

Greek elections 2015: the beginning of the end or the end of the beginning?

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Eurocrisis in the
Press

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SYRIZA's recent electoral victory attracted global attention. This commentary will try to explain SYRIZA's surprise move to form a coalition government with the far-right party ANEL arguing that both parties share a worldview that explains their co-operation.

SYRIZA is a far-left party with a socially progressive agenda favouring integration of immigrants, secularism, and human rights. By contrast, ANEL is a nationalist party which holds deeply xenophobic, anti-Semitic and homophobic views. Tellingly, ANEL was the only party that objected to the prosecution of the Golden Dawn MPs.

Yet, both parties seemingly share a broader worldview which makes them ideal partners. First, they both argue that Greece's economic troubles stem from the Troika imposed austerity because of the subordination of New Democracy (ND) and PASOK to the EU and especially Germany. Second, they accuse Angela Merkel for masterminding Greece's woes (SYRIZA accuses her for causing a humanitarian crisis while for ANEL she is a [neo-Nazi](#) to Greece). Third, they both express anti-western and pro-Putin views (SYRIZA opposes West's supposed neo-liberalism and ANEL prefers closer ties to Russia because she is an Orthodox country). Remarkably, the new Foreign Minister, Nikos Kotzias, and ANEL's leader [Panos Kammenos](#) have reportedly direct links to [Kremlin's inner circle](#) – a claim denied by Kotzias. Kotzias has also written a [book](#) on how Europe made Greece a debt colony (a [view](#) shared by Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis).



This shared worldview is linked to Greece's '[underdog culture](#)' whereby Greece is suspicious of the outside world, the West is considered a threat, economic liberalisation and modernisation are undesirable and Greece belongs to the East. This sub-culture has been represented before in Greek politics so it is not surprising that SYRIZA [mimics the PASOK of mid-1970s-1980s](#) and ANEL the conservative siege mentality of the 1967-74 Junta.

Both parties employed a [populist](#) anti-austerity / anti-German discourse to exploit this cultural cleavage within Greek society and portrayed themselves as the defenders of ordinary people against the mainstream yes-men – a strategy reminiscent of the anti-mainstream discourse in the Weimar Republic. SYRIZA legitimised this discourse as an anti-austerity rally, while ANEL as defending the motherland. The economic freefall and the poor management of the crisis by ND and PASOK due to [pervasive clientelism](#) persuaded the Greeks to give a chance to SYRIZA's promises of reversing austerity whilst keeping Greece in the Eurozone.



However, with the majority of Greeks favouring Eurozone membership a potential clash with the EU may signify the end of the beginning for the SYRIZA-ANEL government. Moreover, a SYRIZA-ANEL U-turn is also likely due to Greece's desperate need for external financial support – something that only the much accused Troika has provided so far.

In other words, Greece's new government is threatened by its own populist agenda vis-a-vis its Western partners

and its [voters](#). Its fate will be the benchmark for other populist anti-systemic parties throughout Europe. Sadly, Churchill's [quote](#) about El-Alamein feels dangerously appropriate for Europe once again: "Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning".

Note: This article gives the views of the authors, and not the position of the Euro Crisis in the Press blog, nor of the London School of Economics.

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