bolsheviks made a foreign compromise to assure domestic survival and domination and perhaps the bailout treaty could be viewed in similar terms. Interacting with displacement, Syriza was arguing that foreign space had been given to afford it better odds in the domestic front. Of course, what the party overlooked is that, unlike the Bolsheviks, it was not trading titular control of some territory for deeper control of another. It was trading away its own internal power for funding—which it would supposedly use against the establishment.

Furthermore, while the Bolshevik example was repeatedly used as a template of successful compromise, the domestic example of the civil war was used as a negative case. The failure of the KKE to make a compromise with the Greek bourgeois parties had led two generations of leftists to ruin, as it had initiated the civil war that ended in defeat, exile and prison. Tsipras posed the rhetorical question, pondering the hypothetical dialog between government and people in the frame of the historical KKE failure:

*[We would say:] “Greek people, our expectation of ending the bailout was falsified, so we should let the bankrupt political establishment that led us to the bailout manage this reality, who during the previous period did not negotiate, but conspired with the Troika to impose politics on you”...And the Greek people would respond, “no I do not want them, I want you to try” and we would reply “no, we will not try”...What would this mean practically? That we would abstain from the next elections to avoid the risk that the Greek people vote for us because they want us? Like the KKE did in 1946?” (Tsipras 2015c)*

Much of the government’s rhetoric elements are encapsulated in this quote. The displacement to the domestic side, the rupture with the party establishment of Greece, the conspiratorial idea that the previous governments did not negotiate but willingly handed victories to the Troika, the reversal of goals and means as survival in government becomes the goal of Syriza, a direct result of popular will and finally the reminder that not compromising could lead to another historic defeat.

The more the government retreated from its programmatic promises, the more it dug into revolutionary references and the left’s history and mythology to justify its actions to its party and core base. They outflanked their critique from the left, invoking examples that came not from recent, arguably tamer dilemmas faced by the left in the contemporary globalized

world, but from the deepest, most intense and heroic revolutionary moments of the left abroad and domestically. This impulse made sense, since leadership knew that members perceived what had preceded the Syriza government as a full-blown insurrection from below, one whose crowning achievement was the referendum that democratically sealed the rebellious path of the country. To undo that, frames of reference from the revolutionary tradition of the left were required to justify the retreat.<sup>91</sup> The temporary setback was not about integration into the anodyne, mainstream left of Europe, but a tactical retreat that sustained the ability of the party to carry out its revolutionary task. If Lenin had compromised, then objections against their compromise were infantile leftism. In this sense, the urgency and unorthodox means with which Tsipras essentially led the internal opposition to party exit were necessary methods to avoid a dangerous deviation that would lead the left astray.

Summing up, the government and Tsipras particularly used a variety of types of arguments to make the case for continuity with the bailout regime, with *radical non-action*. These ideas and arguments to a degree helped halt the outflow from the party and quell its centrifugal tendencies, at least until the elections, aided by the promises of a convention and the possibility of a better future. The main theme of this episode—non-contentiousness—can then be explained also partially by the rhetorical success of Syriza in persuasion, and the displacement and reversal of developments to make them seem as something different from what they were. Most of the Eurosceptic hardliners were ultimately not convinced, but the framing and references of this rhetoric possibly also stalled their actions and persuaded them that shared understandings with the leadership could perhaps help steer it in a different direction. More ambivalent members hesitated and remained passive, swayed by the

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<sup>91</sup> This also made sense as Syriza's members perceived themselves as being on the radical left wing. In the internal party poll held after the departure of its left-wing faction and before its second convention, they overwhelmingly placed themselves on the far left end of the left-right spectrum. 47.1 percent situated themselves on "1" and 32.4 percent on "2" of the 1–10 scale (Klavdianos 2016).

leadership's argumentation. Overall, results speak for themselves. After the July deal with the creditors, the leadership seemed on the brink of losing the party. By September, it had secured whatever remained of it and led it successfully to elections, vindicating its strategy, at least for the next four years.

### ***Conclusions***

In Gabriel Garzia Marquez's novel *A Hundred Years of Solitude*, Remedios the beauty, a local of Macondo—the fictional village within which the narrative takes place—is presented as the most beautiful and pure inhabitant of the village. Despite her apparent naivety and goodness, she accidentally causes the death of the men who cannot but be lured by her beauty. A glaring contradiction between the moral character of Remedios and the consequences of her actions develops, contrasting purity of intent with vileness of events. Marquez resolves this conundrum by having Remedios simply ascend into the heavens one clear afternoon. In a metaphor for the inability of purity and beauty to exist in war-ravaged, conflictual and cynical Latin America, Marquez uses escapism as the magical resolution for his hero.

In the episode recounted here, Syriza members, like Remedios, mentally escaped into the metaphorical heavens. Their good intentions of ending the bailout and the reality of the new agreement led to intense cognitive dissonance. The episode's theme, empty streets and rearguard parliamentary fights, was explained as voters, members and protesters grappled with their conscience, weighing whether the deal was maybe not as bad as it seemed, whether it was a necessary compromise and whether even worse, hidden outcomes had been avoided. Hardliners became dazed, hesitant, uncoordinated, and unable to deal with the sudden transformation of the party and the aggressive rhetoric justifying it. They developed bipolar tendencies, providing supply to the government, while striking down every one of its legislative

initiatives. They threatened to leave as they dreamed of challenging the leadership and retaking the party. In the end, their inaction cost them dearly.

For ordinary members and voters, trusting the leadership and detesting the mainstream parties, it was worth pondering whether there was still something worth fighting for. They collectively escaped into a world where the party was not actually defeated, but merely retreated temporarily, where grievous injuries into the party's program were but a scratch. Possible future gains, the mirage of European solidarity, getting rid of the political establishment, were goals still worth pursuing. They had been defeated, but they would regroup and launch another offensive once they took a pause to collect their thoughts and emotions.

The third bailout was not followed by wrath and fury like the others, but by reflection and introspection. A critical mass of supporters—people who had mobilized in previous instances—was now mentally unavailable, exhausted, frustrated, and hesitant to return to the streets. Hope—once the dominant feeling, expressing the emotional state of 29 percent of poll respondents in February 2015—had returned to the fringes by October, felt by only 7 percent of the electorate. Instead, 23 percent felt indignation surge again and an equal number felt disappointment, both up from February, from 15 and 12 percent, respectively (Public Issue 2017). Many protesters were occupied either with the fighting inside Syriza, watching the spectacle of this fight through media, or retreating to their privacy, disappointed at the outcome of their struggle.

This chapter has again stressed the importance of timing and how developments crucially depended on the sequence of actions. Weil's quote at the beginning of this chapter resonates at two levels. First, before the episode's start, at the European level, Tsipras' government behaved amateurishly, carrying out an uncoordinated, hopeless fight without any concern for a feasible alternative plan. By the time it had completed the referendum, any hope for a radically different agreement had flown away. The second level was inside Syriza. The

internal opposition oscillated, hesitated and lost the battle of timing to Tsipras and his circle. Syriza did not prepare for the possibility that the creditors did not intend to pursue a reasonable deal and its internal opposition did not prepare for the party's non-preparedness.

What followed was a whirlwind of emotional turbulence and furious escapism as the party and opposition tried to rationalize the events of the previous months. The combination of the effectiveness of the leadership's rhetoric, the doubts of the internal opposition, the despair and defeat of the official opposition all played into Tsipras' hands, leading into the most institutionally turbulent—but contentiously smooth—passage of a bailout over the entire five years. As the party was won and the streets quieted, the road to restoring the parliamentary majority of Syriza through the September elections and bringing the bailout era to an end lay open.

## 10 September 2015 – Equilibrium Restored

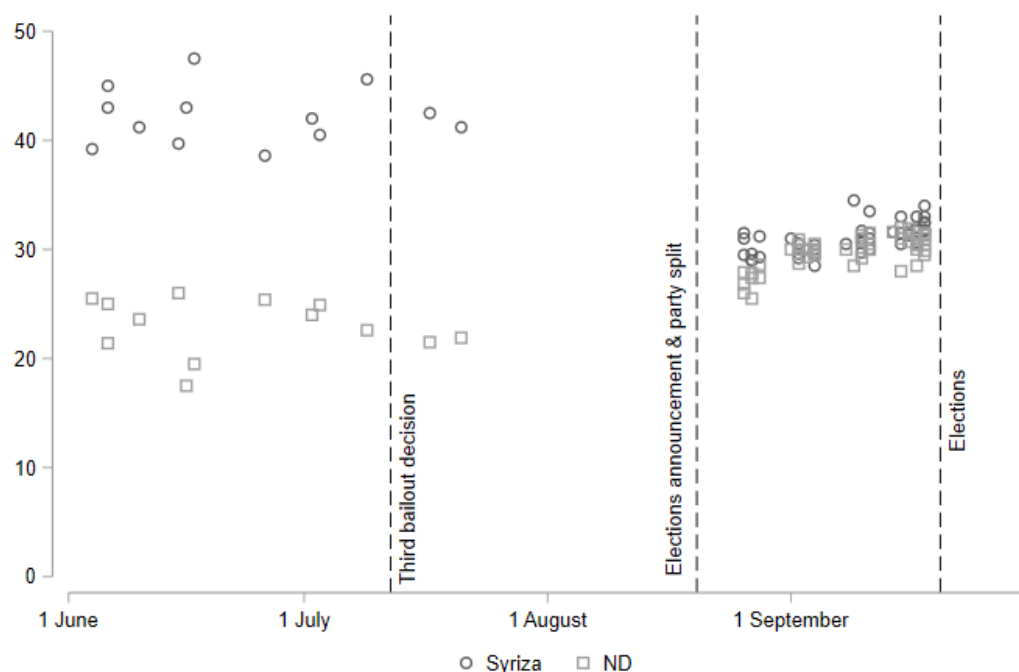
### *Introduction*

In the theatrical play allegory, there were two overlapping plots, the contentious and institutional one. The elections of September 2015 brought the play and all its plot lines to their close. They constitute the event that brought the drama full circle and pointed to its final resolution. The main mechanism moving the plot along throughout the episodes was the introduction of the bailout, a “super issue” incorporating economic, political and nationalist dimensions affixed around the bailout treaty signed by the Greek PASOK government, European creditors and the IMF. The bailout restructured and reformed Greek politics as it changed political conflict, an opportunity seized by challenger parties, particularly Syriza, during that period. This new structure of bailout-centered conflict was undone after Syriza’s capitulation and the party’s decision to use its other assets, particularly the popularity of its leadership, to “unbundle” the bailout, focus on some of its more political and domestic dimensions and otherwise restore the political space to its former state. After the September 2015 elections, political conflict and dimensionality would return to familiar forms and concurrently, contention, already at lower levels since 2012, subsided further and did not re-emerge as an impactful factor in Greek politics, at least not in terms of the bailout issue.

In the previous chapter, I showed how Tsipras and his circle maintained control over the party, deploying an alluring rhetorical mix and manipulating party processes to their advantage. However, while the party might have been persuaded by the appeals to the history of the left and mechanisms of cognitive dissonance that resolved thorny contradictions between actions and ideas, what of the voters? Why did so many of them persist with Syriza despite the party’s spectacular turn around in the timespan of a few months, if not a week (5–12 July)? Puzzlement about this result is further justified by poll predictions indicating that Syriza was

facing a precipitous vote loss after it signed the new bailout agreement with Greece’s creditors and was on par with New Democracy (see *Figure 10-1*).

*Figure 10-1: Polls in the summer of 2015 for Syriza and New Democracy*



Source: Compiled by author

The “left parenthesis” threat was in danger of becoming a reality—threatening Syriza with a PASOK-type electoral descent. Not only had the party signed a new bailout in direct contradiction to its pre-electoral pledges, but also its negotiation tactics had resulted in capital controls, which had an adverse impact on the economy. Almost half of its previous voters appeared uncertain about supporting the party in the coming September elections.<sup>92</sup> However, Syriza overcame its struggles and retained a core of its supporters, allowing it to return to power with a hefty seven percent victory margin. At the same time, its splinter party failed even to reach the electoral representation threshold of three percent.<sup>93</sup> The central theme of this epilogue are the elections of 2015, their relation to the last and previous episodes, and the

<sup>92</sup> In six polls by ProRata, an average of only 48 percent of Syriza January voters stated a definite intention to vote for the party again.

<sup>93</sup> The complete results of the 2015 September elections are provided in Appendix *Table A2*.



surprising electoral resilience of Syriza. I start with the election's general themes—analyzed through our core sentence analysis—and afterwards proceed more specifically into Syriza's strategy and appeal, which may help explain its surprising victory.

### ***The September 2015 elections and punctuated equilibrium: Coming full circle***

Returning to the core sentence analysis of the 2015 elections, the political space during this election campaign was significantly changed compared to the previous three. Syriza's main conflict with New Democracy laid on the political dimension at this point, rather than on the bailout issue. The latter dimension in this election was inhabited only by the remaining radical left parties, the KKE and LAE, the Syriza splinter party.

This completes the pattern of punctuated equilibrium (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Baumgartner et al. 2009) of political conflict described at the beginning of the thesis. As described by Baumgartner, a punctuated equilibrium is a pattern of general stability punctuated by sudden and radical change. In our case, a relatively “frozen” party system, set in place with minor deviations after 1981, was massively disrupted by the introduction of the bailout. As noted, the punctuation point was the May 2012 elections, after which the party system—under the pull of the electoral law—showed signs of re-stabilization, a process that ended with the September 2015 elections and the return to previous modes of political competition. As in the elections of 2007 and 2009, the September 2015 elections were mostly structured around issues of competence and the degree of state intervention, welfare and taxation, but within the bailout framework, a distorted replica of the pre-crisis political space. In contrast, the intervening elections had been structured around opposition to the bailout or support for the country's Eurozone trajectory. In this regard, the punctuated equilibrium pattern was completed, as the punctuation that perturbed the system was almost resolved.

There is further subtlety to the changes manifested in this election, uncovered by perusing the core sentence data recoded specifically for the Greek context (see issue description in *Table 3-7* and chapter 8). The data, presenting a comparison of the four elections by themes is presented in *Table 10-1*.

*Table 10-1: Issue shares of core sentences for the four Greek crisis electoral campaigns*

Aggregate Issue	Sub-Issues	05/2012	06/2012	01/2015	09/2015
Bailout	Bailout (general)	7.2	11.5	10.9	8.1
	Eurozone	7.8	15.2	11.0	5.5
	Bailout negotiation	3.2	6.6	3.0	6.8
	Bailout policies/terms	9.7	8.3	10.3	4.1
Bailout (overall)		27.9	41.6	35.2	24.5
Political issues	Old/new & past records	3.2	0.1	3.5	8.0
	Valence/ability	1.6	1.5	1.1	7.4
	Personal Attacks	5.3	5.5	5.8	2.3
	Corruption	1.9	1.9	2.2	7.3
	Political reforms	6.6	0.9	1.6	1.5
	Democracy (general)	0.5	0.4	2.3	1.6
Political issues (overall)		19.1	10.3	16.5	28.1
Government formation	Coalition speculation & government stability	20.3	13.0	18.4	21.0
Economic Issues	Economic Lib./Welfare	11.2	10.9	12.2	10.9
Cultural Issues	Cult. Lib./Nationalism	8.6	11.6	4.8	4.2
Campaign style	Campaign	6.0	8.3	5.6	5.9
Others	Others	7.0	4.6	7.4	5.4
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N		1,673	1,607	1,814	2,125

Source: POLCON.

What are the differences to the last three crisis elections? There are three noticeable trends. First, the gradual decline of the bailout issues and an internal shift concerning what they talk about when parties refer to it. Second, the noticeable rise in the frequency of political renewal discourse as an issue: the dichotomy between the “old” establishment and the “new”

government of the left was a central theme of this election, detached from the bailout super issue at this point. Third, the personalization trend, mostly related to valence that I am going to explore in more detail for the rest of the chapter.

*The bailout's relative decline and internal composition shift*

The salience of the bailout issue did diminish in this election, particularly when compared to the two previous ones. We found 24.5 percent of all sentences to be about the third bailout, compared to an average of 34.9 percent in the three prior elections, when it was the main theme. However, who spoke about it (and how) had changed in important ways.

The anti-bailout discourse shifted from the center of the political space to its fringes. Almost 39 percent of the core sentences talking about the bailout in principle or in the abstract originated from Popular Unity, Syriza's internal opposition-turned-party that monotonically denounced the bailout and Syriza for having signed it.<sup>94</sup> Another 17 percent came from the KKE, also along the same lines.<sup>95</sup> Syriza and New Democracy held a combined 76 percent share of this category in the January 2015 election, while they only held 27 percent in September.

Overall, unlike in previous elections, only the (remaining) radical left raised its banner against the bailout in principle. Popular Unity tried to copy the Syriza strategy of the past elections, but this time it did not work. Syriza and ANEL comprised 20 percent of the sentences discussing the bailout in general, mostly positive this time around, trying to justify their choice to sign the third memorandum. The rest of the parties (PASOK, New Democracy, Potami)

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<sup>94</sup> Popular Unity/LAE is also the party that heavily dominates the "democracy" issue category, alluding to sentences that denounce the bailout as inherently violating the democratic organization of the country, particularly in reference to what LAE saw as the violation of the referendum mandate.

<sup>95</sup> Press bias should be noted in this instance: The anti-Syriza newspapers we used for coding unduly publicized LAE, partially in an effort to harm Syriza, partially because LAE was, formally, the third biggest parliamentary force. LAE captured 10.2 percent of all core sentences, way above its electoral share of 2.9 percent. Without this coverage bias, the bailout issue would have shrunk further.

made up the remaining 25 percent, also mostly supporting the need for a new bailout in principle. Similarly, the Eurozone expulsion threat vanished from mainstream discourse as Syriza capitulated, reduced to only 5.5 percent of core sentences—again, mostly attributed to LAE and KKE (53 percent). It is the first time since 2012 and the rise of Syriza that we see what I termed in chapter 4, as a “full consensus” on the bailout issue between government and opposition.

The second change in the bailout theme was therefore the shift of conflict toward familiar patterns of valence and policy competition among the mainstream parties but within the bailout context. When the two main parties at this point, New Democracy and Syriza, mentioned the bailout, 46 percent of their sentences corresponded to conflict over competence in handling the bailout (past and future), its implementation, and the ability to extract concessions in negotiations with creditors (i.e., the “bailout negotiation” sub-issue). Rather than speak of the bailout as a binary issue that one is either for or against, for the first time the “new” mainstream competed on bailout management.

The second most discussed theme between the two mainstream parties (25 percent of their bailout-related sentences) involved conflict about specific bailout policies and the mix of taxing and spending cutting. The newfound consensus on the bailout shifted the discussion from its existential, constitutional foundations to more routine political patterns: what is the right policy mix toward a consensus goal and who is best to deliver this? Also in this way, political conflict had returned to pre-crisis patterns, to a competition about valence and competence upon a common policy consensus frame.

### *The rise of political renewal discourse*

While the bailout retained its salience—albeit not its polarization potential—that of another issue rose spectacularly. Talk about the political system, the political establishment,

and the political “class” almost doubled in this election compared to the average in the three previous ones. Political renewal became the dominant topic, capturing 28 percent of all our recorded core sentences, this time partially detached from its association to austerity. The link between “old” and the bailout remained, but only with reference to the past. There are three dominant themes within this discourse.

First, there was the juxtaposition of “new” and “old” parties, a somewhat abstract categorization of the party system that was strongly propagated by Syriza and Potami (40 and 30 percent respectively of all relevant sentences). Their rhetoric focused on the “oldness” of the political establishment of PASOK and New Democracy. These were mostly abstract references to “oldness” without much clarification, implying the bundling together of their responsibility for the economic crash, corruption, clientelism and other ills of the Greek political system and the need to give new politicians and a younger generation a chance to take the helm. Turning to Tsipras once more, he hammered the message home at his final pre-election rally, held in Syntagma square:

*[B]ecause on Sunday we have ahead of us yet another crucial referendum. The dilemma in the ballot is whether we will let Greece go back...whether the old regime that governed the country for 40 years, indebting the country, will return, or whether we will move forward, continuing the effort to liberate our people from the shackles of the past...so also in this referendum on Sunday, as in July, our people will exclaim the great “NO”. No to the return of the bankrupt old political system. No to the restoration of the regime of oligarchy, interweaving interests (“diaploki”), and corruption. No to the older than old, New Democracy of Mr. Meimarakis and of the political personnel that threw*

*Greece onto the rocks and is lurking, waiting to return to avenge itself*  
(Tsipras 2015e).

Syriza almost exclusively focused on the juxtaposition between “new” and “old”, between themselves and the corrupt political personnel trying to glide back into power on the wings of the bitterness and apathy caused by Syriza’s European adventures. It is also interesting that Tsipras framed the election as a “referendum”, trying to polarize it on the basis of his own agenda, completely discarding the more radical alternatives he had embraced only months prior. The echoes of populism were much stronger in this election than in previous ones, in the effort to create an establishment/regime vs the people dichotomy, one in which every multi-choice ballot was reduced to a binary referendum.

The second strand of the political renewal discourse is one invoked more by the opposition (particularly New Democracy), focusing on the trustworthiness, honesty and particularly competence of Syriza and its leader, Tsipras. New Democracy would repeat *ad nauseum* that what Syriza had delivered was something entirely different from what it had promised and that their awkward and clumsy efforts to bring about change cost the Greece dearly, as capital controls injured the country further. It honed in on Syriza’s clumsiness, comparing its tenure to that of an apprentice wizard, revealing Tsipras’ gross ignorance about the functions and operations of the European Union, leading the country down a quixotic adventure that damaged its economy, reputation and credibility. Almost 45 percent of cases in this category were recorded as belonging to New Democracy, at a distance to the second Potami, at 18 percent.

New Democracy’s insistence to frame Tsipras as someone both dishonest and incompetent was also a tactical choice to undermine what they considered to be Syriza’s strongest remaining asset, its leader. As I shall try to show, trust in Tsipras was a defining cornerstone of Syriza supporters’ political behavior and New Democracy tried to undermine

that. It is debatable whether the party's tactics were correct; on the one hand, Tsipras was the strong card of Syriza and discrediting him would have benefited New Democracy. On the other hand, centering the discussion around valence issues and the person of the prime minister did not favor New Democracy if one assumed that Tsipras' high standing was a fixed parameter of public opinion rather than something changeable.

The last major dimension of this rhetoric of political renewal were the explicit charges of political corruption, sustaining the clientelistic system of the past decades and cozying up to the domestic economic oligarchy. Syriza and ANEL capture the bulk of the sentences focusing on corruption (56 percent), interweaving interests with the oligarchy (67 percent) while Syriza and Potami together share 62 percent of the sentences critiquing clientelism. This category can be thought of as a rhetorical effort to substantiate what the abstract "old" and "new" differed in, as is also evident on the Tsipras quote above; the new parties' ability and willingness to handle domestic affairs fairly and transparently, rather than through a labyrinthine closed network, exchanging privileges and favors at the expense of the public.

Finally, even if nominally not a sub-issue of democratic and political renewal, also the core sentences concerning government formation corroborate the emergence of this new type of conflict. Unlike the 2012 elections, where Syriza's potential coalition of the left was the main topic of discussion, the dead-end in which the parliament found itself after the Syriza split and the perceived drop of Syriza in the polls, rekindled discussions about a grand coalition. Thirty-three percent of government formation sentences are queries about this outcome. New Democracy is overwhelmingly positive about such a perspective, with a ratio of eleven to one positive to negative sentences, while Syriza is absolutely negative (all coded sentences are negative).

Tactically, New Democracy wanted to downplay the old–new division of parties, while Syriza wanted to emphasize it. As much as possible, Syriza sought to keep its distance and

image separate from the “old” establishment. Even if the substantive policy issue that separated the two parties was now essentially overcome, it vehemently denied that there was any prospect of further cooperation. New Democracy instead, emphasized that it wanted stability (60 percent of all sentences on the sub-issue) and was willing to tolerate forming a government with Syriza, despite the party’s flaws, if parliamentary arithmetic did not work otherwise.

Overall, the surge in discourse over political renewal can be summed up as follows. On the one side stood Syriza and the other “new” parties, ANEL and Potami, inexperienced but “clean”, not tainted by the old regime’s faults. Ranged on the other side were the parties of the “old” establishment—by now mostly New Democracy. The party downplayed its past record and contribution to the current situation, emphasizing instead its managerialist credentials on the economy and European affairs and consensual attitude toward the reality of the new bailout.

#### *Personalization and valence*

The final trend of the 2015 elections was increasing personalization of the election—more precisely, increased valence competition about bailout and negotiations management. Compared to previous elections, political conflict was much more direct,<sup>96</sup> personalized and centralized on the leaders, particularly Tsipras.

I have already noted how valence, competence on handling the bailout negotiations, and implementation and competence in government in general were major themes within the main issues of the election. Overall, aggregating various categories, 16.4 percent of core sentences concerned the competence and qualities of party leaders. It is the second most frequent category of sentences, trailing by one percentage point speculation about the new government.

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<sup>96</sup> This is also corroborated by the higher incidence of actor–actor sentences in this election: 37.8 percent of core sentences were of the actor–actor type, compared to an average of 30.8 percent in the last three elections.



Personalization could also be conceived as the frequency of appearance of a particular person in the electoral campaign as an object of political conflict. How often do parties bring up a specific individual when they bring up other parties as opposed to non-individualized references to other parties? As detailed in the chapter 3, one way to measure this is to compare the share of actor–actor sentences (i.e., sentences where one party directly refers/praises/accuses another party of something) and see how often they invoke individuals when they refer to that party (i.e., how often individuals are the object of an actor–actor sentence). The results are shown in *Figure 10-2*, ranked for each for each leader and election combination in our database, for values above a minimum threshold of 1 percent of the sentences.

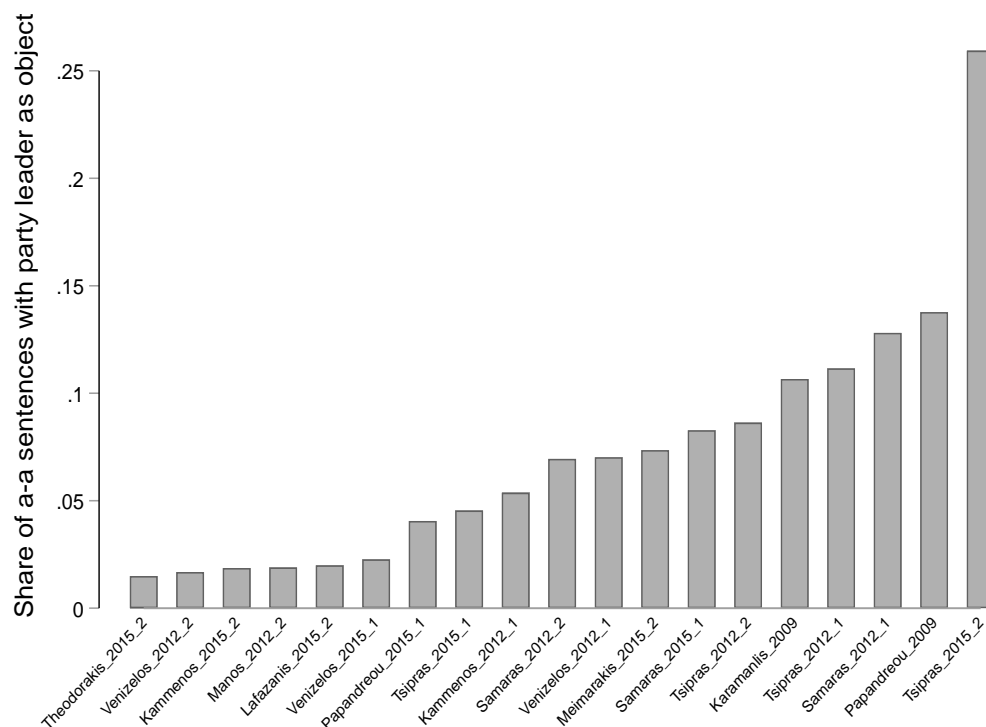
The results are evidence of the special character of the September 2015 elections—in all other campaigns coded references to any leaders did not surpass 15 percent of actor–actor sentences, with Papandreou in the 2009 election reaching the pre-2015 maximum of 13.7 percent of actor–actor sentences. In 2015, Tsipras is the object of 25.9 percent of mentions by other parties, almost doubling that performance.<sup>97</sup> Tsipras became a focal point of the September 2015 elections, concentrating the ire of the other parties in a way no other personality had done before. The September campaign was heavily focused on the competence and integrity of Tsipras compared to his opponents. The opposition tried to frame him as the person responsible for what it billed as the unprecedented fiasco of the previous months. Out of all those sentences referring to Tsipras, a bit more than half (52 percent) fell under the categories of valence or bailout negotiation capability, mostly on the accusation that his “negotiation” turned out to be a chaotic failure. Additionally, if one measures the share of sentences with Tsipras as an object versus the total number of sentences with an individual as

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<sup>97</sup> It should be noted that references toward individuals are predominantly negative in Greek political conflict, with an average of 90 percent of individual-focused sentences carrying a negative connotation. Ninety-seven percent of the core sentences mentioning Tsipras in this election were negative, slightly higher than average.

an object—namely, a measurement of the concentration of personalization (Aelst, Sheafer, and Stanyer 2012)—the results are similarly lopsided: 54 percent of all core sentences with a person as an object in this election refer to Tsipras. In our entire core sentence database for all elections since 2005 and all Southern European countries, no other figure ever receives significantly more than a third of the share of individualized sentences dedicated to Tsipras in this election.

*Figure 10-2: Share of actor–actor sentences with party leaders as objects*



Notes: On the x axis, each observation is a leader-year, i.e. the share of a-a- sentences with the specific party leader as an object at a specific election, marked by the year. Source: POLCON

The 2015 elections are therefore another aberration of the Greek supernova, as the issue space shrank dramatically and normal policy and ideological dimensions, such as economic and cultural liberalism diminished in relative salience, to give place to an intense competition and judgment on whether Tsipras was competent and trustworthy to move forward with the new, third bailout task. While the bailout issue was still present, it was now more focused around the capability of different leaders, and particularly Tsipras, to oversee the new bailout. I argue that this trend toward valence competition and personalization is key in understanding

how the bailout period came to a close and the issue was finally overcome. I therefore try next to expand on the theoretical framework provided in chapter 4. Then, I try to explain why this personalization trend—concurrent with an increased focus on issues of political renewal—became so salient in those elections, provide some additional demand-side evidence for its importance and argue how it finally helped cement into place a new bipolar equilibrium, ending the bailout punctuation.

### *Leadership in semi-sovereign democracies*

Why personalized attacks on Tsipras and issues of valence and competence did then become such a salient theme in this campaign? I return briefly to the theoretical chapter, to argue that this is a logical outcome of the semi-sovereign regime described there. As I outlined in chapter 4, the bailout had created fundamental problems in the agent-principal relations between the government and the electorate, as the latter could not be aware if the former was negotiating in good faith and competently (i.e., the problems I labeled “hidden agenda” and “obscured competence”). Within a context of economic crisis—where economic policy sovereignty had been lost irrevocably, and those types of uncertainty dominated—I argue we should have expected that political competition would become increasingly personalistic and, by default, decreasingly programmatic.

It is important to dwell slightly on the “irrevocability” part in the last sentence. In fall of 2015, contention was waning (see chapter 9) and essentially no street resistance to the third bailout emerged, after the Syriza leadership had successfully quelled an internal uprising and the parliamentary spectacle absorbed the country’s attention. Institutionally, the main development was that Syriza had been defeated in its struggle with creditors and was forced to sign a bailout the party itself did not believe in, but felt compelled to see through. The capitulation of Syriza and the near-extinction of contentious politics, as well as the impotence

displayed by Syriza's splintering dissident factions, essentially signaled the inglorious defeat of the anti-bailout rebellion.

In sum, there were no longer any significant parties on the anti-bailout side after Syriza had made its peace with the creditors and agreed to oversee the last bailout. Annulling the bailout would require coordinating action around the Syriza splinter parties, going through a similar process as in the past five years, with no guarantee of better success. The fatalistic acceptance by Syriza's internal opposition of the party's turn—their resignation without a serious fight—had dented any prospects of the anti-bailout faction returning to the forefront of politics. The policy window for more radical choices had essentially been shut.

The defeat of Syriza's tactics by July 2015 had thus rendered the presence of the Troika—and its close supervision of Greek policy—irrevocable, at least in the near future. As described, Greece had inescapably become a *semi-sovereign* country, able to direct some of its affairs and policies, but having to jointly consult and co-decide with creditors' representatives on fiscal issues (and much more besides). In turn, this finality—with the help of Syriza<sup>98</sup> and New Democracy's change of discourse—helped direct attention toward the aforementioned issues of uncertainty in the future government–Troika relationship. As the new bailout seemed inescapable, the two parties, as I showed, tried to shift the contest into the grounds of valence, competence, and negotiating skill.

Both uncertainty problems were prominent in bailout-era Greece, as many voters believed that successive governments handled the job of negotiating incompetently and were certain better solutions could have been found even within the bailout framework (see chapter 8). Troika–government negotiations were opaque and filtered through a heavily partisan press

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<sup>98</sup> I have to stress that the emergence of valence-based competition is not some accidental or neutral outcome, a game-theoretic rational choice dilemma faced by the voters, emerging only due to the structure of the semi-sovereign regime. Syriza tried hard to frame the competition thus, its main motto being “we vote for prime minister”, plastering Tsipras' face in almost all of its posters and advertisements.

and media that most Greeks found untrustworthy.<sup>99</sup> It was unclear what the Troika demanded and whether concessions were made under genuine creditor pressure, because the government was simply being incompetent in negotiations or because it pursued a hidden agenda while blaming the Troika for it. Blame attribution, as expected by the literature on supranational involvement in domestic policy had become much harder and complicated (Kosmidis 2013; Hellwig and Samuels 2007).

This allowed the challenger parties to blame the 2010–2015 governments for both types of offenses: “obscured competence” and “hidden agenda”. Syriza, when in opposition, claimed that their “neoliberal” ideology was in line with the Troika’s and they instrumentally advanced some of their preferences, such as labor reform and privatization, under the guise of “Troika demands”. Samaras, Papandreou and Papademos, they claimed, sneaked their own agenda through and laid the blame on the creditors, escaping responsibility and eventually, electoral accountability. Additionally, Syriza would argue that the New Democracy government did not behave strategically so that the creditors could be forced to concede more lenient terms to Greek policy-makers. The party maintained that a more steadfast and determined government could extract additional concessions from the creditors, who would be terrified at the prospect of Greece crashing out of the Eurozone and would therefore “blink” and scrap extensive austerity. New Democracy and PASOK had not utilized the country’s leverage properly, becoming poor stewards of the state’s affairs. If a confrontational tactic, such as the one espoused by Syriza had been followed, it would have exposed the program’s failure and

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<sup>99</sup> Specifically, the poll company Public Issue before the January 2015 elections reported that 13 percent trusted newspapers versus 80 percent who did not and 13 percent trusted television versus 76 percent who did not. Radio and internet on the other hand fare better, with radio enjoying the trust of 48% and distrust of 36 percent while the internet was trusted by 42 percent and distrusted by 32 percent (Mavris 2014). For media systems in the South more generally compared to other regions, see Hallin and Mancini (2004).

galvanize domestic and international public opinion, exerting pressure on the creditors. To quote Tsipras again:

*[A]ll this proves that Mr. Samaras neither wants nor can negotiate [successfully]. Exactly because he has become identified with the bailout and disaster. Because he himself deeply believes in the disastrous policies of internal devaluation...we commit to take a series of measures that will relieve society and rejuvenate the domestic market and demand, measures that are unnegotiable and inside the European rules framework (To Vima 2014b).*

Syriza could therefore support, as seen in previous chapters, that staying in the Eurozone was possible while concurrently annulling the bailout measures, as many of the unpopular policies were not a creditor demand anyway and even if they were, the fiercer negotiation approach of a Syriza government would force creditor concessions. The public tended to believe the veracity of this claim and, coupled with fraying trust in the “old” political system, those accusations shaped the perception of many Greeks that the bailout could be significantly improved if only someone more competent and honest held the reins.

The link to personalization is now relatively straightforward. Normally, the government’s preferences are a decisive factor in policy design and the electorate looks for a government whose preferences align with its own—namely, a form of programmatic congruence linking party and voters (Kitschelt 2000). In the semi-sovereign regime, the Greek government no longer could guarantee that programmatic preferences would translate into reality as long as the Troika wielded its veto. Since the Troika demanded unpopular and costly policies and had significant leverage, many voters perceived the government’s role as one where it reduced the Troika’s damaging policy proposals to a minimum and extracted as many concessions from the Troika as possible.

Within this framework, certain trends in electoral behavior emerged: bonds of trust toward a candidate should be expected to become a potential solution to the described uncertainty issues. Even if they did not necessarily trust anyone significantly, the voters were nevertheless induced, by the structure of the semi-sovereign regime, to make a relative selection of the most able and trustworthy agent to handle a negotiation-based policy regime rather than a top-down policy implementation one. Therefore, the person leading the government—and his ability to handle the Troika’s demands to the best interest of the electorate—became key issues of the electoral campaign, as evidenced seen in the core sentence analysis.

The crucial presumption for this mechanism to be activated of course is that the semi-sovereign regime is acknowledged and at least implicitly accepted as irrevocable, at least in the run-up to the elections. In the previous elections, the premise of an exit from semi-sovereignty, promoted by Syriza and other challengers, structured political competition and suppressed issues of competence within the bailout framework. In the September 2015 elections, for the reasons outlined above, the semi-sovereign regime was finally de facto accepted as having lasting power and none of the main pillars of the Greek political system was disputing the fundamental direction of the country.

### ***Demand-side evidence of changing electoral themes***

#### *Data and operationalization*

The trend toward personalized, valence-centered conflict is further supported by demand-side data showing that the probability to revote for Syriza was higher for voters who placed a high importance in the person of the prime minister and the negotiating capability of Syriza compared to other characteristics. Using individual-level data from pre-electoral polls

(ProRata 2015c), the main one conducted on 11 September 2015, with a sample of 1,000 voters, I explore how such attitudes contributed to voting (or re-voting) for Syriza.

I use logistic regression models, where the dependent variable is the odds of voting for Syriza. I try to discern what the critical voting criteria were for Syriza voters. The independent variables therefore represent attitudes toward the election and the voting criteria of voters. In one of the polls, respondents were asked what their voting criterion for this election was, allowing for several non-exclusive answers.<sup>100</sup>

According to their answers, I produce three independent variables. The first one is a proxy for the effect of leadership and is a dichotomous variable that takes a value of 1 when the respondent says that her sympathy or antipathy toward Alexis Tsipras was an important voting criterion and 0 if not. I chose this particular poll and variable to at least try to overcome a thorny problem of endogeneity in personalization studies, where it is impossible to test for the effects of leadership due to confounding with party identification, i.e. because party voters overwhelmingly tend to like their party leader (Garzia 2011; Holmberg and Oscarsson 2013).

As party identification is identical to liking the party leader, it becomes difficult to know whether people like the leader because they vote for the party or vote for the party because they like the leader. This is also true of Syriza voters, among which it is extremely rare to profess antipathy or even indifference or ambivalence toward Tsipras. I try to at least partially circumvent this problem by using this variable as a proxy for leadership effects, as it asks voters directly whether sympathy for the leader is the vote choice criterion, rather than trying to infer it is so by looking at the correlation between sympathy toward the leader and party choice.

Additionally, this choice is beneficial because when cross-tabulating Syriza voters and attitudes toward Tsipras, the set of those who would vote for Syriza and yet dislike Tsipras is

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<sup>100</sup> For a comprehensive overview of the operationalization of variables and descriptive statistics, see Appendix Tables A2 and A3.



almost nil. This is not the case for this variable, because, even if it is still lopsided, approximately 20 percent of Syriza voters do not consider sympathy toward Tsipras an important voting criterion.

The second independent variable is a binary variable I call “retrospective government assessment” that takes a value of 1 when a respondent says that punishing or rewarding the government for its work during the past nine months was an important voting criterion for him. The third one is a prospective variable, taking a value of 1 when a respondent says that an important voting criterion is the prospects (negative or positive) he imagines for a different/alternative government. Furthermore, I create an ordinal variable capturing the voters’ assessment of the negotiations’ outcome. The original answers include five levels, of very positive, positive, negative, very negative, neither good nor bad and an additional “do not know” level. This variable is reduced to a tripartite one, grouping people who express a positive and very positive opinion of the negotiations, those who express a “neither good nor bad” with those who do not express an opinion and finally those giving a negative and very negative assessment. This category reduction is performed so all categories contain a sizable portion of the sample, as praise of the agreement was relatively scarce.<sup>101</sup> I also include a variable representing whether someone had voted for Syriza in January, as the best available proxy for partisan identity, and the interactions between this variable and sympathy for Alexis Tsipras as a voting criterion. I also incorporate another interaction between the variable capturing retrospective assessment of the government as an important voting criterion and the variable corresponding to the evaluation of the negotiations.

Finally, I include demographic controls, on gender, age, education and residence in Athens or Thessalonica, as well as some variables signifying whether a respondent is a

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<sup>101</sup> The exact descriptive statistics can be viewed in Appendix *Table A3*.

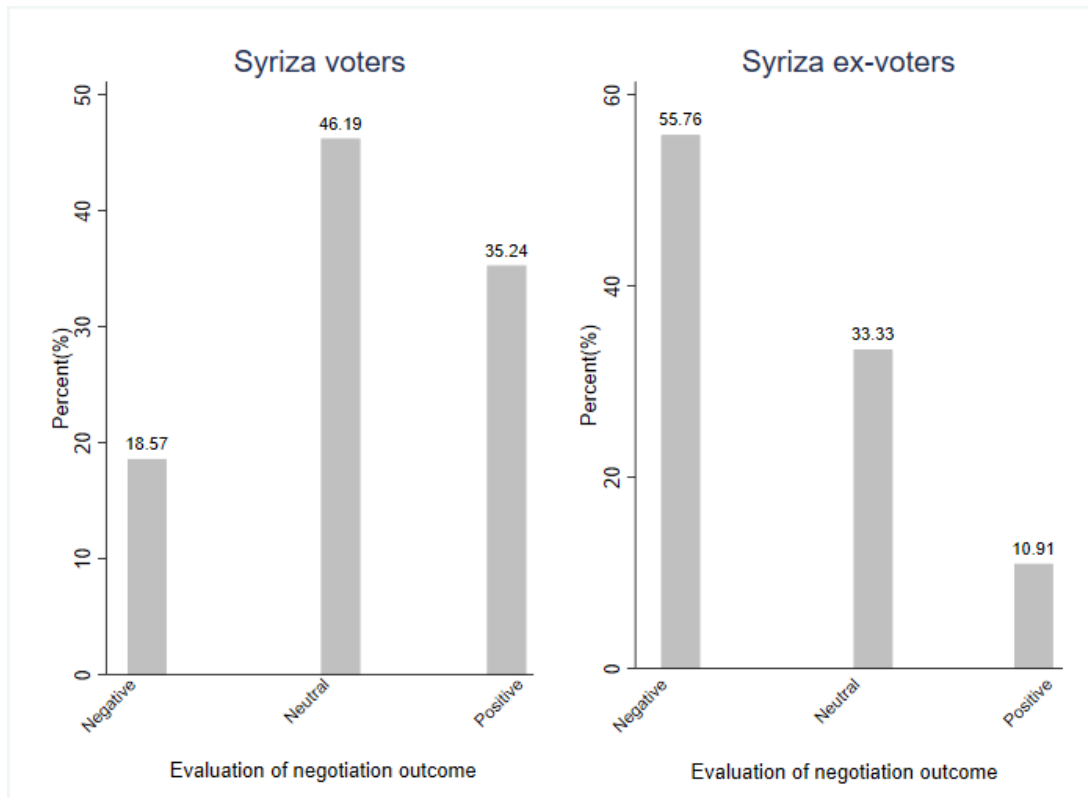
housewife, unemployed, employed in the public/private sector of which only the first one, the only statistically significant one, is included in the table presented here for parsimony.

### *Results*

Before analyzing the regression results, just by looking at the distribution of responses, we should expect that attitudes toward Tsipras and the evaluation of the negotiations should play an important role in voter assessment. Comparing respondents who intend to revote for Syriza to the rest, reveals contrasting attitudes. Sympathy toward Alexis Tsipras motivated 80 percent of Syriza voters, while only 51 percent of ex-Syriza voters and 43 percent of non-Syriza voters in general chose this as one of their main voting criteria. This corroborates the idea that in the 2015 election, those who considered Tsipras to be an important attraction were more than likely to revote for the party, making Tsipras the “glue” that kept the party going in this most difficult phase.

The same applies to the negotiation evaluation. As shown in *Figure 10-3*, Syriza voters in September, compared to those who did not vote for the party again, tended to *not* pass judgment or be ambivalent about the negotiation outcome, rather than overwhelmingly positive.

Figure 10-3: Differences on the perceptions of Syriza voters and ex-Syriza voters on the outcome of the negotiations with EU partners



Source: (ProRata 2015b).

Partisanship lenses did not necessarily blind Syriza supporters, who did not automatically consider the third bailout to be a positive outcome. Instead, they demonstrated some ambivalence toward it, maybe expecting to see what came out of it, being unable to assess what it really meant at that time. The elections after all were called *before* any of the measures were actually implemented, when Tsipras still insisted there was room for an “alternative” program of social justice within the bailout confines. Given this very confusing context, the importance voters attach to Tsipras as a leader and trust toward him could be bridging the gulf between their ambivalence or limited knowledge about the new agreement and their vote preference. When faced with a salient but complicated evaluation that they could not decipher, it is therefore possible that they simply chose to delegate responsibility to a figure they trusted, in line with what was theorized before.

The regression results are presented in *Table 10-2*, while the operationalization is further explained in the appendix. The results indicate that there are various significant variables correlating with the vote for Syriza. The strongest effect is, expectedly, the effect of the previous Syriza vote (i.e., whether one had voted for the party nine months before). But the most revealing finding is the strength of the association between sympathy for Tsipras as a voting criterion, the assessment of the negotiations and predicted vote for Syriza.

In addition, it is evident that the evaluation of the outcome of the negotiations is also mediated and amplified by whether holding the government accountable for its actions, as measured by the “retrospective assessment of the government” variable, was an important voting criterion for someone. Among those who did not consider retrospective punishment as an important criterion for their electoral calculus, an assessed negative outcome of the negotiations was still significant, lowering the odds of voting for Syriza. However, the difference is amplified for those who considered retrospective punishment/reward as fundamental voting criteria. For this category, the difference between a negative assessment and a neutral/positive one raised the probability of voting for Syriza considerably.

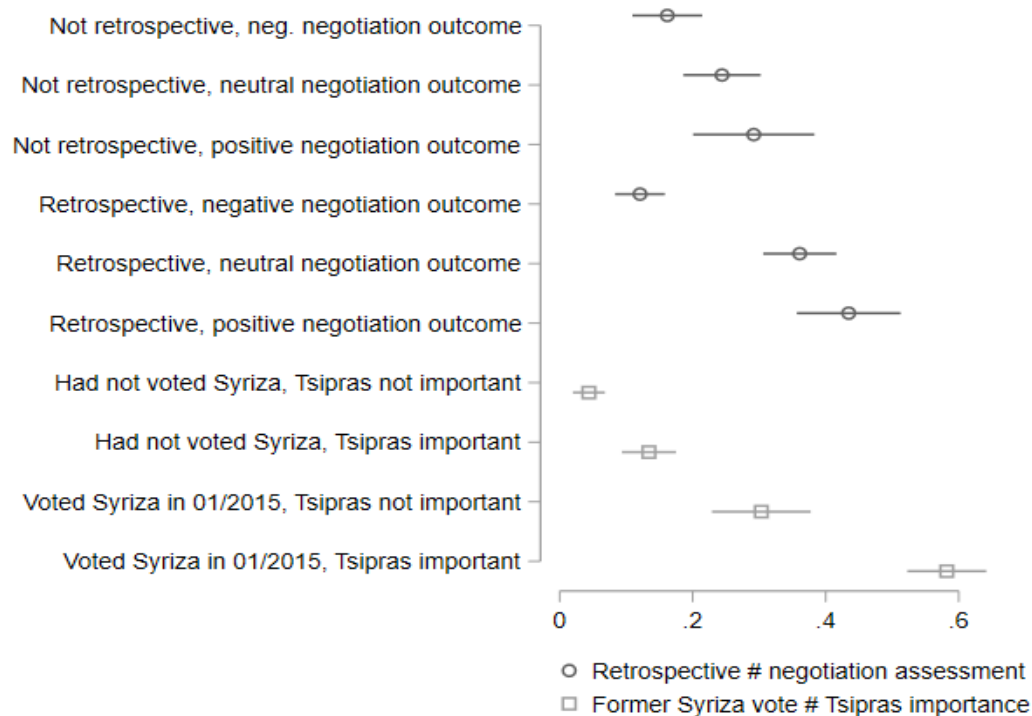
*Table 10-2: Logistic regression results for the effects of negotiations and leadership on the probability of voting for Syriza*

DV: Log-odds of probability of voting for Syriza	Coefficient	Standard Error
Evaluation of negotiations (ref. neutral)		
Negative evaluation	-0.75*	(0.36)
Positive evaluation	0.38	(0.44)
Ex-Syriza voter in January	2.53***	(0.38)
Sympathy toward AT as important voting criterion, never voted Syriza	1.32***	(0.37)
Sympathy toward AT as important voting criterion, had voted Syriza	3.98***	(0.35)
Retrospective gov. assessment as important voting criterion	0.90**	(0.32)
Retrospective gov. assessment # negotiations (positive evaluation)	1.40***	(0.36)
Retrospective gov. assessment # negotiations (negative evaluation)	-1.20**	(0.35)
Prospects of a different government as important voting criterion	-0.57*	(0.22)
Controls		
Residence in Athens/Thessaloniki	0.08	(0.20)
Gender (Female=1)	-0.20	(0.22)
Education (ref. secondary)		
Primary education	-0.17	(0.25)
Tertiary education	-0.14	(0.24)
Age (ref. group 35–64)		
Age group: 18–34	0.16	(0.31)
Age group: 65+	0.22	(0.23)
Occupational status: Housewife	0.71*	(0.31)
Constant	-3.02***	(0.42)
Observations	1,000	
McFadden's pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	0.41	

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses in third column. \*\*\*p<0.001, \*\*p<0.01, \*p<0.05 +p<0.1.

In *Figure 10-4*, I draw the predicted probabilities of voting for Syriza based on the two interactions I included in the regression. Someone who had not voted for Syriza before was more likely to vote for the party now, from virtually nil to approximately 13 percent if she considered sympathy toward Tsipras as an important voting criterion.

Figure 10-4: Likelihood of voting for Syriza by voting criteria and past vote



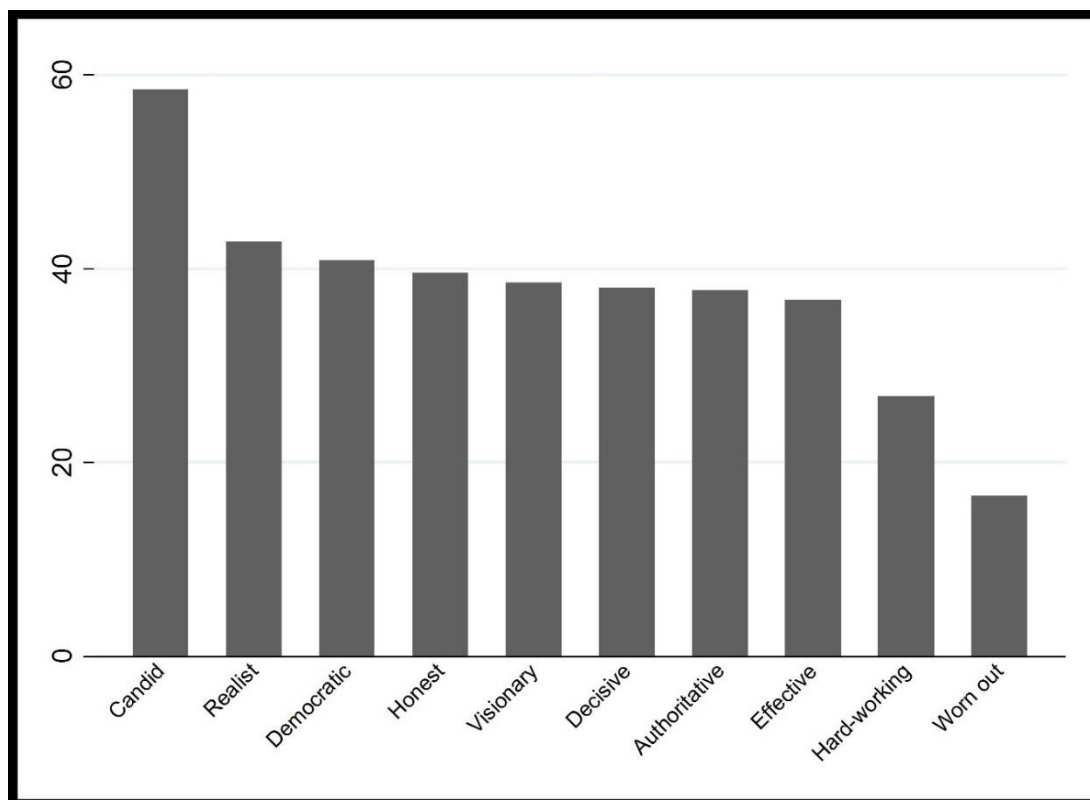
Notes: Probability of voting for Syriza, measured on the x axis, is based on the regression interactions between voting criteria: retrospective assessment of the government as an important voting criterion, negotiation evaluation and the interaction of sympathy for Tsipras as a voting criterion and past vote for Syriza. Source: Prorata.

But most significantly, among those who had voted for Syriza in January, predicted probability to revote for the party jumps from 30 to 58 percent if one considered her attitude toward Tsipras a vote criterion. In both *Table 10-2* and *Figure 10-4*, the Tsipras effect is evident for retaining votes.

This poll-based evidence may not be perfect, but it does corroborate the spike in personalization observed in the supply-side data. A major line that separated vote for Syriza, and especially *re*-voting for Syriza was the attitude toward the leadership and its stance during the previous months. The negotiations, the evaluation of the skills of the prime minister who led them and the attitude toward him emerge as significant voting criteria that helped hold the party together.

A final piece of evidence corroborating the particular effect of the multi-level policy regime on leadership in this election is the gulf between former Syriza voters who would revote for the party and those who would not in assessing Tsipras’ qualities (see *Figure 10-5*). There, I depict the difference in positive evaluations between those two categories of voters over various qualities of Alexis Tsipras’ personality. It is indicative that the largest gulf between Syriza loyalists and defectors appears on the assessment of Tsipras’ candidness [“ειλικρίνεια”].

*Figure 10-5: Differences in positive evaluations of Tsipras' qualities between Syriza voters and ex-Syriza voters: percentages.*



Notes: The source of the variation is diversity in the opinions of switchers from Syriza—those who re-voted for Syriza almost unanimously attribute positive values to Tsipras in almost all categories. Source: (ProRata 2015c)

While they also doubt all his qualities, the biggest rift is not about Tsipras’ visionary character or his charismatic image, but in the disproportionate distrust by defectors of his truthfulness. This chimes with the idea that a significant that motivated voters in this semi-sovereign regime were issues of trust—those who did not trust that Tsipras was saying the truth

to them anymore, defected from the government camp. The issues of uncertainty described above reared their heads again for this group, while they did not for the loyalist Syriza voters. The main differences between the two groups therefore were their perceptions of trust and their belief in the capabilities but also truthfulness of the leader. Once the semi-sovereign regime was embedded, owing to Syriza's capitulation, Syriza used its remaining asset; namely, that a majority of its voters—confused, in disarray and pessimistic—clung on to Tsipras as a reliable, truthful and trusted agent to represent them in the future.

### *The opposition's inefficiency*

Another question that flows from the results discussion is why was the opposition unable to generate the same amount of trust/sympathy as Tsipras? The reasons for this have been sketched in the previous chapters, concerning their record during the first bailouts and the discrediting of the political establishment. Syriza's rise to power was based on a double wave of anti-austerity struggle and of backlash against the political class. As I showed, political renewal became a huge focus of the electoral campaign, the election's framing by Syriza being that of a battle between the "old" and "new", where Meimarakis, the opposition leader, symbolized the old. New Democracy gained little by focusing the debate on him. Twenty years older than Tsipras, he was also a founding member of New Democracy youth in 1974. Moreover, he had been a high-profile minister in the pre-crisis New Democracy government and speaker of the parliament throughout the Samaras government in the 2012–2015 period. He was thus a token representative of the careerist political class and establishment that people blamed for the crisis.

Additionally, Syriza voters were more focused on personnel issues to begin with. Predominantly, they followed their leader in his assessment that even if the struggle against the bailout had been lost, kicking out the bums was still worth pursuing. In the polls, whereas most



respondents credited Syriza's anti-bailout position for its recent victories, a significant fraction, 37 percent, reaching a 57 percent majority among Syriza voters (ProRata 2015c), was crediting the fact that Syriza was uninvolved in past governments and its personnel not associated with what was increasingly seen as the tainted old establishment. Additionally, Meimarakis was only a transitional leader, not having been elected to his position but appointed by the outgoing party president, Samaras, to handle the process of electing a new leadership at some point in the fall. Not expecting that the unraveling of Syriza would happen so fast, New Democracy's leadership was once again stuck in limbo, a fact exploited by its opponent. Once again taking advantage of the timing, Tsipras forced a contest against an opponent that lacked the authority of a properly elected opposition candidate.

### ***Conclusions***

How did the bailout period come to an end? How was the polarization caused by the bailout super issue finally resolved? How did Syriza avoid the fate of PASOK? The main theme and answer was trust. The last two chapters have provided a tentative outline of the events that signaled the conclusion of the bailout-centered political conflict, or at least its transformation and eventual subordination to a more banal and common type of conflict. The process had three steps; first, the demobilization in the streets, the defanging of the wider anti-bailout movement and the concurrent institutionalization of it under the wings of Syriza prior to 2015. Second, the institutional capitulation of Syriza to the creditors, as they credibly threatened to let Greece explore economically in the summer of 2015. Finally, the third step, narrated over the last two chapters, was the successful co-optation of the party and voters by Syriza leadership to follow it in its new path. Utilizing persuasion within the party and exploiting the credibility, trust and sympathy of its core voters toward its leader, Syriza, which had emerged as a challenger due

to the anti-bailout movement, was the party that eventually contributed to overcoming the bailout-centered division.

An obvious factor in bringing about the successful completion of this plan was timing—the successful navigation of contingency. As we saw in the previous chapter, the manipulation of the timeline of the processes by Syriza leadership managed to quell unrest within the party and discredit the internal opposition which appeared hapless and indecisive. The early call for elections, immediately after the vote by parliament of the last pieces needed for the new bailout was another such successful choice. Exploiting the confusion and ambivalence over the new agreement, the general sympathy for Tsipras and the opposition's transitory status, Syriza managed to hold on to its previous electoral margin despite unfavorable circumstances, the obvious discrepancy between programmatic promises and actual deeds and the upward ascent of economic pessimism. The rapid pace of events and helplessness of internal and external opposition helped solidify the impression that the semi-sovereign status of Greece was standing on firm foundations for the first time.

The irrevocability of this regime in the short-term helped turn this election into a second “referendum” on three main issues: 1) the events and aptitude of Syriza on the preceding negotiations; 2) trust and belief in its competence in future ones and; 3) the question of whether the “old”, managerial but corrupt parties should rule over the “new”, inexperienced, somewhat clumsy but “clean” ones. As this frame came to dominate the September 2015 elections, the time of contention around the fundamentals of the bailout was over and that Syriza would go on to win handily. Standing on only the one plank of the anti-bailout super issue proved enough for Syriza, as a contest with the discredited personnel that ruled the country for the past forty years proved to be no contest at all at that point. The prospect of renewal and of at least giving Syriza a chance dominated over any frustration about unfulfilled promises. A part of the party electorate defected, but in an election where the stakes were now significantly lower, so did

the electorate of all other parties, preferring to stay at home. The punctuation that disrupted the Greek party system in 2012 had now run its course and a new, tentative equilibrium was reached and the restoration of a bipolar system had begun.

Syriza's splinter did not even clear the parliamentary threshold of three percent, rendering any vision of resurrecting Syriza's trajectory stillborn. Comparing the trajectory of PASOK to the one of Syriza, one can sense how the party-system collapse of 2012 was not an automatic product of the bailout policies or process—or a linear outcome stemming from programmatic de-alignment (K. Roberts 2013)—but required significant failings and errors on the part of the protagonists. The skillful use of timing by Syriza, the rapid call for elections, its rejection of any grand coalition scenarios, its escapist yet persuasive rhetoric and its effort to clearly demarcate itself in juxtaposition to New Democracy on policy but also on entirely symbolic grounds (“new” and “old”) were the concrete opposite of PASOK's “responsible” choices.

I have tried to argue throughout the thesis that nothing was pre-determined. There is a counterfactual universe perhaps in which Syriza's electoral share was pillaged by the new anti-bailout challengers, much like had happened with PASOK. There is another counterfactual, though, in which PASOK used rhetoric, timing and events to its advantage, calling for early elections earlier—as its Portuguese peers had—and in which its leader did not vacillate at the most critical juncture and did not cede power and initiative to a technocratic government and the opposition. There is a limit in this imaginative exercise, as PASOK could not have been as credible in its role of the accuser of the political class as Syriza ever was, due to its long tenure in government. Nevertheless, my narrative and the evidence provided suggest that even until the technocratic government, different choices, by PASOK, New Democracy and their European peers, could have averted the party-system implosion. In this scenario, perhaps the Greek traditional party system would not have been a magnificently exploding supernova, but

a small star whose social-democratic nucleus would be suffering a slow death among dozen others. But that is what made the case a tragic one; the insistence of the protagonists to march headlong onto their doom, as limited information and understanding, persistent habits, erroneous frames and judgments blinded them to an existing, but not taken, alternative path.

## 11 Conclusions

In concluding the thesis, I want to delineate what the study of the Greek case has contributed to our knowledge and the literature on social movements and party-system collapse. The first obvious contribution is the study of a deviant case, of interest in itself. Additionally however, the thesis has helped make advances on our understanding of processes of party-system change and the role of social movements in it. It has done so by providing a more sophisticated framework for studying the interactions of social movements and institutional politics, providing an anatomy of a party-system's collapse by tracing the process that led there and systematically separating the factors, of structure and agency, that contributed to it.

The examination of the case itself—through the coding of contentious episodes and the complementary data on protest events—revealed the existence of a gigantic protest wave in Greece, already noted by Kanellopoulos et al. (2017), Diani and Kousi (2014) and other scholars which emerged in 2010, washed over the country between 2010 and 2012 and dissipated shortly after the 2012 elections. The thesis helped contribute to the literature on the Greek social movements during the bailout age first by treating the entire period as a whole and creating a periodization of its various phases or episodes, something that was only partially done before (Diani and Kousis 2014; Kanellopoulos et al. 2017; Kotronaki 2018) or was not done, as the various episodes were treated in isolation (Psimitis 2011; Sotirakopoulos and Sotiropoulos 2013; Petropoulos 2014; Simiti 2015; Aslanidis and Marantzidis 2016). While Kanellopoulos et al. (2017) mostly analyzed the protest wave's phases in terms of changes in its network structure and claims, the thesis, deploying quantitative evidence produced by a novel way of recounting contentious episodes, separates the different phases according to the composition of actors, claims and types of interaction with the government.

This protest wave had three distinct peaks. During the first, around May 2010, it was composed of a politically narrow, but numerically populous, coalition of unions, parties and habitual protesters, mostly contesting austerity and other economic issues (Psimitis 2011; Rüdig and Karyotis 2013; Kanellopoulos et al. 2017). Once the government had to amend and expand its austerity measures however, in the second stage of this protest wave in June 2011 inspired by the Indignados movement in Spain, protest grew further quantitatively but also, and most importantly, qualitatively. As we track with protest event analysis, both the frequency of protest increased and claims of protesters changed, towards claims with more clear political content. Protesters and organizations who did not habitually appear in the streets descended onto the squares across parliament in record numbers. The claims against austerity were enhanced with wide and diffused grievances against the political class who led the country down the crisis path and who enacted the unpopular bailout policies, as already noted by several scholars (Sotirakopoulos and Sotiropoulos 2013; Petropoulos 2014; Simiti 2015; Aslanidis and Marantzidis 2016; Kanellopoulos et al. 2017).

The persistence of the economic crisis and government's inability to address economic malaise, instead continuously digging itself a deeper hole, fueled the wrath of protesters. The thesis enhanced the understanding of this second peak of protest by providing an account, apart from the large street protests, of the emergence of a disruptive repertoire of protests—targeting politicians personally in private events and disrupting state operations and government appearances—proliferated in 2011. While this had been recorded somewhat informally in journalistic accounts (Palaiologos 2015), it was a critical element of the summer of the Greek Indignados and of the general arc of the story, as it signaled the culpability of mainstream parties for continued crisis, adding a political dimension to the grievances against the bailout, and causing increased friction and hesitation throughout the ranks of government and its supporting MPs.

The protest wave reached its climax in the third stage (in late October 2011) when the growing gulf in perceptions and expectations between challengers and government caused sharply contradictory reactions to yet another government–Troika agreement, triggering what I have called, borrowing from Sewell (1996), a “historical event”. This is a somewhat novel interpretation of the Greek drama, as the parade events are mostly ignored in the literature, or considered an epiphenomenon of the main institutional drama, which was the feuding within PASOK and between the government and the Troika. However, the thesis, by tracking the process through which elites, starting at the summer of the GI and continuing throughout the third episode, were feeling increasingly threatened, fearful and reluctant, creates the necessary link between the parade protests and the breakdown and transformation that soon afterwards occurred in typical patterns of government-opposition and government- MPs interactions. The dissertation therefore traces carefully an often overlooked but critical juncture of interaction between movements and institutional politics and the process through which the one influenced the other.

Papandreou’s collapse in turn led to the formation of a technocratic government that caused the unraveling of the Greek party system, as the protest-induced, expanded dimensions of political conflict around the bailout found perfect correlation with institutional parties in parliament. Pitting the old parties of government, which supported the bailout versus the “new”, untainted parties of opposition that did not, the technocratic government helped crystallize and consolidate the pro-/anti-bailout divide in Greek politics. This was soon validated by the 2012 elections, at which point the Greek party system imploded with tremendous force. This is a story therefore reminiscent of Latin American accounts of party collapse, as recounted by Roberts (2013) and Lupu (2014), focusing on the destabilizing effects of programmatic dealignment and party-brand dilution respectively. However, the added value of the thesis is that by creating a systematic and structured tracking of the process, it shows that

programmatic de-alignment and brand dilution only came to be because of complex interactions in various sub-systems of policy making and the disjunction between them. The misalignment of the Troika-government interactions with the government-opposition ones are a key element, overlooked by similar stories in Latin America, which start their accounts at a mid-way point in the story without examining in detail the roads leading there and the possible counterfactuals and alternative strategies.

Another somewhat overlooked factor in the literature of Latin American cases of party-system collapse is the rise of the challengers, which is often treated as an inevitable counterpart to the decline of the mainstream parties (Morgan 2011; Seawright 2012; K. Roberts 2013; Lupu 2014). The thesis, by tracking the so-called race of the challengers, in accordance with suggestions in the literature for the rise of Syriza (Spourdalakis 2014; Tsakatika 2016), provides a mix of qualitative and quantitative evidence, mostly based on surveys and polls but also core sentence data, to make the case that the party's penetration of the two-party system was as much a product of voter anger and PASOK's collapse as it was the result of the party's strong supply-side offer of an alternative to the grand coalition's bailout path and "old" politics. As such, while the thesis does not claim to provide a clear-cut causal account of Syriza's rise, it nevertheless provides enough evidence to triangulate and infer the reasons for the party's extraordinary success in more rigorous ways to what existed in the literature.

The last two chapters of this thesis stand as a counterpart to the overly dramatic antecedent period and episodes. Syriza, saddled with a bailout after its failed negotiation tactics, did not face another wave of contention, while its parliamentary rebellion left the party intact. To my knowledge, there is no other direct scholarly account of the party's survival and the leadership's maintenance of control throughout such a tumultuous phase. The thesis posits the puzzle of Syriza's extraordinary resilience and addresses it in two stages. One referring to the intra-party struggle, where the proper use of timing, bait and switch tactics and control of



the agenda by the party leadership allowed it a semi-wondrous recovery from its July 2015 defeat, despite extensive internal discontent. This is also a relative *terra incognita* for political scientists, as it is rare to have a case of a radical party come to power and accommodate so rapidly and forcibly to demands entirely contrary to its original program. Similar bursts of radicalism in Latin America (Chavez, Morales, Kirchner) or Eastern Europe (Orban) proceeded predictably to at least satisfy part of their program. Such fast turns, quite unlike, for example, gradual, long-term shifts of social democracy over decades (Kitschelt 1994), and how newly-emerged parties that perform them survive, are a relatively unexplored field of political science to my knowledge.

The thesis offers a strategic/discursive explanation to this puzzle. Exploiting the dazed intra- and inter-party opposition, Tsipras controlled the pace of events appropriately and deployed an alluring rhetoric to secure his party, while, on electoral terms, he exploited the links of trust he had with the electorate and forced a timely election to ride the last wave before he would suffer a PASOK-like implosion. Drawing on the literature on personalization of politics (Karvonen 2010; Garzia 2011; Aelst, Sheaffer, and Stanyer 2012), I explore how focusing on the personality and personal trust deposited on Tsipras, Syriza was able to overcome lingering doubts about the new agreement and its surrender to the creditors. The thesis' contribution in this field is located first in accounting for the closure of the drama, focusing on personalized and valence politics and the issue of at least trying to get a better deal, the latter already suggested by Tsatsanis and Teperoglou (2016). But it also makes a contribution on suggesting possible similar ways to understand the management of broken expectations by other parties in the future, particularly as the distance between responsibility and representation widens (Mair 2009, 2013).

Beyond the actual narrative and the evolution of the Greek story, I want to also argue for the thesis' contribution in studying processes of interactions between social movements and

party-system collapse. I locate two such main contributions. The first is the creation of a systematized corpus of concepts and the mapping of factors of structure and agency that can help us analyze the evolution of the case. The second is methodological, in regards to documenting the interactions between movements and institutions and among institutions themselves.

For the first, I tried, to specify the structural changes brought about by the joint EU-IMF intervention. The emergence of the bailout or an IMF intervention as a nodal issue in political conflict and the rise of social movements as a reaction to an austerity program and the rise of parties that profit from the movements' appearance, forming a symbiotic relationship with them, are well-recorded outcomes in multiple similar cases, across Latin America and Europe (Stearns and Almeida 2004; Morgan 2011; K. Roberts 2013; Lupu 2014; Almeida 2017; Porta et al. 2017). The thesis however attempts to delve somewhat deeper into the questions of what such an intervention means and the type of opportunities it creates. It asks questions such as whether there is something more to these interventions than the pain of austerity and answers positively. What changes structurally, exactly, when a country is bailed out? The answer I provided was that immediately the fields of policymaking and political conflict are reshaped.

Policy-making is reshaped due to the emergence of what I called a *semi-sovereign*, multi-level regime. This regime of course was fairly similar to the one in other European and Latin American countries (Pop-Eleches 2009; Moury and Freire 2013; Clift 2018). Within the bailout's confines, the government had to negotiate policy with the Troika, limiting its power and creating newfound friction across the previously established routines that produced policymaking, in particular the interactions of the government with supporting MPs, opposition and challengers.

In conjunction with this, the thesis explored how the emergence of certain issues, like the bailout, have a special potential to blast the structural foundations of party systems. The bailout, and the associated issue of European integration, have already been shown to be polarizing and structuring issues in the Greek elections of this age (Dinas and Rori 2013; Voulgaris and Nikolakopoulos 2014; Teperoglou and Tsatsanis 2014; Katsanidou and Otjes 2016; Otjes and Katsanidou 2017). The thesis theorized further, thus adding to the existing literature, on the special potential of such issues to reconfigure political conflict and competition. I suggested that super-issues, such as the bailout, are not simply situated on some abstract political space, but have a particular potential to signify both abstract representations, particular measures straddling various dimensions of politics and tangible elements of reality, such as a signature on a physical document. Those two bodies of such issues, one material, one abstract, allow political entrepreneurs to play a game of meaning ambiguity, to refer to the physical document and the bailout *in principle*, while allowing the abstract signifier to vary, providing them opportunities to concurrently blur their position (Rovny 2013) on what they would do differently or what measures they protest exactly, but be extremely precise about their antithesis to it, maintaining the polarization created by clear programmatic divides (Kitschelt 1994; Beramendi et al. 2015).

As such, the thesis contributes to the existing literature on party-system collapse by examining the mechanisms of structural change of institutional politics, and those through which political competition becomes more precarious and unstable, along with the ways these twin structural changes induce a certain vulnerability to the system. Furthermore, while those elements were present in all the other Latin American and European cases, forming the structural underpinning of most bailout efforts, it was the way they became embedded in routine interactions among systems of actors and how they were exploited by social movements and eventually party-challengers that determined the specific outcome of the Greek crisis.

Thus, the thesis also suggests a framework through which to understand how vulnerability translated to collapse in this case, avoiding overly deterministic interpretations of the situation. By focusing specifically on the interactions between elite actors, such as government-MP, government-opposition and government-challenger dynamics, the thesis attempts to create a qualitative, yet systematic, framework to study contentious episodes, as envisioned by McAdam et al. (2001) in their seminal work and several other scholars occupied with the interactions between movements and institutions (McAdam and Tarrow 2010, 2013).

The reason for the exceptional collapse of the Greek party system can therefore be traced in the way this rather common framework of intervention became embedded in the patterns of interactions among Greek elites. Indeed, the thesis argues that a reason we did not see such a dramatic party-system upheaval in Portugal or Ireland which shared Greece's predicament was not only because of the deeper nature of economic collapse, but also because of the specific ways in which Greek elites had learnt to operate prior to the crisis and resumed operating in despite the new circumstances. It is under this light that the thesis drew the parallel between Clark's *Sleepwalkers* (2013), since the systems of policymaking, with the introduction of the Troika–government relationship started malfunctioning and the reproduction of typical routines in government–MP and government-opposition systems could not continue. The semi-sovereign regime caused asynchronous and misaligned action in each sub-system, which reverberated through the rest and caused further malfunction, as actors were forced to follow paths inimical to their interests. Unlike therefore other accounts of party-system collapse, which focus on more static, linear explanations of outcomes (Morgan 2011; Seawright 2012; K. Roberts 2013; Lupu 2014), the thesis advances a more dynamic explanation of party-system collapse, based on a pattern of disruption and gradual (mal-) adjustment of all the systems that sustained policy-making.

The development of theoretical concepts, such as “super issue” and “semi-sovereignty”, are therefore key contributions of the thesis that allow us to unlock the logic of party-system change and see how factors like patterns of elite interactions, movements and party agency could fit in. But they are also transferable concepts—as European integration progresses and interconnections become increasingly uneven, the loss of sovereignty and sense of impotency of domestic elites will in all likelihood resurface. The “super issue” concept for example could also be fruitfully applied in other cases with similar characteristics—I have already singled out Brexit as a potential example. Rather than naming every new division or locus of conflict a “cleavage” (Bartolini and Mair 1990), super issues allow a more varied taxonomy of political conflict and the way in which issue-dimensionality should be treated. They help us make sense of affixed, transient in the medium-term, types of conflict which have however potential for potency and an ability to quickly (re-)sort and polarize the electorate in new party permutations, as it happened in Greece. Again, the happenings within an extreme case can help guide our search for similar processes in other cases where their smaller scale would cause them to go undetected.

The dissertation has noted how a bailout intervention and the new structures accompanying it create inherent vulnerabilities, which may then in some cases, like the Greek one, lead to a supernova explosion, when combined with shrewd political entrepreneurs and pathogenic patterns of interactions among elites. Rather than a direct linkage between variables and outcomes, the thesis therefore sees party-system collapse and restoration as a process with multiple critical junctures and contingencies and explores the mechanism of why it evolved thus in Greece and not elsewhere, looking beyond obvious reasons such as the depth of recession.

Additionally, methodologically, the thesis, in order to study the expansion and impact of movements adopted a novel approach to framing the interactions between institutional

politics and social movements, acting as a backbone to structure the narrative: the contentious episode format, providing some flesh to the plan of McAdam et al. (2001) for describing and analyzing contentious episodes in a more rigorous, even if qualitative way. This involved recreating a stream of time-bounded interactions between governments, challengers and third parties, based on press archives and then the use of those formalized sequences in the narrative. As I noted, the sequences of interactions, their pace and patterns of change, offers an appropriate vantage point from where to zoom into specific instances of heightened contention and examine in more detail the reactions of institutional agents to protest. Yet it also allows us to zoom out to synthesize the different episodes into an overarching campaign, recounting the overall tale of Greek contention, remarking on its evolution in terms of actors, claims and actions.

Furthermore, substantively, the thesis has sought to specify the role of movements and resist the temptation to portray them as the main mechanism of change, as is common in social movement literature (McAdam and Boudet 2012). I focused on two mechanisms of transmission of action from contentious to institutional settings, embedded within the generally dysfunction caused by the aforementioned structural changes. Movements added to the pressure and fragility of the situation, creating tensions *within* the government party ranks, eventually wreaking havoc on its cohesion and unity, rendering it unable to rule the country. This allowed the unfolding of a series of contingencies that debilitated the political elite, a process I called *elite breakdown*, which was akin to what had been described in other cases in the literature, as for example in rebellions and the Soviet Union collapse (Skocpol 1979; Goldstone 1998). By doing so, the thesis helped identify a particular mechanism through which challengers take advantage of newfound political opportunities (Tilly et al. 2001; Kriesi 2007) that is relatively similar to other accounts, but somewhat distinct, as the political elite paralyzed

and shirked its duties rather than break down into separate camps in any significant way, at least not until deep into the second bailout.

Secondly, protest helped imbue the struggle against the bailout with new dimensions and connotations, manifesting latent attitudinal changes that were not being expressed prior to the Greek Indignados, a process I called *political conflict expansion*. Whereas most accounts of the Greek drama focus on the role of the GI as a direct influence on Syriza's rise (Aslanidis and Marantzidis 2016; Porta et al. 2017; Kouki 2018; Kotronaki 2018), I focus on the transformation brought about by the GI of the type of political conflict present in Greece, a much subtler and indirect way which eventually allowed the rise of challengers. While it is undoubtedly true that the symbiosis of Syriza with movements and the "overlapping membership" of its members in them fueled the party in the run-up to the earthquake elections of 2012, the movements' effects should be considered much more significant in terms of reshaping and imbuing political conflict with new meanings, causing in the process political elites to lose their nerve.

In the field of party-system change, as well, the thesis has studied some important variations of party agency that often go undetected in party literature. The comparison of Syriza to other potential challengers shows how party discourse and strategy is critical for the rise of a party (De Vries and Hobolt 2012; Spourdalakis 2014; Tsakatika 2016) and that collapse of mainstream parties does not necessarily yield automatic victories for challengers. Much has been made of the populist menace presented by Syriza (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis 2014; Mudde 2016; Aslanidis and Marantzidis 2016). But if we are to count Syriza among the populist variety, I would argue the dissertation points to positivity, message innovation and *just enough* radicalness as important aspects of its success, even if somewhat disregarded in the literature. By focusing abstractly on the nemesis of Greeks at the time, the bailout, and providing a potential alternative that had the prospect of both disrupting and annoying the

mainstream parties, Syriza managed to prevail in a crowded field and forge a path of victory for itself in the new political arena.

While this thesis dealt with the Greek case in depth, partly owing to the author's own interests and slight historicist bent, there are some potential avenues for further, more generalized, research. As suggested, the structural conditions outlined here are elements of most crises and bailouts, but the way they become interlinked with existing patterns of elite interactions are not, and the mechanisms and processes studied by the thesis could be expanded into a more abstract, possibly less detailed, but also more comparative perspective. Answering what was different in Portugal or Ireland or even Spain would be a natural next step for future research.

Additionally, since due to its nature the thesis covers a lot of conceptual ground to describe one case, it is natural to suggest that future work could cover less ground and study multiple cases. Concepts of the thesis such as the super-issue could be studied as a particular case of issues that could advance and expand our understanding of political conflict, political competition and strategy in various times and spaces. Other methodological and theoretical tools, such as the tracking of political crisis through the parallel study of separate systems that sustain routine political activities could be undertaken to examine other instances of crisis and breakdown of even some of those systems.

To conclude, the thesis has tried to argue repetitively that the Greek collapse was a product of complex interactions among systems, agent ingenuity and tragic error and constraint rather than a deterministic outcome of economic collapse and harsh adjustment. Movements, economic crisis, voter anger, broken linkages or programmatic de-alignment did not automatically spell doom for the old Greek political parties. The bailout added fragility, as it did in many other cases but the sleepwalking, mistimed and miscalculated actions of protagonists were necessary to arrive at this end. Syriza exploited the opportunities afforded



by error, movements, and structure and managed to grow exponentially in three years. Afterwards, through the leadership of Tsipras, it masterfully managed to navigate the contradictions of its rise to power, securing the end of the bailout conflict, and with it the restoration of a new political competition equilibrium. It looked much like the one Tsipras had struggled to overthrow, focused on issues of competency, management and corruption within the bailout confines. A titanic battle over austerity, political renewal and the fate of the country became reduced to a minor incident of Bonapartism, no small feat by any means.

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## Appendix

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# *A1: List of Acronyms*

Organizations	Acronym
Parties	
Panhellenic Socialist Party	PASOK
New Democracy	ND
Coalition of the Radical Left	Syriza
Communist Party of Greece	KKE
Democratic Left	DIMAR
Independent Greeks	ANEL
Golden Dawn	GD
Popular Unity	LAE
Movement of Democratic Socialists	KIDISO
Communist Organization of Greece	KOE
National Orthodox Rally	LAOS
Social Movement Organizations/Unions	
Greek Indignados (“Aganaktismenoi”)	GI
We Stay in Europe (“Menoume Evropi”)	ME
General Confederacy of Greek Workers	GSEE
Supreme Administration of Civil Servants’ Unions	ADEDY
International Institutions	
European Union	EU
European Central Bank	ECB
International Monetary Fund	IMF

Notes: The acronyms maintain, by transliteration, the original Greek acronym of each party in most cases, unless it is not widely used, as in the case of Golden Dawn or the Greek Indignados, in which case I use the English initials.

*A2: Greek election results, 2009–2015.*

Election	10/2009	05/2012	06/2012	01/2015	09/2015
New Democracy	33.5	18.9	29.7	27.8	28.1
Syriza	4.6	16.8	26.9	36.3	35.5
PASOK	43.9	13.2	12.3	4.7	6.3
Communist Party (KKE)	7.5	8.5	4.5	5.5	5.6
DIMAR	n.a.	6.1	6.3	0.5	n.a.
Union of Centrists	0.3	0.6	0.3	1.8	3.4
Potami	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	6.1	4.1
Independent Greeks (ANEL)	n.a.	10.6	7.5	4.8	3.7
LAOS	5.6	2.9	1.6	1.0	n.a.
Golden Dawn	0.3	7.0	6.9	6.3	7.0
Turnout	70.9	65.1	62.5	63.9	56.6

*A3: Description of independent variables in Tables 8-3 & 8-4.*

Variable Name	Variable Description	Variable Type
May vote	Coded as 0 when respondent voted for pro-bailout parties (ND, PASOK, DIMAR), 1 for Syriza voters, 2 for other anti-bailout parties (KKE, ANEL, GD) and 3 for anything else.	Nominal variable, contains four options
Gender	Coded as 1 when the respondent is female.	Dichotomous
Education	Coded as 0 when the respondent has finished primary education or below, 1 when he has finished secondary/post-secondary education (max. 12–14 years) and 2 when he has finished tertiary education (14 years+).	Ordinal variable, contains three levels
Age*	Coded as 0–3, depending on whether the respondent belongs to the 18–25, 26–40, or 41–64 or 65+ age groups respectively.	Ordinal variable, contains four levels
Union member	Coded as 1 when the respondent says he/she is a union member.	Dichotomous
Interest in politics	Originally ordinal variable, trimmed to two levels, equal to 0 when respondents is interested in politics “a lot” or “somewhat”.	Dichotomous

*A4: Descriptive statistics of the sample for Tables 8-3 & 8-4.*

Gender		Education			Age			
Male	Female	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	18–25	26–40	41–64	65+
521	503	399	373	256	97	242	404	246
ND would be a better alternative		The government is to blame for the economic situation			Assessment of EU integration			
Yes	No	Yes	No		Positive	Neutral	Negative	
195	834	807	222		442	457	129	
May 2012 vote								
Pro-bailout		Syriza			Anti-bailout		Other	
375		155			132		367	
Union members				Interested in politics				
Yes		No			Yes		No	
963		66			585		444	

\*Source: ELNES (Andreadis, Chadjipadelis, and Teperoglou 2016). For weights implemented, see (Andreadis 2012). Sample size for each regression varied depending on the number of missing variables. Overall, N=1,029.

*A5: Description of independent variables in Table 10-2.*

Variable name	Variable Description	Variable Type
Syriza vote in January	Coded as 1 when the respondent voted for Syriza in January 2015.	Dichotomous
Sympathy/antipathy toward AT as important voting criterion	Coded as 1 when the respondent replies that his sympathy/antipathy toward Alexis Tsipras was an important voting criterion.	Dichotomous
Retrospective assessment as important voting criterion	Coded as 1 when the respondent says that the punishment/reward of the Syriza government's work is an important voting criterion for him.	Dichotomous
Prospects of a different government as important voting criterion	Coded as 1 when the respondent says that the prospects of a different/alternative government is an important voting criterion for him.	Dichotomous
Evaluation of negotiations	Coded as 0–2, depending on whether the respondent takes a negative, neutral (neither bad nor good)/agnostic (don't know) or positive view toward the negotiations' outcome conducted between the Greek government and its European partners.	Ordinal variable, contains three levels.
Residence in Athens/Thessaloniki	Coded as 1 when the respondent resides in the large urban centers of Athens/Thessaloniki.	Dichotomous
Gender	Coded as 1 when the respondent is female.	Dichotomous
Education	Coded as 0 when the respondent has finished primary education or below (max. 9 years), 1 when he has finished secondary/post-secondary education (max. 12–14 years) and 2 when he has finished tertiary education (14 years+).	Ordinal variable, contains three levels.
Age*	Coded as 0–2, depending on whether the respondent belongs to the 18–34, 35–64, or 65+ age groups respectively.	Ordinal variable, contains three levels.
Occupational status: housewife	Coded as 1 when the respondent says he/she is a housewife.	Dichotomous

Notes: I have merged the original six age groups due to the low number of individuals in each one, opting to separate them into a youth group (at least in the Greek context) of 18–34 year old people, working age population of 35–64 and a retired/old group of 65+ years. The results of the regression change slightly if I use the original six age groups, in that the youngest group of 18–24 has a higher probability to be an ex-Syriza voter, but this could be biased due to the very low number of responses from the 18–24 age group.

*A6: Descriptive statistics of the independent variables for Table 10-2.*

Intention to vote for Syriza in 09/2015		Voted for Syriza in 01/2015		Sympathy/antipathy toward Tsipras as an important voting criterion		Residence in Athens/Thessaloniki	
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
254	756	375	625	529	471	440	560
Gender		Education			Age		
Male	Female	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	18–34	35–64	65+
438	562	249	408	343	162	615	223
Evaluation of the negotiations’ outcome							
Negative		Neutral/Agnostic			Positive		
497		341			162		
Retrospective assessment of government work as an important voting criterion				Prospects of a different government as an important voting criterion			
Yes		No		Yes		No	
600		400		659		341	

\*Source: (ProRata 2015b). N=1,000.