

REFORM AND TRANSITION IN
THE MEDITERRANEAN

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SYRIZA

The Failure of the
Populist Promise

Cas Mudde



Reform and Transition in the Mediterranean

Series Editor
Ioannis N. Grigoriadis
Bilkent University
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The series of political and economic crises that befell many countries in the Mediterranean region starting in 2009 has raised emphatically questions of reform and transition. While the sovereign debt crisis of Southern European states and the “Arab Spring” appear *prima facie* unrelated, some common roots can be identified: low levels of social capital and trust, high incidence of corruption, and poor institutional performance. This series provides a venue for the comparative study of reform and transition in the Mediterranean within and across the political, cultural, and religious boundaries that crisscross the region. Defining the Mediterranean as the region that encompasses the countries of Southern Europe, the Levant, and North Africa, the series contributes to a better understanding of the agents and the structures that have brought reform and transition to the forefront. It invites (but is not limited to) interdisciplinary approaches that draw on political science, history, sociology, economics, anthropology, area studies, and cultural studies. Bringing together case studies of individual countries with broader comparative analyses, the series provides a home for timely and cutting-edge scholarship that addresses the structural requirements of reform and transition; the interrelations between politics, history and culture; and the strategic importance of the Mediterranean for the EU, the USA, Russia, and emerging powers.

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SYRIZA

The Failure of the Populist Promise

Foreword by Petros Papasarantopoulos

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FOREWORD

I got to know Cas Mudde from his work on the populist radical right, which has distinguished him as one of the leading experts on political extremism, radicalism and populism. His book *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*¹ is considered a benchmark for future research and has won important awards. When I got the pleasure and honour to edit and prologue the Greek editions of his books, I appreciated him not only as an author and scientist but also as a generous, sincere and frank person. He is a real friend, with whom one can enjoy both agreeing and disagreeing.

His interest in populism, which led not only to the writing of a great number of articles in several journals, but also to the co-editing of the book *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy?* with Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser,² led to his studying the Greek case systematically, especially after SYRIZA's electoral success in January 2015.

This volume includes, in the first part, eleven articles in which Mudde analyses Greek politics with great insight as an external observer, something that allows him to compare, assess and foresee things objectively. The first article was written on the day of the elections of 25 January and, following the dramatic events occurring in Greece since then, he wrote the last one year after, on 25 January 2016. His conclusions can be summarised as follows:

- SYRIZA has failed, first and foremost, because both the party and its leaders – not to mention its coalition partner, Independent Greeks

(ANEL) – were ill-prepared to govern the country. They were well-intentioned amateurs at best.

- SYRIZA's main political argument that Greece could remain a member of the Eurozone without complying with its rules and its austerity policies was an unrealistic one.
- Politicians who want to build a different Europe have to accept, even reluctantly, that politics is a profession with its own rules and that it requires specific skills and abilities. To achieve anything in politics, including changing the rules, you have to master 'the art of the possible', as conservative German statesman Otto von Bismarck famously said, rather than merely trumpet 'the truth'.
- Europe, in contrast to what SYRIZA suggests, will not turn to the (far) left. At the same time, it is not expected to change fundamentally.
- Greece will not become Weimar Germany.
- In fact, the choice to continue the coalition with ANEL, rather than PASOK-DIMAR or To Potami, seems to indicate that Tsipras is looking to become another Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), the patriotic left populist party of Andreas Papandreou: fiery in rhetoric, pragmatic in policy. The problem, in Mudde's words, is that the original PASOK was built not so much on rhetoric or policy but on clientelism.
- He emphasises that this was the last election that Tsipras could win purely on the basis of the failure of the other candidates. The next time, be it in one year or in four, voters will judge *him*, rather than his opponents. Is Tsipras, Mudde asks, ready for this?
- He risks the prediction that SYRIZA will lose (big) in the next elections, when its electorate has been confronted with the consequences of the third bailout. He thinks that the party will be able to recover for the simple reason that, at least in the short to medium term, there is an absolute lack of credible challengers on the (patriotic) left.
- He believes that the time of a two-party system in Greece is over. He thinks that New Democracy (ND) will get at least 10 per cent less votes than before, despite some incidental successes, and the same will apply to SYRIZA as the successor to the old PASOK. Both parties will have to rely on smaller parties to form coalition governments.

All these conclusions, which completely deconstruct the rhetoric of the SYRIZA government, justify the title of the book, which refers to the failure of SYRIZA's populist promise. To support his views, the author uses the tools of comparative politics and political science, comparing and contrasting empirical data from other countries. This way he comes to another conclusion, according to which 'SYRIZA is therefore better seen as an example of Greek "exceptionalism" than as a European vanguard'. Greece is both a historic and a modern exception, not the rule in Europe.

Moreover, he doesn't hesitate to say that it 'is Greeks that have created the dysfunctional system and it is Greeks who will have to solve it. While the Greek elites play a special role, clientelism and corruption [could] not become so endemic and omnipresent without the tacit compliance of a large portion of the population'.

In the second part of the book, three interviews with the author by Elina Tzanoudaki, Grigoris Bekos and the publisher are included. The last interview, which is the longest, includes topics over which there have been great disagreement between the author and the publisher, as over whether SYRIZA can become a 'traditional' party and whether the European Union (EU) can be characterised as neoliberal or not.

In the third part of the book, one of his important essays on liberal democracy and extremism is included, which explain concepts that many people find difficult to understand. The author's finding that 'in the early 20th century only some ten countries in the world could be qualified as democratic, and then only if we overlook the fact that half of the citizenry (women) were excluded from the vote. Today democracy is hegemonic throughout the western world, with over 85 per cent of the population supporting democratic values in virtually every country', is quite comforting.

The Addendum includes three articles published in *The Books' Journal* in a special issue on populism, written by Cas Mudde, Giannis Voulgaris and the publisher, respectively, all expressing both similar and different views on populism, keeping the debate open for discussion.

I believe that this book, which is the first popularised scientific study that puts SYRIZA in a broader theoretical, geographic and political context, will be excellent food for thought. All articles are based on solid study and avoid simplification as well as hastily made conclusions.

Though the author doesn't bring good news, let's not tell him not to bring any.

Publisher of Epikentro Publications
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Petros Papasarantopoulos

NOTES

1. Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
2. Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy?*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

PREFACE

Until the 2012 elections I, like many other non-Greeks, paid little attention to Greek politics. I had followed the discussions about the economic crisis, the bailouts and the protests, but it was the rise of the neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn (XA), and the consequent debates and hysteria in the international media, that led me to take a deeper interest in Greek politics. I remember sitting in a coffee shop in downtown Indianapolis, following the results of the May 2012 elections on my laptop. My wife and other guests undoubtedly thought I was crazy, murmuring in disbelief at my screen about an event that they had no knowledge of or interest in. When the final result was becoming clear, I belted out, ‘That’s crazy! A draw! This must lead to new elections.’ Suffice to say that my wife, let alone the other guests, was much less excited about the outcome than I was.

I knew a bit about Greek politics at the time. My first invited conference attendance was in Athens, in 1994. To be honest, it wasn’t really me who was invited; it was my PhD supervisor at Leiden University, the late Peter Mair. Because he couldn’t make it, Peter suggested that I would go in his stead, and the organisers, to my great surprise, agreed. At the workshop we discussed ‘anti-party parties’ and the growing dissatisfaction with political parties in Europe. I got to talk to several local scholars about Greek political parties in general, and PASOK in particular. This was years before I started to take the concept of populism seriously, which was probably why it didn’t have a lasting effect on me.

I returned to Greece a few years later, on an impromptu vacation (the destination was decided by the options of the last minute offers of KLM the day before I left). I mainly remember two things from that trip; first,

being shocked by the number of zombie-like junkies around Omonoia Square. Although hardened by regular visits to Amsterdam and Rotterdam in the 1980s, the height of the heroin period in the Netherlands, I had never seen anything like that. Second, I visited five soccer games in Athens and Thessaloniki, and came to talk about politics with some AEK supporters – one of them had grown up in Germany so that we could converse in German. I was struck by their hostility towards immigrants, notably Albanians and Roma (which they obviously called ‘Gypsies’), particularly because Athens looked at that time remarkably white to me, compared to the already very multicultural Dutch cities of that time.

I didn’t return to Greece until March 2015, when I gave several academic and public talks in Athens and Thessaloniki. I was eager to personally observe the ‘humanitarian crisis’ that Prime Minister Tsipras and his foreign devotees were speaking about. I was struck by the difference between downtown Athens and downtown Thessaloniki; the former lived somewhat up to the gloomy picture painted in the left-wing media, the latter was without any clear traces of any crisis. I spent ten days intensely discussing EU and Greek politics with colleagues and friends from almost all sides of the political spectrum, from the radical left to the radical right. Although, to be fair, while they spanned the range of the political spectrum, and therefore the various positions on the SYRIZA government, the defining topic of Greek politics in 2015, almost all those over forty had been part of the Eurocommunist wing of the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) in their youth. I came back to the other Athens (in Georgia, USA) tired and confused; a compliment to my hosts and, I guess, an accurate reflection of the country too.

This book gives me the opportunity to finally acknowledge and thank all the people who, over the years, have helped me better understand Greece and Greek politics. Most of my knowledge about populism in Greece comes from the work of Takis Pappas, the foremost scholar on the topic, with whom I have also had several engaged discussions. I am further indebted to the work of Antonis Ellinas, the main academic expert on Golden Dawn. During my last stay in Greece, in March 2015, I gave a talk at the Observatory on Populism and Democracy of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, where I enjoyed the tremendous hospitality of Yannis Stavrakakis and his POPULISMUS team. I also spoke at the Netherlands Institute at Athens, where I finally met Willem Ledebuur in person, a fellow Dutchman and PSV supporter with whom I have had an online friendship for more than fifteen years. A last acknowledgement goes

to an anonymous twitter account (@greekanalyst), a pseudonym of a Greek commentator who has become a main target of SYRIZA supporters because of his relentless criticism of the Tsipras governments. All of these colleagues and friends have helped me shape my views, pulling me into different directions, and challenging my sometimes stereotypical views.

But there are two people who have supported my work in ways that go well beyond courtesy and collegiality. The first is Ioannis Kolovos, my most consistent source of information on Greek politics in general, and the Greek far right in particular. Ioannis contacted me more than ten years ago, when he was writing an MA thesis on the Greek extreme right at the University of Sheffield. In addition to providing me with exceptionally sharp insights into Greek politics, and unique information about the Greek extreme right, he regularly sends me links to interesting academic and media articles on Greek politics and provides (translated) insights from the Greek media.

Last and certainly not least is my friend and publisher Petros Papasarantopoulos, the initiator of this book, who has been a great supporter of my work for years, publishing and translating many of my books and op-eds in Greek. Petros is also an extremely generous host, who has shared with me his favourite restaurants as well as his favourite football team in Thessaloniki. Any activity with Petros is combined with long and passionate discussions about Greek politics, in which he shows a level of pessimism that makes me look like an optimist (no easy feat, I can assure you). I want to thank Petros for introducing my work to a broader Greek audience and for introducing me to various great Greek people and venues, not in the least those at the Thinking Zone bookstore in Athens.

All these people hold very different opinions on Greek politics, populism and SYRIZA, from each other and from me. But they share an intellectual curiosity and openness that have helped me better understand Greek politics. Obviously, all ideological biases and intellectual interpretations in this collection of articles and interviews are mine, and mine alone. I hope everyone will read this book in a similar spirit, critical but open, and that it will at least challenge, if not necessarily change, some of their ideas about Greek politics, liberal democracy and populism.

Athens, GA
October 2015

Cas Mudde

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Abstract This chapter sets the context of Cas Mudde's interest in Greek politics, which really started with the breakthrough of the neo-Nazi party, Golden Dawn, in the Greek parliamentary elections of May 2012. It raised a series of questions about liberal democracy and its political challengers, which had relevance well beyond the Greek borders.

Keywords Golden Dawn · Greece · Liberal democracy · SYRIZA

In my early work on far-right parties, Greece never played much of a role. While the country had one of the first far-right parties in the European Parliament, the National Political Union (EPEN) in 1984, like other Greek far-right parties, it was small, short-lived and understudied. It was almost impossible to find any information on the Greek far-right *groupuscules* outside of a rare chapter in an edited volume on extreme right parties in Europe and an MA thesis of a Greek student at the University of Sheffield.¹ As I was writing my PhD thesis on 'the ideology of the extreme right' at Leiden University, in the 1990s, Greece was one of many European countries without a relevant far-right party. While the situation in Europe had changed significantly when I was working on my second book, *Populists Radical Right Parties in Europe* (2007),² with several far-right parties gaining significant electoral support and some even political power, in Greece much had stayed the same. The Popular Orthodox Rally

(LAOS) was the only relevant far-right party in the country, having one member in the European Parliament. So, when Golden Dawn (XA) was making headlines in Europe in the summer of 2012, I might have been one of the few people outside of Greece to have heard of them, but I was still equally surprised about its sudden success.

There is no doubt that XA's entry into the Greek parliament was a major political event in post-war Europe. However, it was not so much the scale of the support, roughly 6 per cent of the vote, which has by now become relatively modest for a far-right party in Europe. Parties like the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik) and Swiss People's Party (SVP) consistently draw three to four times as much support. What was truly remarkable, yes shocking, was the fact that an openly neo-Nazi party could get such support. Italy had its openly neo-fascist party between 1948 and 2005, the Italian Social Movement (MSI), but fascism was never as discredited as Nazism in Europe, let alone in Italy, and Nazism is not an 'indigenous' ideology in Greece. In fact, Greece suffered more under Nazi occupation than almost all other European countries, because of its unique armed resistance against the Nazi occupiers. For all those reasons, 6 per cent of Greeks voting for the neo-Nazi XA was much more shocking than 6 per cent of Italians voting for the neo-fascist MSI.

The shocking success of XA also flew in the face of the academic literature on far-right parties, which was divided over almost everything, but found a rare consensus on the belief that neo-Nazi parties could not be electorally successful in post-war Europe. Consequently, even in the build-up to the May 2012 election, I was certain that XA wouldn't be able to enter the *Vouli* (Greek Parliament). Both disturbed and intrigued by its success, and even more by the wild speculations in the media about an alleged European trend of neo-Nazism, I decided to seriously read up on Greek politics. Moreover, having more recently started comparative work on populism, left and right, I was intrigued by the equally sudden rise of the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA). The sensationalist and uninformed anti-XA and pro-SYRIZA sentiments in the European left-wing media triggered my contrarian instincts, which I tend to express mainly in op-eds, but also a deeper reflection on European politics in general, and political extremism in particular.

A first question to address was: what is the significance of the XA success for both Europe in general, and Greece in particular? As always when the far right in Europe is concerned, historical analogies referring to

Weimar Germany and the Versailles Treaty were thrown around without much consideration for historical accuracy or national context. Terms like ‘Weimar Greece’ became popular and some commentators even speculated openly about ‘Weimar Europe’, suggesting that Greece could be the future of the whole of Europe, or at least Southern Europe. Suffice to say that the Versailles Treaty and Weimar Europe arguments are seriously flawed, while Weimar Greece only makes sense with important qualifications. Most importantly, while Weimar Germany was about the rise of extremism, i.e. anti-democracy, ‘Weimar Greece’ is more about the rise of radicalism, i.e. anti-liberal democracy. As several of the following readings hopefully clarify, this is far from just an academic play of words.

The second question to address was: what is the relationship between populism and democracy? One of the more positive consequences of the rise of SYRIZA, and to a lesser extent Podemos in Spain, is that people are reminded that populism is not necessarily a right-wing phenomenon. Until 2012, almost all successful populist parties were right wing, mostly far right, which had led many commentators to conflate far-right features like xenophobia with populism. SYRIZA, and even more Podemos, show that populism doesn’t have to be nationalist and xenophobic. But that raised the question what was specific to populism; i.e. what do all populist parties share, and what is the relationship of populism per se with democracy? I addressed these questions in an op-ed for *The Guardian*, entitled ‘The Problem with Populism’ (see Chap. 2), which draws upon insights from a collaborative research project, which looks at left and right populism in Europe and the Americas, and illustrates in more detail the highly complex relationship between populism and (liberal) democracy.³

The third question it raised was: is the Great Recession (finally) causing the rise of left-wing populism in Europe? After all, left-wing populism has been a successful response to the consequences of neoliberalism in several Latin American, like Bolivia and Venezuela, for years. As so often when two somewhat similar phenomena occur within a relatively short period of time, the media went into a speculation frenzy of an alleged ‘rise of left-wing populism’. Sympathetic academics got swept up as well, publishing their wishful thinking in essays with grandiose titles like ‘The Winds Are Changing: A New Left Populism for Europe’⁴ and ‘The People United: On the Populism of the Mediterranean Purple Wave’.⁵ In fact, the British paper of left-wing record, *The Guardian*, received so many op-eds in support of left-wing populism that it felt the need to publish a highly critical editorial on

populism.⁶ How different things look today? Few self-respecting progressives still taut SYRIZA as a ray of hope for Greece, let alone Europe, Podemos has consistently disappointed in polls and regional elections, and the few older left-wing populist parties – like the Dutch Socialist Party (SP) and German The Left (Die Linke) – have shown little increase in their support.

Some try to keep the myth of a rise of a populist radical left alive by casting the net wider, including politicians like new Labour Party leader Jeffrey Corbyn and Democratic Party presidential candidate Bernie Sanders. However, there is nothing populist, or even particularly radical, about Corbyn and Sanders, who propose fairly standard, old-school social democratic policies. The fact of the matter is that left-wing populism remains a fairly minor political phenomenon in Europe and that SYRIZA hasn't helped the case for similar parties in other countries in Europe. SYRIZA is therefore better seen as an example of Greek exceptionalism than as a European vanguard. While the electoral success of SYRIZA has its roots in the Great Recession, left-wing populism is an established Greek phenomenon. In many ways SYRIZA is the modern version, and even replacement, of Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK).

The fourth, and final, question to tackle was: what's next for Greece? While I have been quite comfortable in making short-term predictions, which mostly stated that little would change, the long-term future is much more difficult to foresee. At the party political level, the ball is in the corner of SYRIZA. Wherever Alexis Tsipras decides to take his party determines not only the fate of SYRIZA, but also of several other current and future parties. Of much more importance are the long-term social effects of the Great Recession and the political contestation over them. Most importantly, what happens with the Greek youth? While official data are to be treated with caution, youth unemployment in Greece has clearly reached endemic levels. Peaking at around 60 per cent at the height of the crisis, it continues to hover around 50 per cent. Even if the Greek economy is to bounce back soon, i.e. within the coming five years, many of these youths will not be able to profit, as jobs will go to the next generation of youths. They could become a 'lost generation', not unlike the youth in East Germany in the 1990s, but much less well cared for, because of the dire state of the Greek welfare state. Most will slowly but steadily turn their back on politics, further weakening their voice in the political system and the legitimacy of the democratic system. But some could join extremist

groups, of the left and right, strengthening the already high political polarisation and violence in the country.

In the end, though, Greece seems destined to remain a dysfunctional liberal democracy, more similar to the new European Union (EU) member states in the Balkans than the old EU member states in Western Europe. Parties will continue to mobilise on the basis of fiery rhetoric, lauded with conspiracy theories and nationalism, while governing through clientelism and corruption. Parties and politicians that want to modernise Greece, let alone strengthen its liberal democratic foundations, will either find only modest electoral support or will be frustrated by economic and political elites. The EU will regularly criticise the Greek elites, but will also continue to put international economic interests over domestic political concerns. In the end, if the choice is between the economic health of the Eurozone and the democratic health of the Greek political system, the latter is always going to lose out.

But for however egocentric and incompetent the EU approach to the economic crisis in general, and Greece in particular, has been, the EU is not the cause of the Greek problems, but merely a catalyst. It is Greeks that have created the dysfunctional system and it is Greeks who will have to solve it. While the Greek elites play a special role, clientelism and corruption cannot become so endemic and omnipresent without the tacit compliance of a large portion of the population. Similarly, while elite failure creates opportunities for nationalists and populists to mobilise, it doesn't force people to vote for them. If this volume has one overarching message, it is that populists might at times ask the right questions, but they almost always offer the wrong answers. This is true for all countries, and here Greece is no exception.

NOTES

1. A more elaborate version was later published in Greek. See Ioannis Kolovos, *Extreme Right and Radical Right in Greece and Western Europe, 1974–2004*. (Athens: Pelasgos, 2005). (Kolovos 2005)
2. Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) (Mudde 2007). A Greek version was published by Epikentro in 2011.
3. Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2012). A Greek version was published by Epikentro in 2013.

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4. Marina Prentoulis and Lasse Thomassen, ‘The Winds Are Changing: A New Left Populism for Europe’, *Open Democracy*, 27 January 2015. (Prentoulis and Thomassen 2015)
5. Paolo Gerbaudo, ‘The People United: On the Populism of the Mediterranean Purple Wave’, *Open Democracy*, 3 June 2015. (Gerbaudo 2015)
6. ‘The Guardian View of Europe’s Populists: Left or Right, They Are United by a Worrying Xenophobia’, *The Guardian*, 1 February 2015. (*Guardian* 2015)

CHAPTER 2

SYRIZA's Populist Illusions

Abstract Eleven articles discuss SYRIZA's populist politics starting from its first election in 2015, making predictions about what will happen in Greece and Europe after it and discussing the problem of populism to liberal democracy. Greece isn't Europe and Europe isn't Greece. The Greeks have become victims of SYRIZA's illusions and voted 'No' to the so-called *Greferendum* offering a symbolic victory to SYRIZA, which won't change the inevitable acceptance of a new bailout. This so-called *aGreekment* won't lead to the rise of the neo-Nazi party XA, but a left alternative to Europe is also impossible. Tsipras' victory in the new elections will barely change Greek politics, as it is the first post-Memorandum election and the last in which Tsipras will not be held responsible for previous policies. Now part of that politics is in Tsipras' hands and he faces the choice of which PASOK he wants to transform SYRIZA into. A year later, Greece is more isolated than ever before.

Keywords Europe · Greece · *Greferendum* · Liberal democracy · Populism · SYRIZA · Alexis Tsipras

1 AFTER SYRIZA's LANDSLIDE: FIVE PREDICTIONS OF A MUCH SIMILAR FUTURE

After months of speculation and growing hyperbole, Greece will finally have a government dominated by the left-wing populist SYRIZA.¹ Exit polls have SYRIZA at around 36–39 per cent of the vote, which might give them a majority of the parliamentary seats. Party leader Alexis Tsipras, who has grown into the pin-up of the western (radical) left in the last years, will be the new prime minister. But what else will change? Despite all the hype of a new Greece and even a new Europe (and EU), the most likely scenario is that the fundamentals of both systems will stay the same, but there will be some changes at the margins. Here are five predictions:

The Greek Party System Will Consolidate a New Two-Party Dynamic

Much has been made of the implosion of the Greek party system, which used to be based on a rigid division between the right-wing New Democracy (ND) and the left-wing PASOK. But the change might not be that significant. Greece today is not the same as Italy in the 1990s, when corruption scandals led to a true implosion of the old party system, i.e. of the so-called First Republic, and gave way to a completely new party system, of the so-called Second Republic. Today only the Northern League (LN) has survived, and that party only emerged at the end of the First Republic; all other parties are either completely new (e.g. Forza Italia and Five Star Movement) or constitute significant transformations of previous parties (e.g. Democratic Party).

Instead, in Greece the right-wing poll has hardly changed: it is still occupied by the ND, which merely lost some of its support and has more competition from far-right parties like XA. And on the left, PASOK has imploded, but is replaced by SYRIZA. While the voters might not be the same, SYRIZA will play roughly the same role in the Greek party system as PASOK has done for decades, i.e. provide the populist left-wing alternative to the conservative ND.

Greece Will Not Follow the Path of Weimar Germany

European elites are obsessed with Weimar Germany comparisons, i.e. weak democracies being threatened by strong extremist parties. From Russia to Greece alarmist elites warn of a Weimar scenario, i.e. death by

elections. But whereas extremists of left and right gained huge pluralities of the votes in Weimar Germany, they are relatively small in contemporary Greece. The neo-Stalinist Communist Party of Greece (KKE) has been reduced to around 5 per cent of the vote after the end of the Cold War, whereas the neo-Nazi XA seems to also have hit its limits of roughly 7–8 per cent, not in the least because of strong state repression, which will undoubtedly increase further under a SYRIZA government.

SYRIZA might not be a committed liberal democratic party, built upon the values of pluralism and minority rights, but neither was the left-wing populist PASOK, which governed Greece several times before the economic crisis. SYRIZA is essentially a democratic party, i.e. supporting popular sovereignty and majority rule, and will come to terms (grudgingly) with accepting pluralism and minority rights. Even if they collaborate with the KKE at times, which seems highly uncertain at this point as KKE considers SYRIZA members to be bourgeois traitors, they will not do so at the price of fundamental democratic procedures and values.

SYRIZA Will Consolidate into a More Traditional Party

The official name of SYRIZA is Coalition of the Radical Left and that accurately describes what the party is: a coalition of small radical (and extreme) left *groupuscules*. While many of the (old) members of SYRIZA are still, first and foremost, loyal to their small far left group, which in many cases still exists independently today, the vast majority of voters have their loyalty, or at least have put their hope, in SYRIZA.

Particularly if it will be able to form a ‘one-party’ government, the internal struggles between SYRIZA and its constituent parts will be one of its main challenges. Though perhaps not a charismatic leader in the traditional sense, Tsipras is essential to the victory of SYRIZA, having given one face to a fragmented hope.

But while he has a strong public mandate, his power over the SYRIZA cadres might be less strong. Much of his team has been drawn from outside the cadres of the *groupuscules*, including from Greek intellectuals abroad, which could entice the old guards. The pressures of governing a country in crisis, as well as the internal divisions and struggles of the party, will provide Tsipras and his team with strong incentives to build SYRIZA into a real political party, increasingly independent of the various groups that now make up the Coalition of the Radical Left.

One of the main challenges is to do this without being overrun by opportunistic defectors from PASOK, who might bring some of the necessary expertise, but also potentially the stigma of the old regime.

Europe Will Not Turn to the (Far) Left

Still not as sexy as the rise of the far right, which has attracted a couple of thousand media articles in 2014 alone, the rise of the far left has become an increasingly popular topic among commentators, either looking for the next big thing or engaging in wishful thinking.

They mainly point to the recent lead in the polls of 'We Can' (Podemos) in Spain, simply stated, the party vehicle of the *Indignados* social movement. But while these two left-wing populist parties have indeed risen largely out of nowhere, as a consequence of the economic crisis, most of their brethren across the continent have not.

In Cyprus, Ireland and Italy left-wing populist parties might grow a bit, but mostly in the form of established forces. This is one of the key things that holds left-wing populism back in most other countries, where there is clearly a growing breeding ground of (far) left anti-establishment politics. The party vehicles of these sentiments are often old and stale, like the Dutch Socialist Party (SP) or the German The Left, including *apparatchiks* and opportunists who cannot convince their potential electorates to overcome their distrust of previously defeated ideologies. This, perhaps more than competition from the far right, prevents the spread of left-wing populism across the continent.

European Union Will Not Change Fundamentally

SYRIZA has come to power by offering a third way to the Greek people: not the support for the bailout and austerity policies of the ND-PASOK government and not rejection of the bailout and support for a Greek exit from the EU (Grexit) of the extremist opposition (notably KKE and XA). Instead, they have proposed a bailout without austerity, despite the fact that European elites have consistently rejected this as a non-option.

Over the past years, Tsipras has been touring Europe to argue that a new Europe is possible and that a SYRIZA victory in the 2015 Greek elections would be the beginning of building such a new Europe. European elites, most notably German Chancellor Angela Merkel, have

reaffirmed their commitment to the EU's austerity politics and have even stated that a Greek exit from the Eurozone is not problematic.

This game of chicken will soon come to an end; most likely with a 'compromise' that is essentially a SYRIZA defeat. After all, the party has very few weapons to negotiate with. Not only is Greece irrelevant to the EU and Eurozone economy, but the vast majority of Greeks, including undoubtedly most SYRIZA supporters, want Greece to stay in the Eurozone.

Consequently, the most likely scenario is a softening of EU austerity rhetoric, but to a lesser extent policy, just as happened in the first months after the election of French president François Hollande in 2012. Even if Podemos comes to power in Spain later this year, and that is a big *if*, the majority of European governments will continue to support austerity politics, if only because their political fate is tied to it.

This is not to argue that SYRIZA's victory today is irrelevant. It is the first (new) left-wing populist party in the EU to win a national parliamentary election and to lead a (one-party) government. It will undoubtedly boost the spirits and success of similar parties in Europe, notably Podemos in Spain and Sinn Féin in Ireland. It will further put pressure on the elites of more established radical left parties that have not been able to significantly increase their political fortunes, such as Jean-Luc Mélenchon of the Left Party in France and Emile Roemer of the Dutch SP.

It will also lead to more left-wing insurgencies within the meddling social democratic parties, which haven't felt this pressure since the rise of the Green parties reached a halt in the 1990s. Obviously, the rumble on the left will have ramifications for the centre-right. In the end though, this will all probably lead mainly to more fragmentation, which will make fundamental change even more unlikely.

2 THE PROBLEM OF POPULISM

The recent electoral success of left-wing populist parties such as SYRIZA in Greece and Podemos in Spain has given a new impulse to the debate on populism in Europe.² Until now, populism was almost exclusively linked to the radical right, leading to an incorrect conflation of populism and xenophobia. In its original form, populism is an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups: 'the pure people' and 'the corrupt elite', and argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people.

Practically, populist politicians almost always combine it with other ideologies, such as nativism on the right and socialism on the left.

Up until a couple of years ago, the consensus among European elites on the left and right was that populism was inherently bad. It was dismissed as a ‘pathology of democracy’ or, as the American historian Richard Hofstadter wrote in the 1960s, ‘the paranoid style of politics’. The rise of left-wing populist movements and parties has seen a shift in the public debate, particularly pushed by followers of Chantal Mouffe and the late Ernesto Laclau, who argue that populism actually constitutes the essence of democratic politics. In their view populism is good for democracy; it is liberalism that is the real problem. Simply stated, both are right and wrong. The relationship between populism and liberal democracy is complex and includes the good, the bad and the ugly.

The main good is that populism brings to the fore issues that large parts of the population care about, but that the political elites want to avoid discussing; think about immigration for the populist right or austerity for the populist left. Leaders from different parties can come together to keep issues that divide their respective electorates off the agenda – such as European integration and immigration.

In other cases they take it even a step further, excluding controversial areas from the democratic process altogether by putting independent, technocratic institutions in charge (such as the courts or central banks). In many cases political elites have worked hand in glove with cultural and economic elites, leaving virtually no space for democratic opposition. To paraphrase the Mexican political theorist Benjamin Ardit, in those cases populism behaves like the drunken guest at a dinner party, who doesn’t respect the rules of public contestation but spells out the painful but real problems of society.

The main bad is that populism is a monist and moralist ideology, which denies the existence of divisions of interests and opinions within ‘the people’ and rejects the legitimacy of political opponents. As the populists are the *vox populi*, i.e. the voice of all the people, anyone with a different view speaks for ‘special interests’, i.e. the elite. Given that the key distinction is between the pure people and the corrupt elite, any compromise would lead to the corruption of the people and is therefore rejected. This uncompromising stand leads to a polarised political culture, in which non-populists turn into anti-populists.

Populism tends to get ugly when it gets into power. If it has to share power with non-populists the effects, positive or negative, tend to be

small (think about the Schüssel governments with the populist radical right FPO in Austria). Even when populists dominate the government, as is now the case in Greece, the negative aspects of populism often are limited, although not for a lack of trying. Populists like Silvio Berlusconi in Italy, the Kaczyński in Poland or Vladimír Mečiar in Slovakia regularly tried to circumvent or undermine the power of countervailing forces, including independent judges and the political opposition. In most cases they were successfully opposed by other parts of the political structure – often with the help from outside influences, most notably the EU.

However, the current situation in Hungary and Venezuela shows us what populism can do when it takes full control of a country. Supported by impressive popular majorities in elections, populist leaders like Viktor Orbán and Hugo Chávez have introduced new constitutions that significantly undermine the checks and balances of liberal democracy. In addition, loyalists have been put at the head of non-majoritarian institutions, such as the courts and other oversight committees, often for periods that extend well beyond the legislative term. Any opposition is frustrated by a combination of legal and extra-legal pressures, from raids by tax agencies to the rejection of renewals of media licences.

In short, populism is an illiberal democratic response to undemocratic liberalism. It criticises the exclusion of important issues from the political agenda by the elites and calls for their re-politicisation. However, this comes at a price. Populism's black and white views and uncompromising stand leads to a polarised society – for which, of course, both sides share responsibility – and its majoritarian extremism denies legitimacy to opponents' views and weakens the rights of minorities. While left-wing populism is often less exclusionary than right-wing populism, the main difference between them is not whether they exclude, but whom they exclude, which is largely determined by their accompanying ideology (e.g. nationalism or socialism).

3 ‘WEIMAR GREECE’ AND THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

At least since the 2012 parliamentary elections, in both May and June, Greece has been the European country to invoke the direst predictions for the future.³ Although far-right parties have gained three to four times as much electoral support in other European countries, the roughly 6 per cent of the vote for the, until then unknown, XA party has unleashed hordes

of journalists on the crisis-ridden country – hopefully compensating at least for some of the lost tourism income – and have put commentators into a frenzy. Mostly asking rhetorical questions, like ‘is fascism back in Europe?’, (self-) proclaimed experts from all over the globe harked back to the inevitable trauma of Weimar Germany to ‘explain’ the current situation in Greece. Some even went as far as to claim that the ‘Weimar on the Aegean’ is the future of all of Europe!

The idea is simple: economic crisis breeds frustration that leads to the support for anti-democratic parties. After all, wasn’t it the Great Depression that created Adolf Hitler? Yes, to an extent it was, although Hitler never achieved more than one-third of the vote and his ascent to power was made possible by naïve and opportunistic behaviour of the political establishment. More importantly, that same Great Depression did not lead to extreme right parties coming to power through elections in other countries. In other words, Weimar Germany was the exception, not the rule.

So, has the Great Recession created a Weimar Greece and, if so, is this the exception in or the future of Europe? At first sight the answer seems an easy ‘no’. Truly extremist parties of right and left received a total of about 12 per cent of the vote: XA got 6.3 per cent and the KKE 5.5 per cent. That said, populist parties gained more than 40 per cent in total: notably, the SYRIZA 36.6 per cent and the ANEL 4.8 per cent. While populists oppose certain features of liberal democracy (e.g. minority rights and pluralism), they do accept the basic tenets of democracy (i.e. popular sovereignty and majority rule). In other words, the main parties supporting liberal democracy received a minority of the votes – in fact, in the current parliament pro-liberal democracy, parties hold just 106 of the 300 seats! Whereas Weimar Germany was a democracy without democrats, contemporary Greece is a liberal democracy without liberal democrats.

There is another similarity between Weimar Germany and contemporary (‘Weimar’) Greece: they are the exception, not the rule. Just as the Great Depression didn’t lead to a continental rise of fascist parties, the Great Recession has not given way to a Europe-wide upsurge in support for far-right parties. On top of that, XA is the only clearly extreme right party to gain, albeit modestly. Strikingly, all four other ‘bailout countries’ have no significant far-right party – XA’s little Cypriot cousin, the National Popular Front (ELAM), is the most successful with a mere 1.1 per cent in the 2011 parliamentary elections and 2.7 in the 2014 European elections. In fact, if the bailout countries have seen any broader electoral response, and even this is limited to a few countries, it is the implosion of the

established parties, most notably of the centre-left, and the rise of left-wing populist parties.

It is in this respect that Greece again stands out. SYRIZA shot from 4.6 per cent in 2007 to 36.3 per cent in 2015, while the mainstream left-wing PASOK crashed from 43.9 per cent in 2009 to a measly 4.7 per cent in 2015. So far this is unique to Greece, but recent polls in Spain show that the left-wing populist party We Can (Podemos) could be set for a similar trajectory, although both the rise of Podemos and the implosion of the mainstream left-wing Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) are less extreme. And while Italy has seen the meteoric rise of a more or less left-wing populist upstart, the Five Star Movement (M5S) of comedian Beppe Grillo, this has been accompanied by a rather modest decrease of the mainstream left-wing Democratic Party (PD). In fact, Italy has seen a more pronounced implosion of support for the mainstream and radical right populist parties, Forza Italia (FI) and the LN.

In short, Greece isn't Europe and Europe isn't Greece. In a strict sense, contemporary Greece is also not the same as Weimar Germany, as the main challenge comes from anti-liberal democratic populists instead of anti-democratic extremists. That said, there are important similarities. Just as Weimar Germany was a democracy without democrats, Greece is a liberal democracy without liberal democrats. But while Weimar Germany was a state in perpetual crisis, Greece has gone through substantial periods of economic and political stability. But, as Greek political scientist Takis Pappas has forcefully argued, the political establishment never truly developed a liberal democratic regime in Greece. Andreas Papandreou made PASOK into a left-wing populist party, rather than a more traditional Western European social democratic one, and established a powerful clientelist party state. Its main right-wing competitor, ND, has copied PASOK's clientelist approach to the state, but not its populist approach to politics.

In short, the Great Recession has not turned Greece into an illiberal democracy, or (more positively formulated) an ill-functioning liberal democracy; it has always been one. Similarly, the economic crisis has not strengthened political extremism, as Greece has always had a relatively strong extremist party in the pro-Soviet KKE. As far as Greek politics has been transformed, it is in the replacement of the establishment left-wing populist PASOK by the upstart left-wing populist SYRIZA. How significant that transformation is for Greek (liberal) democracy will become clear in the coming months and years.

4 VICTIMS OF ILLUSIONS: THE NON-SOLUTION OF THE GREFERENDUM

The seemingly never-ending Greek drama has become a story of amateurism versus dogmatism with incompetence and cowardice on both sides.⁴ The Greek government has squandered all its goodwill within half a year through a combination of arrogance, belligerence, naivety and utter incompetence. It sets out to restore the ‘dignity’ of the Greek people by ‘liberating’ them from the alleged stranglehold of the Troika, while in the process ‘transforming’ Europe into a more equal and just continent. It has achieved neither.

The current Greek government is confronted with almost exactly the same deal as its so maligned predecessor. Moreover, outside of (West) European *gauche caviar*, desperate for a new ‘anti-imperialist hero’ after Hugo Chavez’s death, support for Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras and his SYRIZA has evaporated amid its erratic behaviour and endless accusations of ‘blackmail’ and ‘betrayal’. Even worse, they have strengthened the belief among its opponents that (all) Euroscepticism is necessarily incompetent and moralistic.

The so often repeated claim that the Troika is ‘disingenuous’ is not just evidence of the typical moralistic discourse of populism, in which the other side is ‘the enemy’ that is ‘corrupt’, but, even more importantly, shows the Greek government’s utter misperception of its opponent(s). Whether they truly believe their accusations or not is not that relevant, although it does go to the question of whether they are simply incompetent or (also) disingenuous. In essence, the Greek government is accusing the Troika of being – well – the Troika! It blames them for not supporting the SYRIZA programme. The Troika largely does the same, of course, but uses overall a more technocratic, rather than moralistic, discourse.

The essence of this drama is that both camps are informed by fundamentally different visions and try to come to an impossible compromise on the basis of a warped view of each other. The Greek government thinks the Troika is essentially more committed to a strong Europe than to the politics of austerity, and the Troika still thinks that Greece is a typical European state, which in their view means a Northern European state. Hence, Tsipras keeps presenting ‘fairer’ options, while Merkel keeps calling for ‘rational reforms’. While both can be criticised for incompetence and immorality, the costs are clearly much higher for Tsipras’ Greeks than for Merkel’s Germans.

Whatever the logic and morality of the austerity politics, and both can be seriously questioned, the Troika has been absolutely clear that this is the foundation of its Eurozone politics. It might be rigid, but it is straightforward and, therefore, honest. In sharp contrast, the Greek government, both SYRIZA and coalition partner ANEL, has been far from clear in its position. It has invented a third option, Eurozone without austerity, which from the outset has been rejected by the Troika. More fundamentally, however, SYRIZA proclaims to be a radical left party, which supports an economic model somewhere in between socialism and social democracy. It wants to realise this within the European Union and the Eurozone, which are both fundamentally neoliberal projects, in which substantial state involvement in the economy is considered wrong.

The current standoff was inevitable as soon as the Greek population voted SYRIZA into power. In essence, therefore, both ANEL/SYRIZA and their supporters are responsible for the situation that they find themselves in now. They can blame the Troika for being, and staying true to being, the Troika, but that doesn't change the reality. Tsipras' call for a referendum took much of the rest of the EU, and perhaps many in Greece, by surprise. Pundits will undoubtedly see it as further proof of the highly rational (choice) strategy of 'game theorist' and Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis, trying to put extra pressure on the Troika. However, their archenemy Georgios Papandreou did the same in 2011 and failed (too).

In classic populist language, Tsipras called for a 'democratic response' to the creditors that try to 'humiliate' Greece. Varoufakis tweeted that the referendum will 'boost' democracy in 'euro-related matters'. Responding to reactions that he had been elected to make these decisions, as this is how representative democracy works, he said that the government doesn't have a mandate to make this important decision because only 41 per cent of the people voted for ANEL and SYRIZA. This is a bizarre argument, which, in extremism, would mean that the government should resign, as it doesn't represent the majority of the Greek people. Moreover, it hasn't stopped SYRIZA in the last months from claiming to speak in the name of 'the people', i.e. not just for a majority but for all (pure) Greek people. Incidentally, the righteous claim of boosting democracy was already undermined by ANEL leader Panos Kammenos, who said that the 'Greferendum' would be withdrawn if the creditors would accept their counteroffer.

Rather than boosting democracy, the more likely reason for the referendum is to prevent a breakup of the government and of SYRIZA. As a

literal coalition of more and less radical left groups, SYRIZA is only really united in the opposition to the bailout conditions. The ‘party’ is fundamentally divided on continued membership of the Eurozone and even the EU. However, if democracy is really so important to Varoufakis and the others, they should put the interests of the country and its population above those of the coalition government and their political party.

Tsipras has called a referendum on the very narrow issue of the specific terms offered by the creditors for the latest aid package. This is a ridiculous proposal on several accounts. First, the referendum will have to be organised within one week by a state with limited capacity under the best of circumstances, let alone in the height of an economic and political crisis. Second, the terms offered by the creditors are not even public yet (let alone translated into Greek). How can people vote on them if they haven’t seen them? Third, the referendum is framed purely as a vote on the terms of the creditors, as if there is an option to get the financial aid under different terms. And, even if this were to be the case, and all behaviour and statements of the Troika members make this highly doubtful, what will happen then, i.e. in the best-case scenario: another referendum on the amended terms?

There is a good case to be made for a Greek referendum, but it is not this one. The Greeks should get a straightforward choice between the only two realistic options: staying in the Eurozone under the stated conditions or leaving the Eurozone (and allegedly have their ‘dignity’ and ‘democracy’ back). This is the fundamental choice that should have informed Greek politics for the past years. Greeks could have had that vote in the January elections, but SYRIZA prevented it by offering a faux third option: stay in the Eurozone without the Eurozone conditions. Now that everyone knows there are only two options, SYRIZA should finally give the people a vote on them, be it in new elections or in a (well-prepared) referendum.

5 GREFERENDUM OFFERS SYMBOLIC VICTORY FOR SYRIZA’s ANTI-AUSTERITY ‘THIRD WAY’⁵

Against the predictions of many opinion polls, the so-called Greferendum scored a surprisingly resounding victory for the Oxi – or No – campaign.⁵ Some 60 per cent of Greek voters chose ‘no’ on one of the most

incomprehensible referendum questions in history. The vote has been heralded and mourned across Europe, with both sides agreeing that it is a ‘historic’ occasion in European (they mean European Union) history. It is not.

How could it be? The Greferendum was designed to be vague and inconsequential. It was on an extremely narrow question, i.e. whether Greeks supported a highly specific proposal from the country’s creditors. Moreover, by the time the referendum was held, the proposal was already off the table. It is therefore completely ridiculous to celebrate it as a vote against the Eurozone, let alone the EU, as many far-right politicians have done, and highly optimistic to see this as a mandate to end austerity. Not only was this not the question of the referendum, it is not up to Greece to decide that for the whole Eurozone and EU.

The referendum was always much more about the survival of the Greek government – and, more specifically, its main party, the SYRIZA – than about Greece or Europe. It was, first and foremost, an elaborate and expensive vote of confidence in the more moderate line within SYRIZA. In fact, Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras was remarkably candid about this in his victory speech, saying the result was not a mandate for a rupture with Europe but one for a strengthened negotiating position for Greece. I wonder how that message resonated among the many ‘anti-EU’ and ‘international solidarity’ supporters of SYRIZA across Europe.

Back Where We Started

Consequently, we are exactly where we started half a year ago, when SYRIZA won the Greek elections. In essence, the referendum was about SYRIZA’s ‘Third Way’, that is an anti-austerity Eurozone, which has been the basis of the party’s electoral success. Tsipras called the referendum with the (unconvincing) argument that he didn’t have a mandate to accept the creditors’ proposals, because the two coalition parties gained only 41 per cent of the vote in the 2015 elections – yet they have a clear majority in the mono-cameral Greek parliament.

If this really is his line of thinking, and we ignore the fact that only about 40 per cent of the Greek electorate actually voted ‘no’ in the referendum (60 per cent of 65 per cent turnout), the situation hasn’t changed much. After all, the Greferendum gave him only a mandate about this specific deal, which was off the table anyway. Any new deal, let alone a significantly changed one, would require another referendum. Somehow I think that will not happen.

A Symbolic Victory

From a broader European perspective the Greferendum was a symbolic victory. But unfortunately, such victories are exactly that, symbolic, and tend to not last long. We have seen symbolic victories against the ‘imperialist’ and ‘undemocratic’ EU before – think about the French and Dutch referendums against the European Convention in 2005, in which similar majorities said ‘no’ to a much more fundamental question. But after a couple of months of ‘crisis’, the EU responded as it has always done: with more EU.

The Lisbon Treaty was a European Convention Light, which was no longer put to a referendum in France and the Netherlands. The silly Irish tried to reject it, in a 2008 referendum, only to be forced to vote again in 2009 – as they made ‘the right choice’ the second time around, they didn’t get a third chance.

The Greferendum won’t be different. Within weeks there will be a ‘compromise’ between the two camps, as both have too much at stake (such as hanging on to power). There will be neither an end to austerity nor a Grexit. Instead, there will be something that strongly resembles the rejected proposal, a Lisbon Treaty of austerity, but that can be re-branded as a victory for Greek ‘dignity’ by SYRIZA. The new policy will be austerity light, not much different than the policies in most other bailout countries (such as Ireland and Portugal).

In that way, SYRIZA’s ‘Third Way’ will end up much the same as the ‘Third Way’ of New Labour in the United Kingdom: neoliberal policies hidden under progressive rhetoric.

6 GREECE’S ‘AGREEKMENT’ ISN’T VERSAILLES: WHY THE BAILOUT WON’T LEAD TO SUDDEN RISE OF GOLDEN DAWN

It is not uncommon that a compromise is made that leaves practically everyone disappointed, but the aGreekment, as the recent agreement between the EU and the Greek government has been so coyly dubbed, takes it to a whole new level.⁶ An avalanche of (orchestrated) tweets tells us that #ThisIsACoup and pundits warn that ‘the 12 July agreement puts Greece on a slippery slope towards right-wing extremism’.

The hero of continuous resistance, former Greek Minister of Finance Yanis Varoufakis,⁷ also weighed in on this, comparing the aGreekment with the Treaty of Versailles – putting contemporary Greece on par with

Weimar Germany – and proclaimed with his usual level of certainty that the neo-Nazi party XA will be strengthened by more austerity.

I am not going to focus on the irony that the EU elite⁸ has used the same cynical and misguided fear-mongering tactic again and again against both the far right and the far left, including Varoufakis's SYRIZA party itself. I am also not going to dwell on the fact that Weimar Germany was literally destroyed by a (real) war, while contemporary Greece has seen no armed conflict since its own civil war, more than 50 years ago. Nor will I develop further the meaningless comparison of the aGreekment, which is essentially a loan of billions of euros to Greece in exchange for binding reforms, to the Versailles Treaty, which meant a payment of billions by Germany in the form of reparations. I am even going to ignore the fact that the whole leadership of XA is currently in jail or under house arrest and the party can hardly organise in a normal fashion.

Instead, let's just look at the empirical facts. Is Golden Dawn really on the rise? There is little doubt that XA did profit from the crisis, growing from an irrelevant party of less than 1 per cent before 2010 to a moderately successful party with roughly 7 per cent in 2012. It may high, but hardly a threat to Greek democracy. While no polls have been held since Monday morning following the bailout, a Metron Analysis⁹ poll taken between the Greferendum and the aGreekment shows remarkable stability in Greek party preferences since the January 2015 elections.

Only one shift was outside of the margins of error of plus or minus 3.1 per cent: ND (one of Greece's two major parties) lost almost 9 per cent, which is undoubtedly in part a temporary response to the fresh news of the resignation of party leader Antonis Samaras after the 'no vote' in the Greferendum. XA was down 2 per cent, from 6.3 per cent in January elections to 4.3 per cent. Again, this is within the margin of error, but at the very least shows that there is absolutely no evidence for a rise.

If Varoufakis and others really want to learn lessons from Weimar Germany, they should remember that the rise of the Nazi Party was at least as much caused by the material economic effects of the Versailles Treaty and the Great Depression as by the psychological consequences of the framing of the two. As Weimar Germany was largely a democracy without democrats, contemporary Greece is largely a liberal democracy without liberal democrats (see [Chap. 3](#)). Just like in Greece today, anti-Semitism was rampant in Weimar Germany.

However, while anti-Semitic conspiracies were highly popular in other countries in the 1930s too, including Austria and France, Weimar

Germany had an even more toxic conspiracy theory. The ‘Dolchstoßlegende’ (Stab-in-the-Back Myth) emerged already at the end of the First World War and was spoon-fed to ordinary Germans by a broad range of elites. The accusation was that the capitulation of Germany and the consequent Treaty of Versailles were the result of a stab in the back by a ‘fifth column’ and a ‘traitorous elite’ who did the bidding of hostile international forces.

Sound familiar?

7 THE KEY LESSON FROM SYRIZA’s DEFEAT? A DIFFERENT EUROPE REQUIRES BOTH IDEOLOGY AND COMPETENCE

As Alexis Tsipras is still trying to steer the almost universally disliked aGreekment through the parliament without destroying his own party, the increasingly misnamed SYRIZA, disappointed (ex-)supporters of SYRIZA as well as relieved pro-EU elites have started to write the narrative of SYRIZA’s defeat.¹⁰ While the former continue to get stuck in externalising guilt through toxic discourses of ‘blackmail’ and ‘humiliation’ or the broad variety of conspiracy theories surrounding #ThisIsACoup, the latter mainly argue that it was SYRIZA’s ‘radical left,’ ‘populist’ or ‘ideological’ nature that led it to fail – implying that *all* similar ideological projects are destined to fail.

Obviously, there was no ‘coup’ and, although many Greeks might feel genuinely ‘humiliated’, they are not the ‘victim’ of ‘blackmail’. Blackmail means ‘an action, treated as a criminal offense, of demanding money from a person in return for not revealing compromising or injurious information about that person’. Not only does Greece *receive* money from the alleged blackmailers, rather than being asked to pay them, but no ‘revealing compromising or injurious information’ about Greece or its leaders are being threatened to be revealed. What has happened in Brussels, as happens all over the world every day, is that a strong partner has proposed a rough deal to a weak partner and has been unwilling to seriously consider any of the weak partner’s arguments. The weak partner *chose* to accept that rough deal, however. There was an alternative, the Grexit, which the Greek government *chose* not to pursue. All of this was done openly, or at least as open as the opaque politics of the EU allow. One can hardly accuse German Minister of Finance Wolfgang Schäuble of being shy of expressing his preferences.

On the other side of the argument, there was little ‘radical left’ about SYRIZA’s proposals regarding the softening of austerity – which find basic support among mainstream economists and other experts alike. Second,

while its populism created a toxic political environment, in which SYRIZA opponents are attacked as ‘fifth column of Germany’ or ‘terrorists’, most established politicians *are* professionals, who will overcome their personal dislikes if the rewards are high enough – as was made clear by the pro-Memorandum parties signing Tsipras’ ‘Joint Statement’ and consistently voting in favour of the agreement in parliament. Third, the Blairist dogma that left-wing politics can only be achieved through ‘pragmatism’ has little empirical basis. Most notably, Blairism itself realised few left-wing goals either.

While a radical left and populist ideology hasn’t helped SYRIZA in its negotiations with the EU, they were an indirect rather than direct cause of its ultimate failure. In fact, in a recent interview, one of the most prominent and vocal (former?) Tsipras supporters, Nobel Prize economist Paul Krugman, made his most accurate observation on the Greek crisis, saying rather euphemistically, ‘I may have overestimated the competence of the Greek government.’ You did Paul, and so did most other international fellow travellers – I tend to believe that many Greek voters didn’t so much believe in SYRIZA’s abilities to achieve change, but rather didn’t see any better alternative.

SYRIZA failed, first and foremost, because the party and its leaders – not even speaking of its coalition partner ANEL – were ill-prepared to govern. They were wilful amateurs taken to the cleaners by rigid but experienced politicians like Schäuble. Blinded by their ideology, they were convinced that their argument was absolutely right and they only needed the support of the majority of the Greek people – hence the Greferendum – to convince the rest of the EU of their superior insight.

The best example of this righteous amateurism is undoubtedly the newest darling of Europe’s *gauche caviar*, Yanis Varoufakis, the now ex-Minister of Finance. In his first (of undoubtedly many) tell-all interview¹¹ after resigning, he complained about trying to ‘talk economics’ in the Eurogroup but being met by a ‘point blank refusal to engage in economic arguments’. Most striking of his statements, however, is his follow-up: ‘And that’s startling, for somebody who’s used to academic debate.’ As most academics who have dealt even occasionally with policymakers know, politicians are not interested in long, theoretical ‘lectures’. Moreover, several Eurogroup members were particularly not interested in being ‘lectured to’ by the person who owed them money.

Obviously, the fundamental problem of SYRIZA is that it made up a ‘Third Way’ of bailouts without austerity, which it was able to sell to a

plurality of desperate Greek voters, despite it being continuously and openly rejected by the other Eurozone members. SYRIZA politicians knew this at least since the 2012 elections, but chose to devote all of their time to criticising the established parties and promoting their unrealistic alternative. They did not start to lay the groundwork for possible future negotiations with the Troika.

First of all, they did not develop at least a rudimentary plan for a fall-back option, i.e. a Grexit. Varoufakis recently claimed that they only debated some alternative measures on the night of the Greferendum – oh the irony – but that he couldn't convince his inner-circle colleagues of their feasibility. Even if it is true that Tsipras and others approached a slew of non-EU countries – China, Iran and Russia – in 2014, to secure funding for a possible Grexit, this hardly counts as preparation of a fall-back option. Rather, the fact that they seriously thought that, most notably, Russia would be able and willing to bankroll a Grexit – as it struggles through an economic crisis of its own as well as EU and US sanctions – is painful proof of their lack of understanding of the international political context.

Second, and even more important, SYRIZA failed to muster international support for its preferred alternative. As we learned from the recent negotiations, French and Italian social democrats were open to a softening of the austerity conditions. But rather than reaching out to possible mainstream allies, particularly in other hard-hit countries, SYRIZA politicians criticised several South European countries for their handling of the crisis and debt. Its key strategy seems to have been to wait for other ‘radical left’ parties to come to power in Southern Europe and then to collectively renegotiate the Memorandum. The obvious problem was one of sequencing. Greece *had* to negotiate its deals well before the other countries held elections – leaving aside the fact that there were few indications that other radical left parties would become the dominant party in a new government.

Consequently, when Tsipras met his counterparts in Brussels, he had neither real allies nor a fall-back option. It was only then, under extreme public and time pressure that he tried to sell his alternative to the other European leaders. When they called his bluff, he couldn't threaten with a Grexit, and instead went for ‘a democratic mandate’. But while the ‘no’ vote in the Greferendum took most Eurogroup leaders by surprise, it obviously didn't really affect their position. After all, their own democratic mandates come from their own voters, and in many countries the voters were far from sympathetic to the Greek plight. Note, for example, that

Tsipras' current approval rating of roughly 60 per cent is more than matched by Schauble's 70 per cent – not to speak of the fact that there are almost eight times more Germans than Greeks.

Consequently, the most important broader lesson to learn is not that ‘a different Europe’ is necessarily impossible – although it is debatable¹² that it is possible within the EU. But whether inside or outside the EU, *if* a different Europe is indeed possible, it can only be achieved by competent, well-prepared politicians. This is not to say that they have to be mainstream or even professional politicians; in fact, several SYRIZA members are professional politicians and/or come from the mainstream (e.g. PASOK).

Politicians who want to create a different Europe have to accept, however reluctantly, that politics is a profession with specific rules and skills. To achieve anything in politics, including changing the rules, you have to master ‘the art of the possible’, as conservative German statesman Otto von Bismarck famously said, rather than merely trumpet ‘the truth’.

8 WHY WE HAVE NEW GREEK ELECTIONS, WHY TSIPRAS WILL WIN AND WHY IT ALL DOESN'T MATTER TOO MUCH

Never a dull moment in Greece. A summer full of drama, ultimately, and predictably, ended in a third Greek bailout that virtually no one really supported, but almost everyone nevertheless voted for.¹³ Outgoing Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras resigned as soon as the third bailout, which he still officially considers a national ‘humiliation’, was safe.

His argumentation was as beautiful as it was unbelievable: ‘I feel the deep ethical and political responsibility to put to your judgment all I have done, successes and failures.’ Remember, this is the same man who initiated the Greferendum to get the Greek people’s support for his opposition to a very similar deal. He then turned the resounding and unexpected 61 per cent ‘OXI’ (no) vote into a quick and deciding ‘NAI’ (yes) to an even worse deal.

Just like the Greferendum, the new elections are not about democracy or the voice of the Greek people. They are about increasing the power of Tsipras within his own party, the increasingly misnamed SYRIZA, and within Greece. For the past eight months Tsipras has been governing against a growing part of his own party and fully dependent upon the opposition. As soon as Tsipras switched his position, and pushed through the third bailout, new elections were inevitable.

First, the current crop of SYRIZA MPs is strongly divided over Tsipras' moderate course and is increasingly undermining his position as Prime Minister. Second, Tsipras is governing with an unnatural coalition partner, the ANEL. While ANEL was the only other party to oppose the Memorandum while supporting the Eurozone, almost all its other policies are diagonally opposed to those of SYRIZA – for example, on defence, immigration, and the Orthodox Church. Third, the opposition will not continue to bail out Tsipras on any other issues, now that the third bailout is secure – which is, ironically, what the opposition parties campaigned for and SYRIZA–ANEL campaigned against in the January 2015 elections.

The fact that Tsipras has called the new elections now, and wants to hold them as soon as possible, shows his Machiavellian instincts. There are several important things going for him, but they could run out soon.

First, despite making a 180 degree turn on his main campaign point, Tsipras is still by far the most popular politician in Greece. While no polls have been released in the past weeks, due to the holidays, earlier polls showed that just over 50 per cent of Greeks approved of the terms Tsipras negotiated in the third bailout and that nearly 70 per cent of Greeks wanted him to lead the country.

Second, the internal opposition is not yet organised. The day Tsipras called for new elections, 25 SYRIZA MPs left the party and founded a new party, Popular Unity. Led by the unofficial leader of the radical left faction, Panagiotis Lafazanis, Popular Unity wants to be the voice of the ‘OXI’ vote, i.e. SYRIZA before Tsipras’ ‘betrayal’. The problem is that most Greeks are tired of fighting the EU and will fear that the new party will steer the country towards a very unpopular Grexit, an option explicitly entertained by Lafazanis.

Third, the external opposition is in disarray too. SYRIZA’s main opponent, the right-wing and pro-bailout ND, lost its leader after its dramatic campaign in the Greferendum and a new leader has not yet been elected. Whoever it will be, he or she will not be able to establish him/herself as a serious opponent of Tsipras within a month. Recent polls had SYRIZA first at over 30 per cent and ND second with under 20 per cent. Given Greece’s electoral system, which awards an additional 50 seats (one-sixth of the total seats in the unicameral parliament) to the largest party, this is very good news for Tsipras.

Moreover, other parties are fighting for survival. The centre-right and pro-bailout To Potami (The River) polls third with a mere 6 per cent, while

the anti-EU neo-Nazi XA party has fallen back to fourth with 5 per cent, as its whole leadership is on trial for leading a criminal organisation. Most other parties hover around the 3 per cent threshold, including the pro-EU centre-right PASOK, the anti-EU KKE and SYRIZA's former coalition partner ANEL.

Fourth, time is of the essence because the consequences of the third bailout are going to be felt very soon, not least by the electorate of SYRIZA. And while Tsipras will undoubtedly continue to externalise guilt, blaming Germany and the former Greek governments for leaving him 'no choice', more and more Greek people will start to hold him at least partially responsible for the inevitable austerity policies.

As a consequence of all of this, the upcoming elections will not be too exciting. They might be the first Greek elections since 2007 that is not a referendum on the bailouts. But they will be a clear victory for Tsipras. Ironically, after achieving his political success on the basis of his rejection of the old party's argument that the Memorandum is a TINA issue (There Is No Alternative), Tsipras himself has become the TINA of Greek politics. The only remaining question is: Will he again need a coalition partner? In the end though, it all won't matter much, as the new government, irrespective of the parties that constitute it, will be held to the conditions of the third bailout, which leaves it precious little room for political experiments.

9 GREEK ELECTION: FIVE KEY TAKEAWAYS

The conclusion after many European elections in recent years has been that while much has changed, everything stays the same.¹⁴ In fact, this now also best describes the 'historic' Greek elections of January 2015, which did not bring the hoped (and promised) end of austerity in Europe in general, and Greece in particular. Today's Greek elections are almost the opposite: while everything seems to stay the same, some important things have in fact changed. Let me highlight five.

SYRIZA Is Now Truly Tsipras' Party

The only reason that PM Alexis Tsipras called for the September elections was to weed out the (real) radicals from his increasingly misnamed SYRIZA. Faced with a parliamentary faction of at least one-third 'dissidents', i.e. MPs opposed to the third bailout and the more moderate

course of Tsipras, he by and large called a Greek election to solve a SYRIZA problem. Ironically, Tsipras realised that he was more popular in the country than in his own political party, so a national election was more expedient for him, not necessarily the country, than a party election.

And he got exactly what he hoped for. While the party will have a similar number of MPs, the new and remaining SYRIZA MPs will (blindly) follow their leader. With SYRIZA unscratched and Popular Unity of the dissidents below the electoral threshold, they will realise that Tsipras is their only ticket to success. Hence, the elections have significantly increased Tsipras' power in his party and therefore in the country. In fact, he has even strengthened his position in Europe, as he can (rightly) argue that the 'radical' elements are no longer (relevant) in the party.

A SYRIZA-ANEL Coalition Lost Its Raison D'être

Many people were initially disappointed and shocked that the 'radical left' SYRIZA would form a coalition with the 'radical right' ANEL. Leaving aside that neither was really that radical, the coalition actually made perfect sense in the worldview of both parties, the only two pro-EU but anti-Memorandum parties in the Greek parliament. However, the Memorandum is now a reality that even SYRIZA and Independent Greeks have accepted, grudgingly and under a different name. Consequently, there is no longer a raison d'être for a SYRIZA-ANEL coalition.

If Tsipras chooses to continue his coalition with ANEL, as is widely speculated, this is either a disturbing ideological choice – indicating that the 'patriotic left' is more patriotic than left – or a disturbing tactical choice – as Tsipras was the first to rule out any coalition with 'the old forces', i.e. ND, PASOK and The River (To Potami). While it makes sense for SYRIZA to stay away from a 'Grand Coalition' with ND, which would only further increase the deep dissatisfaction with Greek politics, PASOK and To Potami share more of SYRIZA's alleged progressive politics than the ultra-conservative ANEL.

The Brown Bogeyman Is No More

While it remains disturbing that a political party that has an anti-democratic ideology and has been involved in endemic violence is the

third largest party in the country, all the opportunistic and sensationalist warnings of a huge rise of the neo-Nazi XA have predictably proven wrong. Its modest increase is mostly an effect of the combination of a remarkably loyal support base and a lower turnout (see below). It is clear that roughly 5 per cent of the Greek population supports XA, accepting that it is a violent neo-Nazi party, and will almost always come out to vote. But this makes XA less like the French Front National, a party that has systematically broadened and increased its support base, and more like the KKE, catering to a devoted but relatively stable subcultural base.

It is therefore time for Greek politicians of left, centre and right to stop using the brown bogeyman to push through unpopular decisions. At the same time, the Greek state should do all it can to ensure that no more youth get sucked into the neo-Nazi subculture. One of the most important ways to do this is by ensuring that the court case against XA is well prepared and well executed. So far it doesn't look good, with endless postponements and more confusion than dedication on the side of the prosecution.

The Biggest Party Is the Non-voter

In January it was already very close, but in the end SYRIZA had a higher percentage of votes than the percentage of non-voters. This time the non-voters win convincingly (almost 10 per cent higher!). There is nothing remarkable about non-voters being the largest group in elections in Europe – in fact, this is increasingly becoming the norm in both national and European elections. However, this is the first time that non-voters are the largest bloc in a country that has *compulsory* voting – even though it is no longer strictly enforced. Imagine that, in a country where people are obliged to vote, more than one-third would rather break the law than turn out to vote for one of the parties! It makes one wonder what the turnout would be if there would have been no compulsory voting.

Greek Politics Is Now Officially Post-Memorandum

The final, and most important, change is that, for the first time since at least the May 2012 elections, Greek politics is officially post-Memorandum, in the sense that the negotiations with the EU are no longer the dominant issue on the agenda. Obviously, the constraints of

the conditions of the various bailouts will continue to seriously limit the political space of the governing coalition; the key focus of people and politicians will now slowly but steadily turn to domestic politics. While this provides enormous opportunities to the government parties, it is doubtful that they will be able to profit from them. After all, both ANEL and SYRIZA have almost exclusively campaigned on the Memorandum. Moreover, they have so far never owned up to their decision, instead arguing that the EU ‘blackmailed’ or ‘humiliated’ them into making these decisions. This is getting old fast and the Greek people will want to hear a new tune.

After years of blaming the other parties and claiming to have no choice, Tsipras will now have to actually lead the country into a new era. While Greece remains a semi-sovereign country in the post-Memorandum era, Tsipras has at least as much power as his predecessors had. He also has been able to convince the Greek people that he is the TINA (There Is No Alternative) candidate . . . for now. This was the last election that Tsipras could win purely on the basis of the failure of the other candidates. The next time, be it in one year or in four, voters will judge him, rather than his opponents. Is Tsipras ready for this?

10 TSIPRAS AND THE CHOICE OF THE TWO PASOKS

Asking someone to predict the (mid-term) future of Greek politics is probably more a test of someone’s character than a true journalistic inquiry.¹⁵ Only someone really arrogant or foolish would claim to know what comes next in a country that is still undergoing fundamental economic, social and therefore political upheaval. Still, hiding behind the fact that I was invited to do so, I will take up the challenge, accepting fully well that I will probably be proven wrong within a matter of years (if not months).

There are only two real certainties in contemporary Greek politics. First, it will not return to the – bad or good, depending on your point of view – old days of the pre-crisis period. Not only is PASOK forever gone as a major party in Greece, but the era of two dominant parties is coming to an end across Europe – both in concentrated multiparty systems like Austria and Greece and in two-party systems like the United Kingdom (Malta being a notable exception). Second, the KKE will remain a strong subcultural party with no real political relevance, hovering between 5 and 10 per cent of the vote in national elections. No LE or other splinter of the SYRIZA can change anything about that. Besides these two points, all bets are off.

XA has a fair chance at becoming the KKE of the (extreme) right, i.e. a strong subcultural party with little direct political power that is able to attract the same 5 to 10 per cent of the electorate – its percentage mainly depending on the general turnout. The only thing that can really impact its future is the ongoing court case. If XA is ruled a criminal organisation, it will probably push the electoral support under the 3 per cent required for representation in Parliament. If the party is acquitted, or the case simply fails to come to any clear conclusion (as I expect), it will mainly further consolidate the already solid support of its current supporters.

Unlike the PASOK, ND has been able to survive the political mayhem of the economic crisis, albeit at the cost of about a third of its electorate. While it will continue to constitute the main right-wing pillar of the Greek party system, ND will probably not grow much beyond one-third of the electorate. The main reason is that the party is internally divided between the dominant mainstream conservative camp and a smaller, but significant, radical nationalist faction. With the Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS) has disappeared into political oblivion, and ANEL heading there, there is a sizeable electorate up for grabs to the right of the ND, which XA will not be able to court. A new populist radical right party is only a matter of time and I would expect it to come from within ND, rather than from outside of it, perhaps from circles around former LAOS members like Makis Voridis.

Less predictable is the future of To Potami. Centrist pro-EU parties have always struggled in Greece and the economic crisis has not helped. Even if individual elites could overcome their internal divisions, or a truly new political party – that is not related to the at times petty dispute between To Potami and PASOK-DIMAR (and to a lesser extent the Union of Centrists, EK) – could be founded, the future of that new centrist party is largely dependent upon the course of the two major parties. If either ND or SYRIZA, let alone both, moves to a more centrist and pro-EU position, it will compete for a part of the electorate that the new party will desperately need to establish itself as a viable third party (and, thereby, kingmaker in the coalition game).

The obvious elephant in the room is SYRIZA and its now all-powerful leader, Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras. Calling for elections after just six months has given him all he wanted – i.e. a much more homogeneous party that is completely dominated by his inner circle (see Sect. 9) – but he is living on borrowed political time. His victory was mainly a defeat of his opponents, most of which were still struggling to get themselves organised

after fundamental internal changes (most notably ND and LE). They will be better organised in the next elections, even if they will be sooner rather than later, as many expect. Moreover, Tsipras called the elections before the Greek people had been confronted with the consequences of the third bailout, which meant that he could still get away with his ambivalent position toward the bailout in particular, and the EU in general – ‘I don’t really support them, but they are the best we could do.’

In the coming months, Tsipras will have to choose what party he wants SYRIZA to become. Many in the EU are hoping for a modern social democratic party, pro-capitalism and pro-EU – what PASOK seemed to be transforming into before the economic crisis wiped it out. There are very few indications that this is his preferred option, however. In fact, the choice to continue the coalition with ANEL, rather than PASOK-DIMAR or To Potami, seems to indicate that Tsipras is looking for another PASOK, the patriotic left-wing populist party of Andreas Papandreou: fiery in rhetoric, pragmatic in policy. The problem is that the original PASOK was built not so much on rhetoric or policy but on clientelism. That is difficult to imitate within the current EU, let alone in a period of austerity and a sizably decreased public sector.

In short, the future of Greek politics is far from clear, beyond the plausible claims that ND will be the dominant right-wing pillar of a polarised multiparty system with two solid but small subcultural extremes, KKE on the left and XA on the right. Everything else is in the hands of Tsipras and his choice of which PASOK he wants to transform SYRIZA into.

11 AFTER ONE YEAR IN GOVERNMENT, SYRIZA AND GREECE ARE MORE ISOLATED THAN EVER

One year ago today the left-wing populist SYRIZA won the Greek parliamentary elections; the first time since the re-introduction of democracy in 1974 that another party than the two dinosaurs of the post-dictatorship democracy, the centre-left PASOK and the centre-right ND, came first.¹⁶ While the success of SYRIZA was expected, its choice of coalition partner took many by surprise, not in the least its many (foreign) supporters. And yet, the choice for the right-wing populist ANEL made perfect sense at that point in time (see Chap. 1).

SYRIZA had won the elections on the basis of its Third Way proposal on the Memorandum, which governed the relationship between the Troika – the European Commission (EC), the European Central Bank

(ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) – and Greece after several bailouts. ANEL was the only other parliamentary party to support its utopian ‘No to the Memorandum, Yes to the Eurozone’ position. Hence, SYRIZA leader, and new Prime Minister, Alexis Tsipras had no other choice than to form a government with ANEL in an attempt to try and re-negotiate the bailout conditions in the way he had promised his voters.

Nine months later, the still fresh, though worn down, Prime Minister handed in his resignation and brought Greece to the polls for the fourth time in just over three years. No one, not even Tsipras, argued that the first SYRIZA–ANEL government had been a success. Personified in its flamboyant Finance Minister, Yanis Varoufakis, SYRIZA went for an all-out moral battle with the Troika, assuming that it possessed the absolute truth and that its opponents – in classic populist parlour increasingly demonised as ‘enemies’, ‘traitors’ and even ‘terrorists’ – would see the light once it had been shined upon them. But as Varoufakis lectured economics at Eurogroup meetings, his colleagues became increasingly entrenched in their original positions and lost their little remaining sympathy for the plight of the ‘radical left’ Greek government.

To break the deadlock Tsipras pulled out his joker, a snap referendum on an incomprehensible issue, which only made sense in SYRIZA’s world-vision of an epic battle between ‘democratic Greece “and the” technocratic Troika’ – as if other Eurozone ministers, like the Dutch Jeroen Dijsselbloem and the German Wolfgang Schäuble, did not have a democratic mandate for their austerity policies within their own countries. SYRIZA won the Greferendum convincingly, 61 per cent voted ‘Oxi’ (no), but soon found that nothing had changed outside of Greece (see [Chap. 4](#)). Consequently, Tsipras ignored the referendum results, betrayed his ‘democratic mandate’ and accepted a bailout package that was even more disadvantageous for Greece than the deal he and his supporters had rejected in the referendum.

Soon after, Tsipras called for new elections, taking his many opponents within and outside of his own party by surprise (see [Sect. 8](#)). Despite the rollercoaster that Greece had gone through between January and September, the election results showed remarkably little changes at the aggregate level. Most shifts were within the 1 per cent range; only the liberal To Potami (The River) lost 2 per cent. Still, Tsipras emerged from the elections strengthened, having cleansed SYRIZA of most of his most

ardent opponents and with the main opposition party (ND) leaderless for the moment. Once again he chose ANEL as his coalition partner, but this time the logic was much less convincing.

Having accepted, however reluctantly, the new bailout and its harsh conditions, the new government was going to be seriously constrained on socio-economic policies. Logically, it should have shifted its focus to state reform and socio-cultural issues, which were always important to the party and its supporters. On these issues ANEL was among the least likely available partners. However, SYRIZA was left little choice after months of polarising the political debate. How could it work with parties like the centre-left PASOK-DIMAR and the centrist To Potami, after accusing them of being part of the ‘corrupt’ and ‘traitorous’ elite? That said, it doesn’t seem that Tsipras ever seriously considered an alternative to ANEL. He and ANEL leader Panos Kammenos seemed to have developed a clear and stable working relationship, in which SYRIZA could govern almost unhindered, as long as it stayed away from Kammenos’s Ministry of Defence.

What Tsipras seem to have miscalculated, however, is that ANEL’s passiveness relates primarily to socio-economic issues, which are secondary to that party. When it comes to socio-cultural issues, particularly those central to SYRIZA, ANEL does not only have a different opinion, it has a strong opinion. This is particularly the case with respect to two traditional sensitivities of the Greek left, the powerful position of the Greek Orthodox Church and of the military.

The political power of the Greek Orthodox Church is unlike almost any other within the EU and is perfectly illustrated by the fact that Greek governments are sworn in under the watchful eye of Orthodox bishops. The SYRIZA–ANEL governments were no exception.

Similarly, the Greek military remains one of the most expensive within the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). The country spent a whopping 2.4 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP) on the military in 2015. Despite the fact that the Greek economy has collapsed during the Great Recession, with GDP falling from \$355 billion in 2008 to \$238 billion in 2014 (a loss of one-third!), the Greek military has seen few cuts, and even increased its budget by 0.1 per cent of GDP in 2014.

After one year in power the Church and the Military remain as powerful as ever. As Vassilis Petsinis¹⁷ has shown, SYRIZA has by and large given up on its pledge to reduce their importance, facing strong opposition from ANEL. This has reduced the party’s policy agenda even further, even on

socio-cultural issues. Among its few successes was the new legislation passed last month, legalising civil unions of LGBT couples. While far from insignificant, particularly for the couple involved, it is at best a minor victory and hardly puts Greece at the forefront of gay rights in the EU.

The refugee crisis could have given SYRIZA a chance to regain its standing within the EU and the national and international left. With more than 80 per cent of refugees entering Europe through Greece, the country has been at the forefront of the EU's struggle to control the unprecedented influx. But where many ordinary Greeks have gone far beyond the expected by providing emergency services for stranded refugees, despite their own economic plight, the Greek government has mainly failed in its, admittedly very demanding, task to orderly shelter and register them.

As Tsipras makes (laudable) normative appeals for a more humane EU refugee policy, his government's practical incompetence undermines the chances of them catching on among his crucial partners in the north. In fact, rather than transforming the refugee crisis from a crisis into an opportunity, as Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has so skilfully done, Tsipras has again made Greece the whipping boy of the EU in general, and Germany in particular. It is now even facing a possible Schengen area expulsion.

While SYRIZA created neither the economic crisis nor the refugee crisis, its incompetence and opportunism have worsened their impacts on Greece and have undermined the country's position within Europe. Tsipras is still thinking that lofty speeches are enough to change policies and realities, investing little effort and time in building constructive and lasting coalitions within Greece or the EU. By not making a choice between returning SYRIZA to its radical left roots or transforming it into a 'responsible' centre-left party (see Sect. 10), and instead muddling through with a mix of these two fundamentally opposed models, he remains politically isolated and therefore easily defeated, both at home, including by his own coalition partner, and abroad.

NOTES

1. It was first published at *Open Democracy* on 25 January 2015.
2. It was first published in *The Guardian* on 17 February 2015.
3. It was first published at *The Huffington Post* on 16 March 2015.
4. It was first published at *The Huffington Post* on 27 June 2015.

5. It was first published at *The Conversation* on 6 June 2015.
6. It was first published at *The Conversation* on 15 July 2015.
7. See Alex McClintock, ‘Greek Bailout a “New Versailles Treaty”, Says Former Finance Minister Varoufakis’, *ABC*, 13 July 2015, available at: <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/latenightlive/greek-bail-out-deal-'a-new-versailles-treaty':-yanis-varoufakis/6616532> (McClintock 2015)
8. See Cas Mudde, ‘The European Elite’s Politics of Fear’, *Open Democracy*, 18 March 2013b, available at: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/cas-mudde/european-elites-politics-of-fear>. (Mudde 2013b)
9. See more at: <http://www.electograph.com/2015/07/greece-july-2015-metron-analysis-poll.html>
10. It was first published at *Open Democracy* on 23 July 2015.
11. See Harry Lambert, ‘Yanis Varoufakis Full Manuscript: Our Battle To Save Greece’, *New Statesman*, 13 July 2015, available at: <http://www.newstatesman.com/world-affairs/2015/07/yanis-varoufakis-full-transcript-our-battle-save-greece> (Lambert 2015)
12. See Cas Mudde, ‘It’s Time to End the Eurosceptic Illusions’, *Open Democracy*, 13 July 2015, available at: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/cas-mudde/it%E2%80%99s-time-to-end-eurosceptic-illusions>. (Mudde 2015)
13. It was first published at *The Huffington Post* on 24 August 2015.
14. It was first published at *The Huffington Post* on 20 September 2015.
15. It was first published at *eKathimerini* on 8 October 2015.
16. It was first published at *The Huffington Post* on 25 January 2016.
17. See Vassilis Petsinis, ‘Syriza One Year On: What Happened To the Radical Left in Greece?’, *Open Democracy*, 25 January 2016, available at: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/vassilis-petsinis/syriza-one-year-on-what-happened-to-radical-left-dream-in-grec> (Petsinis 2016)

CHAPTER 3

Interviews About Right and Left Populism, Radicalism, Extremism and SYRIZA

Abstract The first interview discusses the far right in Europe and Greece, the relationship between radical right parties and violence and the importance of the economic crisis for the success of these groups. It focuses on the radical right party LAOS, which created the political space for the rise of the extreme right XA. The second is about the key characteristics of populist radical right parties in Europe and Greece, and the relationship between populism and liberal democracy, especially in Greece. The third discusses the dangers of populism in Greece and beyond. It assesses SYRIZA's first year in office, arguing that its incompetence is as much to blame for its failures as the EU's neoliberal stubbornness. Finally, it debates the possibilities for a post-neoliberal EU.

Keywords European Union · Golden Dawn · Greece · Far right · Populism · SYRIZA

1 WHATEVER WE ARE AFRAID OF IN POLITICS Is NOT ALWAYS FASCISM

Interview with Elina Tzanoudaki¹

The Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS), as many other parties of the same political party family in Europe, is not a democratic party, according to Cas Mudde, a political scientist who has been studying

the phenomenon of the European far right for decades. In this interview, made on the occasion of the publication of the Greek edition of his book Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe, he explains the common characteristics and the differences of the parties that belong to this political party family, and he talks about their populist characteristics, their xenophobia, their strengths and weaknesses... How should democracy respond to this type of political parties? With more democracy.

The Popular Orthodox Rally is one of the conservative right parties which ‘wish to redesign the European Union to be inter-statey governed’ and the state members to regain some of the powers they have transferred to the EU institutions. Although it is not a fascist party, its participation in Papademos coalition government has a symbolic significance. The two mainstream parties have accepted LAOS as a governing partner. I believe that was a mistake, both because of the party’s ideology and because there was not any electoral or political need whatsoever for that.’

Cas Mudde’s book, which won the Stein Rokkan Prize and was named a Choice Outstanding Academic Title in 2008, provides a comprehensive analysis on a current phenomenon, considering the success of many ‘populist radical right parties’ both in Western and Eastern Europe in the last decade, and the debate that this has caused. Is their success a consequence of the economic crisis? According to Mudde, these parties do not benefit from crises, mostly because economic issues are secondary to their agendas. In this interview, Mudde also talks about their common ideological characteristics, their Euroscepticism, their relation to political violence, their Islamophobia...

Elina Tzanoudaki

How much does the economic upheaval in Europe contribute to the strengthening of extreme right-wing parties?

In the short run, the economic crisis does not provide a general advantage to radical right parties in Europe, as people paradoxically trust established parties and politicians in times of economic crisis. Moreover, for most radical right parties economic issues are secondary, which means that in times of crisis these parties become less relevant, as they do not have too much to say on the main issues of the day. That said, the economic crisis will increase feelings of insecurity and political resentment, which can profit the radical right once the economic situation has stabilised.

Which factors account for the electoral success of extreme right-wing parties and their gravitational pull on the political centre?

Radical right parties profit from the general shift from socio-economic issue to socio-cultural issues, which has taken place since the 1970s and is temporarily reversed as a consequence of the economic crisis. They also profit from the development of multicultural societies, from the fact that in most European democracies all major parties have been in government (coalition) at one time or another, and from European integration. Their main issues are linked to these developments: immigration, European integration, crime and corruption.

How difficult is it for extreme right-wing parties to keep a balance between their traditional voters and the need to appeal to new social strata in order to broaden their support?

Not necessarily more problematic than for other political parties. Few radical right parties have neither a significant portion of ‘traditional voters’ nor a competitor ‘on the right’, so they have some space to manoeuvre. Their main problem is with their members, who (as in all parties) tend to be more radical than the leaders and voters, and therefore less inclined to accept moderation. However, unlike most established parties (i.e. from centre-left to centre-right), radical right parties have a lower ‘natural maximum’, because there is a sizeable portion of the population that would never vote for them (the same applies, e.g., to radical left or Green parties). Hence, radical right parties might reach their ceiling earlier, when they gain around 20–25 per cent of the vote, at which time they are caught in a different, if related, conundrum: continue opposition, which allows for ideological purity but could lead to political frustration among more moderate voters (who want to weigh on policies), or join the government (which leads to the opposite).

Which are the sources of populism in Europe?

Populism is a form of anti-establishment sentiment. Hence, it profits from this broader sentiment, which has grown as a consequence of a broad range of social and political developments (see earlier). But it adds a particular dimension to it, the trust in ‘the people’, which is a fairly recent phenomenon in Europe, which has a fairly elitist history. The specific trust in the people is in part a consequence of what the American political scientist Russell Dalton has called ‘the cognitive revolution’; as people got better educated, they also became more self-confident in political

matters. Consequently, many people are no longer willing to simply follow their leaders, because the latter would be better educated or prepared for political office. So, while many frustrated people would look for other elites before, they now increasingly look for politicians like them, i.e. politicians who claim to be ‘the voice of the people’.

Is there a common ideological platform across Europe among right-wing parties?

Yes! All populist radical right parties share at least the combination of nativism, authoritarianism and populism. Hence, they want a monocultural state, in which ‘aliens’ are perceived as threatening, strict law and order policies and an anti-elite politics based on the ‘common sense’ of the people. These three ideologies features connect to the issues listed earlier, i.e. immigration and European integration (nativism), crime (authoritarianism) and corruption (populism). Individual parties will have additional core ideological features, such as anti-Semitism or welfare chauvinism, but these features are not shared by the whole ‘party family’.

What about extreme right-wing parties’ stance towards European integration? Are all far-right parties anti-European? LAOS, for instance, the Greek extreme right-wing party is very pro-European, at least in rhetorical terms, while at the same time viscerally nationalistic. How do you explain this phenomenon?

Most radical right parties will claim to be pro-European, but anti-EU. What they mean by this is that they do support cooperation between European countries, but without the alleged overly bureaucratic and supranational structure of the EU. This fairly vague position is interpreted very differently by the different parties: most parties want to restructure the EU, making it more intergovernmental rather than supranational (i.e. giving back more power to the member states), but some want to dismantle the EU or at least have their country withdraw from it. LAOS will probably fall within the first category. I would assume that the current economic crisis, and particularly the various ‘bailouts’, will further undermine the enthusiasm of the radical right for the EU. North European parties will be annoyed to have to pay for other countries, particularly at a time that many already oppose proposed budget cuts (for pensioners, etc.), while South European parties will be annoyed about the political conditions of the bailouts, undermining their national sovereignty.

Would you describe extreme right-wing parties as fascist?

No! In essence, fascists are anti-democratic, i.e. opposing popular sovereignty and majority rule. The contemporary radical right accepts these key principles of democracy, but opposes certain aspects of liberal democracy, i.e. pluralism and (constitutional) protection of minority rights. Using labels like fascism and (neo-)Nazism to describe the contemporary parties does not only lead to the wrong analysis of the dangers, and hence solutions, it also makes them look less dangerous than they are. After all, compared to wanting to exterminate all Jews, the proposal to remigrate all ‘aliens’ doesn’t sound that intolerant or threatening. We have to move beyond the idea that everything that we fear or don’t like in politics is equated with fascism; not only is it disrespectful to the millions of victims of (real) fascism, it forces us to ask the wrong questions and leads to overreactions from the state (such as bans on demonstrations or even political parties).

What do you think about LAOS participation in Greece’s new unity government which has been highly criticised by the left? Many argued that this amounts to something like a fascist takeover.

I was quite surprised, although I must admit that I don’t follow Greek politics closely. While I understand the call for a national unity government, this was never a realistic possibility given the rejection by the two left-wing parliamentary party. Given this situation, and the fact that ND and PASOK together have a very comfortable (constitutional) majority in parliament, it doesn’t make that much sense for them to include LAOS – except when they worry about losing disgruntled voters to LAOS, which logically should be (much) more a concern for ND than PASOK.

That said, to liken it to a fascist takeover is completely absurd. First of all, the whole procedure has been 100 per cent democratic. Second, LAOS holds only one of the nineteen cabinet posts, which means it has virtually no power in the government. Third, as ND and PASOK hold a huge majority in parliament, LAOS also holds no power there. If there is any relevance to the inclusion of LAOS it is symbolic, i.e. the two main parties have officially deemed LAOS *Koalitionsfähig* (i.e. an acceptable coalition partner). I think that is unfortunate, given the party’s ideology and the lack of electoral or political necessity to include the party.

Can far-right political rhetoric motivate extreme forms of violence?

Yes, of course. Any rhetoric can motivate violent behaviour. The more relevant question is, (1) how big is this threat and (2) is it worth limiting the freedom of speech? Regarding the first point, extreme right violence is still relatively rare, although at times deadly (!), even in countries with widespread radical right rhetoric (like Denmark, France or the Netherlands). At the same time, extreme right violence is at least as prevalent in countries without strong radical right parties (and rhetoric), like the Czech Republic or Germany, as it is in countries with strong radical right parties and rhetoric. Regarding the second point, limiting freedom of speech goes at the heart of liberal democracy and should therefore be done with the utmost caution. Even though extreme right terrorists like Anders Breivik in Norway have clearly been influenced by radical right rhetoric, so have millions of other people who never committed any violence. The relationship is thus at best very selective. It is a bit like banning marihuana to fight heroin addiction. Rather than banning 'far-right' political rhetoric, a democracy and democratic forces (parties and NGOs) should counter it with pluralistic and tolerant rhetoric.

What, in your view, is the relationship between Islam and the extreme right-wing parties? Many compare anti-Islam rhetoric with anti-Jews fascism of the 1930s.

Islamophobia has been part of radical right discourse since the early 1980s, with parties like the Belgian *Vlaams Blok* (Flemish Block, VB) and the French *Front national* (National Front, FN), but it has really become a centrepiece of its propaganda after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. At least within much of contemporary Western Europe, and in some East European countries (like Bulgaria), Islamophobia is now the dominant prejudice of radical right parties, just as anti-Semitism was for fascist (more correctly: Nazi) parties of the 1930s.

However, Islamophobia is a different prejudice than anti-Semitism and is expressed differently by radical right parties (and other parties!). Whereas in anti-Semitic conspiracies just a couple of Jews can form a threat, in Islamophobic conspiracies the threat is in the numbers: a couple of Muslims are not threatening! Also, the Islamophobic discourse does not only include classic ethnic and religious arguments, but also liberal and security argumentation, which make it more acceptable to non-radical right people. Islam, always presented exclusively in its most radical and

intolerant form by Islamophobes, is a threat to the fundamental values of liberal democracy (e.g. gender equality, separation of state and church) and to the basic security of its people (i.e. ‘Jihadist’ terrorism); and not just to ethnic or religious ‘purity’, which only resonates to limited portions of the European populations. But this broader appeal also makes Islamophobia more acceptable to mainstream parties, who thereby compete for Islamophobic votes.

Why are, in your judgement, extreme right-wing parties so much opposed to granting financial assistance to economically distressed countries of Southern Europe and most particularly Greece?

Radical right parties, even more than others, are first and foremost concerned about their own ‘nation’. While they do not oppose solidarity across nations per se, they tend to be suspicious about too much international cooperation, worried as they are about infringements upon national sovereignty. They are also more Eurosceptical than mainstream parties, and therefore not only oppose the economic transfers themselves, but also to the framework (EU and IMF) within which they take place. It is also important to note that while some (left-wing) observers still perceive radical right parties as essentially neoliberal, or as the violent arm of global capital (as the slightly updated version of the classic Marxist fascism theory has it), they are actually fairly centrist in their economic program and have often been among the most vocal defendants of certain parts of the welfare state (obviously only for the ‘own people’). Finally, these parties tend to be more prone to ethnic prejudice, including the ones that South Europeans are lazy and thus not deserving of financial aid of the hard-working Northerners.

2 LE PEN AND GRILLO ARE A REAL DANGER FOR EUROPE

Interview with Grigoris Bekos²

Cas Mudde is an Associate Professor in the School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Georgia. His research agenda is built around the crucial question: How can liberal democracies defend themselves against extremist challenges without undermining their own core values? Most of his empirical research and comparative analyses focus on the systematic study of political extremism – particularly of the populist radical right parties – and the phenomenon of populism. His

books include The Ideology of the Extreme Right (2000) and Racist Extremism in Central and Eastern Europe (2005). Two of his books, Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe and Populism in Europe and the Americas – Threat or Corrective for Democracy? co-edited with Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, have been translated into Greek.

One of the main arguments in his book on populist radical right parties is that these parties ‘are not just dependent variables passively moulded by structural factors but they are also independent variables, actively shaping part of their own destiny’, something that is very often downplayed or ignored in the sociological and economic deterministic studies in political science.

Cas Mudde talks about the far right and populism, and the challenges that Europe and Greece are faced with, to the Greek newspaper To Vima.

Grigoris Bekos

It is clear (something that your book makes even clearer) that the populist radical right across Europe is not one single thing, is not the same everywhere, I mean it is a diverse political phenomenon. My question, Mr. Mudde, is which are today the fundamental characteristics that bound together, in Western Europe and Eastern Europe, all the different versions of the populist radical right? To be direct: when is a party or a politician officially, let's say, in this broad family of the populist radical right?

I use the term ‘populist radical right’ to denote a *combination* of three ideological features: nativism, authoritarianism and populism. Simply stated, nativism is a combination of nationalism and xenophobia, which holds that a state should be exclusively inhabited by natives and everything non-native (i.e. ‘alien’) is seen as threatening. As the infamous slogan goes, ‘Greece for the Greeks, Foreigners Out!’. Authoritarianism means a strong belief in enforcing strict discipline and employing a strict law and order approach to most social issues (from drugs to immigration). Populism, finally, sees society to be divided between two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ and ‘the corrupt elite’, and wants politics to be based on the general will of the people. All populist radical right parties share at least the combination of these three features, but many have several other features too.

I know that I abusively make some historical and social analogies here, but I think it is crucial to ask you. Is there any difference between the populist radical right and neo-fascism or just fascism in new versions, if you wish? Where we should make the differentiation between them? I think about the violent acts... What's your opinion?

This is a both a good and highly relevant question, particularly in the Greek context. There are several fundamental differences between the populist radical right and (neo-)fascism. First and foremost, populist radical right parties like the LAOS accept democracy, i.e. popular sovereignty and majority rule, whereas (neo-)fascists like XA do not. This is a crucial difference, as it pertains to the essence of the political system they support. Second, populist radical right parties have a different view of violence than (neo-)fascist parties. For parties like XA violence is an integral part of politics, for parties like LAOS it is not. This is related to the role that violence plays in fascist ideology, i.e. as a positive force of rejuvenation. That said, populist radical right parties do not support democracy in the way we normally use it, i.e. liberal democracy. While they support popular sovereignty and majority rule, they reject pluralism and minority rights.

In your book *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, you argue that one of the biggest misconceptions about them is that they are a result of the domination of neoliberal politics. Let's agree about that. Which, do you think, are the basic factors then, since the 1980s, that made the populist radical right to gain a solid stance, let's say, in European politics? The interesting thing is that you argue that economics are not so fundamental for these parties. I totally agree, it's the same in Greece. But I wonder whether their agendas (immigration etc.) are a way not to discuss actually about the core of neoliberal economics, or the ongoing economic inequality in general. And here comes my question: to which extent do populist radical right parties profit from economic problems?

It's hard to argue that the rise of populist radical right parties is completely unrelated to neoliberalism, given the latter's dominance of the past decades. My key point is that populist radical right parties are mainly supported on the basis of socio-cultural issues, mostly related to identity (e.g. immigration and European integration), and not socio-economic issues (like unemployment, social benefits). Obviously, both European integration and immigration are

closely related to neoliberalism, but so is roughly everything else in Europe today. What is most important to note is that the received wisdom that populist radical right parties rise (only) during times of economic crisis is simply not true. They have been almost completely unsuccessful in the five bailout countries and in the 2014 European elections populist radical right parties did better in countries that are relatively weakly (e.g. Austria, Denmark Sweden) or moderately affected (e.g. France) by the economic crisis.

Let me describe you what happened in Greece during the ongoing economic crisis. We had a far-right populist party called LAOS as you know (its economic approach was rather centre-orientated). The party went on a coalition government with centre-right and centre-left, as it happens in many countries in Europe. But it disappeared, afterwards! It was replaced by the Golden Dawn – a pure neo-Nazi party, fascists actually that are under persecution of plotting a ‘criminal group’. Golden Dawn has an ancestor and this is Hitler, National Socialism, we have evidence on that. Even though Greece suffered from the Nazis during the Second World War, some Greeks voted again and again for Golden Dawn (today, it is the third party in our parliament). Some analysts say that that is a result of the economic crisis, austerity measures and the distrust on mainstream parties. I say that political culture and history (civil war in the 1940s, military coup d'état in the 1960s) play a role as well. The question for you, and I'm addressing your experience, is why has it happened? From populist radical right to pure neo-Nazi, fascists? Any thoughts? Was is just that they picked up the ‘original stuff’ as some political analysts say in Greece?

I'm sceptical about the cultural explanation. There has not been a strong neo-Nazi/neo-fascist subculture in Greece before the crisis. In fact, by all accounts, XA was a fairly marginal organisation before the crisis – although it did already attract some quite highly qualified and socially successful people (like doctors and lawyers), which could have a cultural explanation. I think the rise of XA is a consequence of two implosions: (1) the implosion of LAOS, which was the far-right alternative before ‘selling out’ (i.e. entering the government); and (2) the implosion of the Greek state, which was never an example of effectiveness or efficiency, but has become almost irrelevant for significant

portions of the underclass. This, as well as some social activities of XA (e.g. handing out food and ‘providing security’) has led some people to overcome their intrinsic revulsion of neo-Nazism. It should not be forgotten, however, that the story of XA is not so much remarkable for its electoral success, which is quite modest in EU-perspective, but because of the extremity of its ideology.

Another question, linked to what is going on in Greece, is that our new government is a coalition between SYRIZA (a left radical party, some say it is populists of the left and they are not totally wrong, which became the major party during the crisis actually, from 4 per cent to nearly 40 per cent) and a minor party called ANEL which is actually like LAOS in my opinion. The base of this government is the anti-austerity agenda. But some say that populism is what binds together this government which wants to end the austerity – programs imposed by Germany in Europe. Do you have any explanation for this? I mean how versions of Left and Right came together?

It is a perfectly rational coalition, in my opinion. First, Greek politics is, first and foremost, about the Memorandum. On this, ANEL and SYRIZA agree. Second, SYRIZA had no alternatives. So, while ANEL and SYRIZA have little in common beyond opposition to the Memorandum, for both parties this is the key political issue in the short term.

Let’s say that SYRIZA cannot change the austerity policies in Europe, though some people here and outside Greece think that is just a sensible demand from Greece. On the other hand, the populist radical right, for example, Marine Le Pen and the FN, if they come into power, may decide to quit the Eurozone. What then? Is the populist radical right more dangerous for the EU than far-left parties?

To be blunt, neither the far left nor far right in Greece is really dangerous to the EU, as Greece is not that relevant to the Eurozone, and neither ANEL nor SYRIZA wants to take Greece out of the EU. For the Eurozone, Eurosceptic parties in the big Eurozone-economies are relevant, such as FN in France or M5S in Italy, which is also talking about splitting the Eurozone into two zones (like [the German grocery giant] Aldi, a North and South split).

Let me return to your book about populist radical right parties. There is an observation there that impressed me because it is actually true, till now. You say that even though these parties gain political significance all these years they don't gain votes, in an analogous way. Why so, do you think?

All new challengers have disproportionate power before they reach their peak, because the challenged (i.e. the established parties) do not know yet exactly how dangerous the challengers are. So, they assume the worst. Once support starts to top off, the established parties know exactly who is, and who is not, susceptible to the challenger, which is generally just a small part of their electorates.

You argue that the populist radical right is ‘pathological normalcy’, rather than ‘normal pathology’ in European politics. I would like to give us a short paradigm which will highlight this for our readers. I guess the immigration policy across Europe would be a good one...

Ok, so the main point is that the key points of populist radical right parties are not alien to mainstream values, as the normal pathology thesis holds, but are best seen as a radicalisation of mainstream values. So, for example, mainstream values hold that we live in nation-states, i.e. Greece is the state of the Greek people. However, mainstream parties consider immigration not as threatening per se, as long as immigrants ‘integrate’ (by which they mostly mean assimilate) and do not change the core values of the national majority (i.e. ‘Greek values’). Populist radical right parties interpret the ideal of the nation-state in a more radical way, i.e. seeing more threat from even relatively small group of ‘aliens’, and therefore oppose (mass) immigration.

Last question: In Greece you are going to speak about left and right populism in Europe and Greece, as I read. In the book you edited about populism in Europe and America, I think that the big issue is populism itself, not left or right populism. But even though, is there any qualitative difference between the two? Or are they both the same danger, just starting from different points, for liberal democracy? And, finally, how can populism (I think about the left one) act in order to repair some things not going very well in our liberal democracies?

Populism of left and right have various aspects in common, both good and bad. Within a liberal democratic context, populism is an illiberal democratic answer to problems created by an undemocratic liberalism. The good thing

about populism is that it calls for the (re-)politicisation of important issues, which have been moved out of the democratic (i.e. electoral) realm and into undemocratic (i.e. technocratic) realms – such as the courts or central banks. The bad thing is that populism is essentially majoritarian extremism in that it does not accept limitations upon majority rule – if the majority wants something, it should get it, irrespective of international treaties or minority rights. On top of that, populists believe that *the* people have (one) general will, which means that different positions (so-called special interests) are not just seen as wrong but as illegitimate. This often creates a polarised political context, for which the other side, i.e. the ‘anti-populists’, also bear part of the responsibility. The main difference between left and right populism is in their inclusion and exclusion. Not only do they include and exclude different groups (right populists often use ethnic categories, left populists more class-like categories), but right populists tend to be more exclusive and left populists tend to be more inclusive.

3 THE TIME OF A TWO-PARTY SYSTEM IN GREECE IS OVER Interview with Petros Papasarantopoulos³

In your articles included in this volume, you suggest that SYRIZA’s main argument that Greece can remain a member of the Eurozone even if it doesn’t comply with its rules is a populist promise that cannot be fulfilled. Could you explain why this promise, which is obviously utopian, has been accepted with enthusiasm not only by some leftist but also by liberal thinkers in Europe and the USA? And these are not only thinkers who belong to ‘La Gauche caviar’ but some Nobel Prize winners, such as Paul Krugman and Joseph Stiglitz.

To be clear, I don’t argue that the promise is ‘populist’ but I do argue it is unrealistic. The reason that it was so popular, among left-wing voters and economists, is because the proposed policies were in line with their social democratic preferences. Left-wing economists like Krugman and Stiglitz defended it because it is economically possible. The problem is, it never was politically possible. Many economists ignore political realities and, clearly, a lot of Greek voters did too. SYRIZA politicians could and should have known that their option was unrealistic, given the power relations within the EU and Eurozone, because Troika representatives and powerful Eurozone politicians like Dijsselbloem and Schäuble had said so at many different occasions.

Some thinkers, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe among them, argued that ‘radical democracy’, which they believe to be the only ‘real’ democracy, is going to be achieved in Greece by SYRIZA. What is your opinion about that?

I am in general sceptical about the possibilities, and desirability, of this so-called radical democracy that is propagated by scholars like Mouffe – not in the least because it is very vague. But even if defined simply as a left-wing alternative to the current dominant neoliberal austerity policies, radical policies can only be achieved by parties that are both competent and realistic. SYRIZA could have tried to implement ‘radical politics’, but only if it would have left the Eurozone (and, in the medium term, the EU altogether), and if it would have had competent, and probably experienced, politicians. Clearly the moment is over now, at least for SYRIZA, as most ‘radical’ forces have left the party and Tsipras and his inner circle have accepted to implement non-radical policies and try to masque them with radical rhetoric.

Nowadays, it seems that this enthusiasm has declined. Could you describe what the general opinion about SYRIZA is now internationally, after the third bailout agreement has been signed?

There is a broad and shared disappointment among the initial international supporters of SYRIZA. What they disagree about it is who is to be blamed for the disappointment. Based on a non-scientific analysis of my social media feeds, the majority of people have lost hope in SYRIZA as a radical force, but blame the Troika in general, and Germany in particular. Overall, they seem to have lost faith in the chances of radical politics in general – strengthened by the dwindling support for Podemos in Spain. A smaller group blames Tsipras and accuses him of ‘betrayal’ of the Greek people. They still believe that radical democracy is possible, although not necessarily within the EU. The utter defeat of Popular Unity in the September elections has weakened this voice. Like former Finance Minister Varoufakis, they tend to emphasise extra-parliamentary politics over elections now.

You have argued that the ugly face of populism, both left and right, appears when it comes into power, providing as examples rightist Viktor Orbán in Hungary and leftist Hugo Chávez in Venezuela. Do you see that happening with SYRIZA now that it is in government?

Compared to Chávez and Orbán, Tsipras is a committed liberal democrat. However, neither Chávez nor Orbán started out particularly bad and radicalised in part because they could and because they were challenged by opponents. The current Greek government has only a small majority in parliament and cannot make many fundamental changes to the broader political system. For that, it requires more support and more time. I seriously doubt they will receive much of either. So far, the ugly side of populism has mainly been rhetorical, with accusing political opponents of betrayal and portraying them as ‘enemies’ of Greece.

Could you tell us your opinion about Alexis Tsipras as a political leader? You have suggested that the decision for the referendum was a ‘ridiculous’ one and that Tsipras has Machiavellian instincts. One could also point out the complete incompatibility between his anti-EU rhetoric and his political choices. What do you think of him?

I think that there are two interpretations of his decisions this year. The first, more positive (or optimistic) interpretation is that Tsipras genuinely didn’t know the limitations of his position and has, later than most others, finally accepted the political realities of the Eurozone. This would mean that Tsipras was ill-prepared for political power, but he has learned. The second, more negative, interpretation is that Tsipras always knew that what he campaigned on was impossible, but he did it anyway because he knew it was his ticket to success. Moreover, he came to power without a real ideological agenda, but rather with a political agenda of staying in power. I honestly think that the truth is in the middle: Tsipras was reasonably ideological and very unprepared when he came to power, confronted with a much more oppositional EU and party than expected, and in the end chose for continuation of power, undoubtedly justifying it to himself and his inner circle as a temporary retreat to make a more successful second try for a radical change.

The current hot debate, both in Greece and abroad, concerns whether SYRIZA is changing and to what direction. There are generally three views:

According to the first view, SYRIZA will become a European social democratic party, like earlier PASOK (under Kostas Simitis, George Papandreou, Evangelos Venizelos). According to the second view, SYRIZA will play the role of a populist party of the patriotic left-wing

populism (like early PASOK, under Andreas Papandreou), angry in its rhetoric, realistic in its policies.

According to the third view, SYRIZA cannot change, because the ‘host ideology’ of SYRIZA’s left-wing populism, its Greek type of radicalism, has a lot of common characteristics with political extremism. It also argues that the ‘anti-capitalistic’ views and ideas of the majority of SYRIZA’s officials are considered to be on the border, the grey zone, between radicalism and extremism, and they are not simply against liberal democracy. According to this view, it is also possible that the host ideology will prevail to the parasitic and chameleon-like ideology of populism, despite the fact that many of its fundamentalists left SYRIZA, forming the party of Popular Unity. Taking all the above into consideration, there is a high possibility that, very soon, SYRIZA will collapse, becoming another flash party in history.

When I read your articles, I feel that you initially agreed more with the first view, while lately, especially after the SYRIZA–ANEL coalition, you seem to agree with the second one. As you already know through our discussions, I agree with the third one. I would like you to explain your opinion in more details and tell us why you disagree with the others.

I don’t think Greece ever really had a real European social democratic party. Even when PASOK finally embraced a more moderate social democratic rhetoric – ironically at the time that most West European social democratic parties had moved away from traditional social democracy toward Tony Blair’s ‘Third Way’ – it still governed on the basis of clientelism and corruption. I think Tsipras is aiming to fill the void left by the old PASOK and has the skills to do so. The split of the Popular Unity has made SYRIZA more homogeneous and more dependent upon Tsipras, which should protect it from major defections in the near future. While I do expect that SYRIZA will lose (big) in the next elections, when its electorate has been confronted with the consequences of the third bailout, I think the party will be able to recover for the simple reason that, at least in the short to medium term, there is an absolute lack of credible challengers on the (patriotic) left.

That said, the time of a two-party system in Greece is over. The ND will structurally get at least 10 per cent less votes than before, leaving aside some incidental successes, and the same will apply to SYRIZA as

successor to the old PASOK. Both parties will probably be the main right-wing and left-wing party in Greece for several years to come, but will have to rely on smaller parties to form a coalition government. This is not specifically Greek, however, but rather in line with broader European trends.

What are your predictions about Greece in the next months and years? Do you think that Greece, a country which according to your own words is ‘a liberal democracy without liberal democrats’, can go out of the recession? Do you think that Grexit is still possible, taking into account ‘Greek exceptionalism’ as you describe it in your article ‘Left and Right Populism in Greece and Europe’?

I think that economic and political ‘crisis’ and instability will be with Greece for some years to come. I don’t think the risk of a Grexit is that big anymore, as the EU is not keen on revisiting the chaotic period of last summer and has a more important crisis to deal with, the refugees. To ‘solve’ the refugees’ crisis, the EU needs Greece. Obviously, they would prefer to deal with ND, and a more solidly pro-EU centrist party. Given that I wouldn’t be surprised if new elections will be called in 2016, and the ND will return to power (in a coalition), I think the EU will get its wish pretty soon.

I personally have argued that the Greek problem is, first and foremost, anthropological, and secondarily economic and political. In other words, the problem lies in the stereotypes, perceptions and mentality embedded in the Greek society, which comprise an irrational bold corpus that give rise to similar political behaviour. This kind of irrationalism is the main obstacle to any reform of the Greek state. I would like your comment on that.

I think there is truth to that with regard to the structural problems in Greek economy (corruption and underperformance), politics (clientelism and populism) and society (conspiracy theories and violence). As I have argued, Greece is in many ways a Balkan country. However, because of its history, its people have the expectations of West Europeans and that creates higher expectations and the idea that Greece should be treated more like, say, Austria than Bulgaria. I don’t believe that cultures are permanent. They have been created and they can be changed. However, that takes skills, will and time. None of these seem available right now.

You believe that the EU is neoliberal. I disagree with that, and I would like to discuss it further. First, about the term ‘neoliberalism’; in Greece, during the crisis, both the right-wing and the left-wing anti-memorandum fronts used that term as an accusation against any attempt for the old-fashioned statist system in Greece to be reformed or any privatisation to be completed, in the same way that, after the end of the dictatorship in 1974, ‘American imperialism’ was blamed for all Greeks’ sufferings. Is there a possibility that an overuse of the term may lead to a metaphysical construction of a new enemy?

Sure, but every term can be reconstructed and made into a new enemy or conspiracy theory. Just like American imperialism did exist in the 1970s, and still does today, neoliberalism existed in the 1980s and 1990s, and still does today. It is not all-powerful, and actually has lost popular support, but it still informs the core of thinking and legislation within the EU. A good example is the ideologically driven emphasis on privatisation, even if it sometimes doesn’t even make economic sense (like with certain sectors in Greece today), and lacks a popular mandate (as in the case of many public transport privatisations). While the neoliberal core of the EU could be changed, in theory, it will always meet phenomenal internal resistance, as it defines the core of the institution. That’s why I argue that, for those principally opposed to neoliberalism, it makes much more sense to organise outside of the EU.

Besides its overuse, let’s talk about its real meaning. In the literature, a well-known case of neoliberal policy was the collapse of Lehman Brothers in the USA. The Federal Reserve Bank (Fed) didn’t want to prevent its bankruptcy, believing in the invisible hand of the market, which regulates everything. On the contrary, in the Greek case, the EU decided to intervene dynamically, and Greece was given hundreds of billions for a bailout. Based on neoliberal ideas, Greece should have been left to collapse. How can both cases be characterised as ‘neoliberal’?

I fully agree that neoliberalism is much stronger in EU rhetoric than EU policy. While they hardly ever question neoliberal ideology in their discourse, they regularly implement policies that go against the core of free international markets. Obviously, in most of these cases of protectionism and subsidies it is the most powerful EU countries that profit (like France and Germany). Unfortunately for Greece, small countries do not get the

same exceptions and are therefore held to higher standards – although mainly during times of crisis, as the EU was extremely lenient towards (and therefore co-responsible for) clientelism and corruption in Greece before the crisis negatively affected mostly French and German banks.

When the EU is characterised as ‘neoliberal’, are the different and antagonistic models of the organisation of the market economy, especially European and American ones, taken into consideration? Social market economy, regulated capitalism, ‘Rhine capitalism’, ‘European social model’, EU’s policies of intervention, the Common Agricultural Policy, the structural funds, rules and regulations of the EU, and many others, don’t they all form an antagonistic model, an alternative to US-style free-market capitalism? Finally, although there is, as yet, no convergence towards a European capitalism, are the neo-American and social democratic variants the same or do they continue an uneasy rivalry?

I think ‘Rhine Capitalism’ is much stronger in terms of policies than ideology. Discursively, the EU speaks much more of the US-style free-market capitalism. The ‘European Social Model’ has not been much heard of since the start of the Great Recession. What this all leads to is a significant mismatch between discourse and policy, i.e. theory and practice, as well as an inconsistent patchwork of policies across the EU, with a myriad of officially sanctioned or unofficially allowed exceptions to the general free-market rule. In the end though, the trend is very much away from the ‘European Social Model’ and towards the American-style free-market economy. One of the best examples of this is Sweden, the prototype of the European welfare state, where inequality has skyrocketed in the past decade.

Let me close on some reflection on the future of social democracy as an alternative model to neoliberal European integration. Clearly, the established social democratic parties do no longer push this model, having succumbed to the ‘pragmatism’ of Blair’s ‘Third Way’. Despite the sometimes radical rhetoric, the so-called radical left parties, including left-wing populist parties like SYRIZA and Podemos, actually push more a social democratic than a democratic socialist agenda. The fact that these policies are perceived, and sold, as ‘radical’ says more about the changed political discourse and reality than about the policies. With social democratic parties in disarray across Europe, and ‘radical left’ parties often still

governed by leaders caught in ideas and practices of their Marxist pasts, the future of social democracy in Europe looks grim.

NOTES

1. The interview was first published in *The Books' Journal*, issue 16, February 2012.
2. The interview was first publish in the Greek newspaper *To Vima* on 15 March 2015.
3. The interview took place in November 2015.

About Liberal Democracy and Extremism

Abstract This chapter gives a concise overview of the key concepts and theories in the study of political extremism, laying out a typology of democratic and extremist actors and ideologies. It also discusses some of the main democratic responses to non-democratic challenges.

Keywords Defending democracy · Democracy · Political extremism

I POLITICAL EXTREMISM – CONCEPTS, THEORIES AND DEMOCRATIC RESPONSES

The term ‘extremism’ comes with negative connotations in virtually every field and language and political extremism is no exception to this rule.¹ Dwight D. Eisenhower’s remark that extremists are always wrong aptly summarises the majority opinion in democratic societies. Even combined with democratic ideals, extremism is considered negatively, as Goldwater’s dramatic loss in the 1964 American presidential election showed. Not surprising then that few political actors consider themselves extremists or their ideals extreme.

Political extremism is a field of study that is extremely fragmented; not just by disciplines and sub-disciplines, but also by types and sub-types. While thousands of academic works exist on left-wing extremism (notably communism) and on right-wing extremism (notably fascism), very few scholars have studied political extremism in general. Hence, the term itself

remains underdeveloped and rarely defined. In most public discussions extremism (and extreme) is used in a relative sense; as out of bounds of the political mainstream. The academic use of the term(s) is not much different; extremism is bad and associated with ‘the other’. Throughout time extremism has been used interchangeably with other, similarly bad and ‘other’ terms, such as fanaticism, fundamentalism and radicalism.

Oddly enough, despite the normative, relative and vague usage of the term, most people use extremism is a relatively similar way. Particularly within a democratic setting, cultural and/or institutional, extremism is defined as the anti-thesis of democracy.² Unfortunately, democracy is probably among the most contested concepts in (and out of) academia. Hence, defining extremism merely as ‘anti-democracy’ answers few questions and raises several new ones; for example, is there a difference between non-democracy and anti-democracy and, if so, what is the boundary?

Concepts

I believe that extremism is best defined as anti-democracy, in which democracy is defined in a minimal Schumpeterian way, as the combination of popular sovereignty and majority rule. In other words, all extremists oppose the ideal and system in which the majority of the people decide upon their own rulers. In contrast, radicalism is pro-democracy but anti-liberal democracy; they accept popular sovereignty and majority rule, but oppose specific liberal aspect, such as constitutional rule and minority rights. Hence, in a liberal democratic context both extremists and radicals are anti-system, even if the latter are not strictly anti-democratic.³

While extremist ideas have been dominant until the mid-20th century, democratic ideas have become hegemonic since then. Indeed, at the beginning of the 21st century, the vast majority of countries in the world are democracies in the minimal definition, often referred to as electoral democracies, while a plurality are full (liberal) democracies. Moreover, in many non-democracies the main opposition is democratic. Extremism is on the decline in most of the world, with the exception of religious extremism, and the main challenges in (liberal) democracies come from radicals (increasingly populists). Even in most non-liberal democracies, both the rulers and the main opposition make their case on the basis of (often flawed) democratic ideals.

This raises an important issue, namely the difference between (democratic or extremist) ideas and actions.⁴ By ideas I mean the goals to which

A c t i o n s		Ideas	
		Democratic	Extremist
		(I)	(II)
		Extremist	(III)
			(IV)

Fig. 4.1 Typology of democratic and extremist actors and ideologies

political actors and organisations aspire, while actions denote the attempted methods of attaining these goals. Both ideas and actions can be democratic and non-democratic (i.e. extremist). This creates the following two-by-two table of political actors and ideas (Fig. 4.1).⁵

Category I comprises organisations with democratic ideas and actions, such as most trade unions, Christian democratic parties, liberal think tanks etc. This category is of little concern to us here, as they do not challenge (liberal) democracies; rather, they constitute the backbone of the democratic state. Category III entails groups that subscribe to democratic ideas, but use non-democratic means to achieve them. This category is most relevant in non-democratic contexts, i.e. democratic oppositions that challenge the non-democratic regime by non-democratic actions because democratic venues are not open to them. These groups are also not of interest to us, as they are forced rather than voluntary extremists. Within a (liberal) democratic context, this category is relatively small and irrelevant, including certain elements of the anti-abortion movement and the anti-globalisation movement, for example.

We are concerned primarily with the remaining two categories of actors. Category IV entails the true extremist groups, which hold non-democratic ideas and apply non-democratic means. The most infamous historic examples are communism and fascism. Within the context of contemporary democracies, true political extremists are relatively marginal actors (think of neo-Nazi groups or the anarchistic ‘Black Block’). Most of the more relevant political extremists in contemporary democracies fall within two related phenomena, which tend to be discussed in different literatures: religious extremists (or, less accurately, fundamentalists) and terrorist.⁶

Finally, Category II entails groups with non-democratic ideas that employ only democratic means to achieve their goals. This includes predominantly radical left and right political parties, which play by the rules of parliamentary democracy but challenge some of the fundamental ideals of

liberal democracy. I exclude political groups that are primarily religiously inspired, such as certain religious fundamentalist parties (e.g. the Dutch Reformed Party, SGP) or some of the groups that constitute the Christian Right in the USA.

The most usual distinction within political extremism is between left and right extremism, traditionally captured by the two main ‘evils’ of the 20th century: communism and fascism. In contemporary studies this distinction remains largely intact: left-wing extremism refers to groups that are ideologically linked to socialism (or anarchism), while right-wing extremism refers to those ideologically linked to fascism (or nationalism).

Theories

Theories of political extremism have always been strongly influenced by the broader fads in the social sciences. Hence, the earliest theories of political extremism, most notably of communism and fascism in the first half of the 20th century, relied heavily on the dominant paradigms in psychology and sociology at that time.

For decades political extremism, mostly referred to as authoritarianism, has been explained through the prism of Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalysis. Among the most influential studies were Wilhelm Reich’s *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1933) and *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950) by Theodor Adorno and his collaborators. Simply stated, the argument was that political extremism was attractive to individuals with a certain type of personality, the authoritarian personality, which itself was a consequence of a certain type of socialisation process. While there are many different varieties of psychoanalytic explanations of political extremism, and aspects of the research on authoritarian personalities are still widely used in the social sciences, the theoretical model has been largely discredited – although it made a little bit of a comeback to explain the rise of extremism in post-communist societies.

In the first decades after the Second World War, political extremism was integrated into the study of democracy as mass politics. Most other political movements, both left and right extremist movements, were primarily seen in terms of class. Particularly influential was Seymour Martin Lipset’s theory of ‘working-class authoritarianism’, which explained political extremism – which he referred to as a generic fascism – as the refuge of the most ‘displaced’ strata of society. In line with modernisation theory, the main argument is that key economic modernisation leads to the transformation of

society, which again leads to political turmoil. This political ‘crisis’ creates winners and losers; the latter, confronted with the threat of status loss or feelings of injustice and humiliation-shame,⁷ are attracted to extremist alternatives.

In one form or another, this type of modernisation theory has remained dominant within the literature on political extremism and its various sub-types. Today, it finds its most prominent expression in the ‘losers of globalisation’ thesis. Popular within both academic and public debates, this thesis holds that supporters of political extremism are the losers of the globalisation process. While there is some debate about the question whether they are real or perceived losers, building upon the seminal literature on the distinction between absolute and relative deprivation, the broader thesis is not often disputed. This notwithstanding, the thesis is theoretically underdeveloped and lacks solid empirical evidence.⁸

In recent decades many (more or less) new theories of political extremism have been developed, in particular within the study of ‘extreme right parties’ in Western Europe. Most remain primarily focused on demand side, although more attention is being paid to the supply side of extremist politics. They continue to see political extremism as a normal pathology of western democracies, which can only become successful in times of crisis.⁹ While this might hold for truly extremist ideas, such as (neo-)Stalinism and (neo-)Nazism, the contemporary populist radical right shows that the normal pathology thesis has severe limitations. Many key ideas that radical left and right groups hold are actually connected to mainstream ideals of western democracies, and find widespread approval within contemporary democracies.

Democratic Responses

This collection mainly addresses political extremism within a democratic context, as is clear from the definition above. Even though communism and fascism dominated European politics during parts of the 20th century, they mostly emerged within a political context in which democratic ideals and institutions were at least the main reference point. While political extremism was able to defeat the mostly feeble democracies without democrats in the early 20th century,¹⁰ the tables have turned significantly in the later decades. Today, democracy is hegemonic in most of the western world, even though ‘real existing democracies’ still struggle with the question of how best to defend itself against political extremism.

While democracies will differ a bit on what actions are considered anti-democratic, there is more profound difference with regard to which ideas are judged to be extremist. Much of the debate features on the question of freedom of speech, while enshrined in virtually every democratic constitution, it is interpreted in very different ways across the globe. The main outlier is the USA, which has an almost complete protection of speech (including ‘hate speech’). In sharp contrast are democracies like Canada and Germany, which have set extensive limitations on free speech. Most democracies fall between these two extremes, although the vast majority tends to be closer to Canada and Germany than to the USA.

Even if most democracies have put limits on the actions and ideas that are considered acceptable, that is democratic, very few anti-democratic actions and expressions are actually punished in court. Moreover, states will usually target individuals rather than organisations; with the exception of terrorist groups. Consequently, bans of (alleged) extremist organisations are very rare and often fiercely debated. Most extremist organisations that are banned are small violent *groupuscules* with little relevance within democratic politics. Even most of the few banned political parties were electorally irrelevant, if active at all, before they were outlawed – such as the National Democratic Party (NDP) in Austria, the Centre Party ‘86 (CP’86) in the Netherlands and the Worker’s Party (DS) in the Czech Republic. Among the few electorally relevant parties that have been banned, or convicted for political extremism, are the Flemish Interest (VB) in Belgium and the Basque Unity (Batasuna) in Spain.

With the recent shift from extreme to radical challenges the dilemma of the defending democracy has gained more prominence. How can a liberal democracy defend itself against political challenge(r)s without undermining its own core values? In a political ideology and system based upon the core value of pluralism and tolerance, how much pluralism can be tolerated? This will undoubtedly be(come) one of the main political questions of the 21st century.

NOTES

1. This text is a slightly edited version of the introduction of a four-volume edited work, *Political Extremism* (Sage 2013). (Mudde 2013a)
2. See Uwe Backes, *Political Extremes: A Conceptual History from Antiquity to the Present*. (London: Routledge, 2010). (Backes 2010)

3. For an interesting discussion of the concept of ‘anti-systemness’, see Giovanni Capoccia, ‘Anti-System Parties: A Conceptual Reassessment’, *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 14, no. 1 (2002): 9–35. (Capoccia 2002)
4. Ronald Wintrobe, *Political Extremism: The Political Economy of Radicalism*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). (Wintrobe 2006)
5. For a more elaborate discussion, see Cas Mudde, ‘Liberal Democracies and the Extremist Challenges of the Early 21st Century’, *Nordic Journal of Human Rights* 21, no. 4 (2003): 429–40. (Mudde 2003)
6. See James Lutz and Brenda Lutz (eds.), *Global Terrorism*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2008), 4 volumes. (Lutz and Lutz 2008)
7. Manus I. Midlarsky, *Origins of Political Extremism: Mass Violence in the Twentieth Century and Beyond*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). (Midlarsky 2011)
8. See, most notably, Tim Spier, *Modernisierungsverlierer? Die Wählerschaft rechtspopulistischer Parteien in Westeuropa*. (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2010). (Spier 2010)
9. For the most elaborate discussion of the normal pathology thesis, see Erwin K. Scheuch and Hans Dieter Klingemann, ‘Theorie des Rechtsradikalismus in westlichen Industriegesellschaften’, *Hamburger Jahrbuch für Wirtschafts- und Sozialpolitik* 12 (1967): 11–19. (Scheuch and Klingemann 1967)
10. Giovanni Capoccia, *Defending Democracy: Reactions to Extremism in Interwar Europe*. (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005). (Capoccia 2005)

Addendum

The Books' Journal Colloquium About Populism

Abstract In his articles about populism, Cas Mudde assesses the rise of populism on the basis of a clear definition. Historically, populism has been a marginal political phenomenon in Europe, whereas, in recent years, it has gained electoral successes. Its effects remain limited, however, although not in Greece, an exception to the general rule in Europe. Giannis Voulgaris discusses *Populism in Europe and the Americas*, and uses its main insights for a critical assessment of the role of populism in Greek politics, arguing that populism is a threat to democracy. Petros Papasarantopoulos discusses the behaviour and ideology of SYRIZA in terms of extremism and radicalism, arguing that being divided between extremists and radicals, SYRIZA has become a party of contradictions, surrealistic decisions and political immobility.

Keywords Democracy · Europe · Extremism · Greece · Populism · Radicalism · SYRIZA

1 LEFT AND RIGHT POPULISM IN EUROPE AND GREECE

Already in 2010, a good five years before a populist coalition government would be formed in Greece, the then EU President Herman van Rompuy called populism ‘the greatest danger for Europe’ (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 9 April 2010).¹ Since then, many establishment voices have done the same, from German Chancellor Angela Merkel to the editors of the

New York Times. What all warnings have in common is that they (1) come from people in power; (2) are vague on the exact meaning of populism; and (3) claim that populism is (omni)present in European politics.

In this article, I will assess the rise of populism on the basis of a clear definition of populism. Historically, populism has been a marginal political phenomenon in Europe, unlike in the Americas (North and South). In recent years populist parties of left and right have gained electoral successes throughout Europe, although their effects on European politics have so far remained fairly limited. This is not the case for Greece, however, which is both a historical and contemporary exception to the general rule in Europe.

What Populism Is (Not)

Populism is a buzzword in the media around the world. There is virtually not a politician who has not been labelled populist at one time. In fact, accused would be a better term, as most people use populism as a *Kampfbegriff* to defame a political opponent. Few politicians self-identify as populist. Those who do usually first redefine the term in a way that is closer to the popular use of democracy than of populism.

In the public debate populism is mostly used to denounce a form of politics that uses (a combination of) demagogic, charismatic leadership or a *Stammtisch* (pub) discourse. None of the three are accurate understandings of populism. While some populists might promise everything to everyone (i.e. demagogic) or speak a simple, even vulgar, language (i.e. *Stammtisch* discourse), many do not. More importantly, many non-populists also do this, particularly during election campaigns. Similarly, while some successful populists are charismatic leaders, some are not, and many successful non-populists are also considered charismatic.

Instead, populism is best defined as a thin-centred ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups: ‘the pure people’ and ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people.² This means that populism is a particular view on how society is and should be structured, but it addresses only a limited part of the larger political agenda. For example, it says little about the ideal economic or political system that a (populist) state should have. Its essential features are moralism and monism. The key point is that populism sees both groups as essentially homogeneous, i.e. without fundamental

internal divisions, and considers the essence of the division between the two groups to be moral. Consequently, its main opposites are elitism and pluralism. Elitism sees the same major division, but considers the elite to be pure and the people as corrupt. Pluralism has a fundamentally different worldview than both elitism and populism, seeing society as divided into several groups with different interests and favouring a politics based on consensus between these groups.

Contrary to what defenders and opponents may claim, populism is neither the *essence* nor the *negation* of democracy. To put it simply, populism is pro-democracy, but anti-liberal democracy. It supports popular sovereignty and majority rule, but rejects pluralism and minority rights. In the European context, populism can be seen as an illiberal democratic answer to problems created by an undemocratic liberalism. Criticizing the decade-old trend to de-politicise controversial issues by placing them outside of the national democratic (i.e. electoral) realm, by transferring them to supranational institutions like the EU or to (neo-)liberal institutions like courts and central banks, populists call for the re-politicisation of issues like European integration, gay rights or immigration.

A final point to note is that populism is neither right nor left; or, perhaps better, populism can be found on both the left and the right. This is not exactly the same as saying that populism is like a ‘chameleon’,³ as it is not necessarily the same populist actor who *changes* colours. Populism rarely exists in a pure form, in the sense that most populist actors combine it with another ideology. This so-called host ideology, which tends to be very stable, is either left or right. Generally, left populists will combine populism with some interpretation of socialism, while right populists will combine it with some form of nationalism. Today populism is more on the left in Southern Europe and more on the right in Northern Europe.⁴

Populism in Europe

Although populism has a long history in Europe, it has always been a marginal political phenomenon. It emerged in Russia in the late-19th century. The so-called *Narodniki* were a relatively small group of urban elites who unsuccessfully tried to stir up a peasant revolt. While unsuccessful in Russia, Nardoniki did have a strong influence on Eastern Europe, where several agrarian populist parties existed in the early 20th century. Most of these groups had little political influence in the largely authoritarian states of that period though. And while both communism and

fascism used populist rhetoric, particularly during the movement stage, their ideologies and regimes were essentially elitist.

Post-war, Europe saw very little populism until the 1990s. There was *Poujadism* in France in the late 1950s, the Danish and Norwegian Progress Parties in the 1970s and PASOK in the 1980s, but all these movements were largely *sui genesis* rather than part of a broader populist movement. This changed with the rise of the populist radical right in the late 1980s. Although some older parties of this group, like the National Front (FN) in France and the Flemish Bloc (now Flemish Interest, VB) in Belgium, started out as elitist parties, they soon embraced a populist platform with slogans like ‘We Say What You Think’ and ‘The Voice of the People’. In recent years a new left populism has also emerged in some countries, particularly in Southern Europe.

Table 5.1 lists the most important populist parties in Europe today – only the most successful party in each country is included. The third column gives the electoral result in the most recent European election of May 2014, which vary from 51.5 per cent to 3.7 per cent of the vote – note that countries without a successful populist party are excluded (e.g. Luxembourg, Portugal or Slovenia). On average, populist parties gained some 12.5 per cent of the vote in the last European elections; not insignificant, but hardly a ‘political earthquake’ as the international media claimed.

A better insight into the electoral and political relevance of populist parties is provided by the results in the most recent national elections (up until April 2015). The fourth column gives the result of the most successful populist party in the country, the fifth column its ranking among all national parties, the sixth the total electoral support of all populist parties in the country, and the seventh column the change in the total national populist vote between the most recent and the previous national election.⁵ Here are the most important lessons to be drawn.

First, populist parties are electorally successful in most European countries. In roughly twenty European countries, a populist party gains at least 10 per cent of the national vote. Second, all populist parties together score an average of ca. 17 per cent of the vote in national elections. This ranges from a staggering 65 per cent in Hungary, shared between Fidesz and the Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik), to 5.6 per cent in Belgium and the United Kingdom. Third, while the overall trend is up, most populist parties are electorally volatile. Few populist parties have been able to establish themselves as relatively stable political forces in their national party system. Fourth, there are huge cross-national and cross-temporal

Table 5.1 Main populist party results in 2014 European elections and most recent national election (and change to previous similar election)

<i>Country</i>	<i>Populist Party</i>	<i>% EP14</i>	<i>% Nat</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>% Total</i>	<i>% Change</i>
Austria	Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ)	19.7	20.5	3	29.8	+1.5
Belgium	Flemish Interest (VB)	4.1	3.7	10	5.6	-5.7
Bulgaria	Bulgaria Without Censorship (BBT)	10.7	5.7	6	10.2	+2.9
Denmark	Danish People's Party (DFP)	26.6	12.3	3	12.3	-1.5
Finland	Finns Party (PS)	12.9	19.1	3	19.1	+15.0
France	National Front (FN)	25.0	13.6	3	20.5	+16.2
Germany	The Left	7.3	8.6	3	10.5	-1.0
Greece	Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA)	26.6	36.3	1	42.1	+6.1
Hungary	Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Union (Fidesz)	51.5	44.5	1	65.0	-4.3
Ireland	Sinn Fein (SF)	19.5	9.9	4	11.3	+3.7
Italy	Five Star Movement (M5S)	21.2	25.6	1	51.3	+5.6
Lithuania	Order and Justice (TT)	14.3	7.3	4	7.3	-5.4
Netherlands	Party for Freedom (PVV)	13.2	10.1	3	19.8	-5.6
Norway	Progress Party (FrP)	–	16.3	3	16.3	-6.6
Poland	Law and Justice (PiS)	31.8	29.9	2	39.9	+7.8
Romania	People's Party – Dan Diaconescu (PP-DD)	3.7	14.7	3	16.1	+13.0
Slovakia	Direction-Social Democracy (Smer-SD)	24.1	44.4	1	63.4	+11.4
Spain	We Can (Podemos)	8.0	–	–	–	–
Sweden	Sweden Democrats (SD)	9.7	12.9	3	12.9	+7.2
Switzerland	Swiss People's Party (SVP)	–	26.6	1	27.8	-1.7
UK	United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP)	27.5	3.1	4	5.6	+2.0

differences within Europe. While some populist parties are brand new (e.g. M5S and Podemos), others are several decades old (e.g. FN, FPÖ, The Left and SVP). Similarly, whereas some parties are on the up (e.g. DF and SYRIZA), others are in a downfall (e.g. PP-DD and VB).

When we are focusing only on the (minority of) European countries where populism is a major political phenomenon, there are four important conclusions to draw. First, in five countries a populist party is the biggest political party – Greece, Hungary, Italy, Slovakia and Switzerland. Second,

populist parties gained a majority of votes in three countries – Hungary, Italy and Slovakia. However, in at least two of these countries the main populist parties are strongly opposed to collaboration. The situation in Hungary is most striking, as both the main governmental party (Fidesz) and the main opposition party (Jobbik) are populist. Third, populist parties are currently in the national government in six countries – Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Norway, Slovakia and Switzerland. Greece is unique in that it has a populist coalition government of a left and a right populist party.⁶ Fourth, and final, in six countries a populist party is part of the political establishment – Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Switzerland. This is important to note, as populism is normally associated exclusively with challenger parties and deemed incapable of establishing itself in a political system. Yet, while populist parties have to be extra careful not to be considered part of ‘the elite’, populists like former Italian premier Silvio Berlusconi and current Hungarian premier Viktor Orbán have been successful at retaining their cleverly constructed ‘outsider’ status in power.

Why Is Populism Successful (Now)?

Given the immense academic interest in the phenomenon of populism, one would assume that we have a good understanding of why populist parties are successful and, even more specific, under which circumstances they rise and decline. This is not the case. Most analyses of European populism focus almost exclusively on one type of populist parties, notably the populist radical right, and particularly its non-populist aspects. However, immigration has little explanatory power for populist parties in countries that have little immigration (like Hungary and Poland) or for populist parties that don’t oppose immigration (such as Podemos or SYRIZA). At the same time, the most popular theories are often too broad and vague. While crisis and globalisation have some relationship to the rise of populism, globalisation is related to everything and crisis is usually undefined and simply used whenever a populist party becomes successful (making the ‘theory’ tautological). The following six reasons are also quite broad, and to a certain extent vague, but indicate some important factors that address both the demand side and supply side of populist politics.

First, large parts of the European electorates believe that important issues are not (adequately) addressed by the political elites. This relates to issues like European integration and immigration, on which established

parties have long been unwilling to campaign, as well as socio-economic issues like unemployment and welfare state reform, particularly in light of the current economic crisis. While it seems fair to argue that political elites have indeed been less forthcoming and successful in addressing important issues, and to a larger extent than in previous periods (i.e. before the 1990s), what is more important to note is that large parts of the European populations have come to perceive this as a major problem. This has created widespread political dissatisfaction, which is a fertile breeding ground for populist parties, but also for other anti-establishment parties (such as *Ciudadanos* or Citizens in Spain).⁷

Second, national political elites are increasingly perceived as being ‘all the same’. Again, the perception is more important than the reality, although the two are not unrelated. While commentators have decried the so-called ‘end of ideology’ since the late 1960s, there is little doubt that the situation today is much more extreme. Responding to the structural transformation of European societies as a consequence of the ‘post-industrial revolution’, including the decline of the working class and secularisation, the main established parties have moderated their ideologies and converged strongly on both socio-cultural and socio-economic issues.⁸ The emergence of the ‘*neue Mitte*’ (new centre) and ‘Third Way’ on the centre-left, which by and large transformed social democratic parties into centre-right parties targeting the same voters as the Christian democratic and conservative-liberal parties, alienated a large part of the remaining working class and left more ideological voters of both left and right without a political voice.

Third, more and more people see the national politically elites as essentially ‘powerless’. Again, perception and reality are closely linked, even if many people will necessarily be accurately informed. In the past decades European elites have engaged in one of the most amazing transfers of power from the national to the supranational. Rarely have politicians so happily marginalised themselves. Of particular importance was the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, which has taken many important issues out of the national democratic realm and transferred them to the much less democratic EU sphere. This was, of course, most notably the case for the countries that joined the Eurozone, which no longer control their own currency or monetary policy.

At the same time, the process of ‘cognitive mobilisation’ has made the European people better educated and more independent, and consequently more critical and less deferential towards the political elites.⁹

Getting mixed messages from the political elites, who claim to be powerless in the case of unpopular policies ('the results of the EU/globalisation/US') but in full control in the case of popular policies ('my successful economic policies'), European populations feel confident to judge their politicians to be incompetent or even deceitful.

Fifth, the media structure has become much more favourable to political challengers. Until at least the 1980s, the established parties controlled most of the important media in Europe, be it party-owned newspapers or state radio and television controlled by parties-appointed boards. While active censorship was rare, most journalists' self-censored stories challenged the interests and values of the political mainstream. Consequently, critique of immigration or European integration was long marginalised, while major corruption, particularly involving elites from several established parties, was left uncovered. This is no longer possible in a world dominated by party-independent, private media and an uncontrollable Internet. Not only do all stories and voices find an outlet, populist stories and voices are particularly attractive to a media dominated by an economic logic. After all, scandals and controversy sell!

Finally, while the previous five factors have created a fertile breeding ground and favourable 'discursive opportunity structure' for populists, the success of populist parties like FN or SYRIZA is also related to the fact that populist actors have become much more 'attractive' to voters (and media). Almost all successful populist parties have skilful people at the top, including media-savvy leaders like Beppe Grillo (M5S), Pablo Iglesias (Podemos) or Geert Wilders (PVV). They can not only hold their own in political debates with leaders of established parties, but they are often much more adept at exploiting the huge potential of new resources, such as social media. For example, for years Wilders dominated the Dutch political debate purely through Twitter. Just one well-constructed tweet would be picked up by journalists, who would then force established politicians to respond, and thereby helped Wilders set the political agenda and frame the political debate.

The Greek Exception

All of these factors play a role in explaining the remarkable success of populist parties in Greece today. Many Greeks feel that important issues like European integration or immigration are not (adequately) addressed by the political elites. For obvious reasons they feel that the political parties

are all the same, particularly since the former ‘eternal foes’ New Democracy (ND) and PASOK formed a coalition government. They also feel that the political elites are powerless, at the mercy of the EU and the Troika. While the traditional Greek media structure is perhaps less prone to a pro-populist and anti-elite frame than that in other EU countries, the attractive new populist actor, and particularly its youthful leader Alexis Tsipras, has forced its way into the traditional media through their omnipresence in the social media. But this doesn’t tell the whole story. Greece is not like any other country in Europe, the EU, or even the Eurozone. It is an exception in at least three important ways.

First, Greece is the country with the longest and most successful tradition of populist politics in Europe. Extensively studied by Greek scholars,¹⁰ but almost completely ignored in the international literature on populism, PASOK was probably the most successful European populist party of the 20th century. With its unique blend of clientelism and ‘patriotic left populism’, exemplified by Andreas Papandreou in the 1980s, PASOK has profoundly influenced Greek politics.¹¹ This was amplified by the fact that ND felt obligated to largely copy its clientelism and, perhaps to a bit lesser extent, populism to stay electorally competitive.¹²

One of the most damaging populist legacies of PASOK is the weak fundamental of liberal democracy in Greece. Reflecting its populist distrust of countervailing powers, which could obstruct the ‘general will’ (i.e. PASOK rule), the party never fully developed a strong independent bureaucracy or judiciary, while clientelism obscured the borders between party and state. While ND was less ideologically committed to creating what Takis Papas has recently termed ‘populist democracy’, electoral and political calculations led it to, by and large, copy PASOK’s politics.¹³ Hence, the main difference between ND and PASOK rule was not about the type of political regime but who would control its powers and spoils.

Third, while the economic crisis in other bailout countries like Ireland and Spain were for the most part the fall-out of the Great Recession, and therefore external, this is not the case for Greece. There is little doubt that the Great Recession was devastating for a country so dependent upon tourism, and the austerity measures have probably intensified the economic decline, but the core of the problem is internal, not external.¹⁴ The Irish and Spanish economies and states were perhaps overextended, and also dependent upon one or two economic sectors, but they functioned rather well before the housing bubble busted in the USA in 2007. In sharp contrast, the Greek economy and state were already dysfunctional

well before 2007. Clientelism and corruption were so endemic that they frustrated the few feeble attempts at economic and state reform.¹⁵ And they continue to do so today.

Conclusion

Despite strong warnings from various national and supranational political elites, populism is not the greatest danger for Europe today. While populist parties are more successful today than at any time before and have become relevant political actors in a majority of European (Union) countries, they only rarely dominate government policies. On top of that, national politics is strongly constrained by supranational organisations, most notably the EU, in which populist parties are even less influential. That said, several factors have created a fertile breeding ground for populist politics and sentiments, which have given way to a ‘populist Zeitgeist’, in the sense that established parties are often put on the defensive by populist critiques and are paying lip service to it – for instance, by praising the ‘common sense’ of ‘the people’ or by criticizing the immorality of the (other) political elites.

The situation in Greece is different, however. Whereas populism is a relatively recent phenomenon in most other European countries, going back to the 1990s, Greece has a longer tradition of populist politics that has profoundly shaped the country’s political discourse and institutions. The Great Recession has merely amplified this effect (and frustrated potential reforms). Many commentators have argued that the economic crisis has profoundly transformed the political dynamics of Greek politics, by replacing the traditional left-right cleavage (i.e. PASOK versus ND) with a new establishment-populist cleavage (i.e. ND-PASOK versus ANEL-SYRIZA). But this is an ahistorical perspective, which ignores PASOK’s strong populist roots. The party may have become more traditional social democratic in past years, particularly as a consequence of the economic crisis, but this is relatively recent. And while SYRIZA does not (yet?) have the clientelistic infrastructure that PASOK has, or at least had before the economic crisis, its ‘patriotic left populism’ has many similarities with that of Andreas Papandreou in the 1980s. Hence, the economic crisis has not so much transformed Greek politics, and created a fundamentally new party competition. Rather, for now, it has primarily exchanged the main ‘patriotic left populist’ pole of the two-party system, from PASOK to SYRIZA.

2 POPULISM HARMS POLITICS

Giannis Voulgaris

Cas Mudde has been interested in non-mainstream political parties for long.¹⁶ He studied the so-called European radical left some years ago.¹⁷ Then he studied the phenomenon of the far right, and his work has become an inevitable bibliographic reference on the subject (Mudde 2007). The concept of populism has always been one of his analytical tools because it is a common characteristic of all party families on the political margins.

In the book *Populism in Europe and the Americas*, which he co-edited with Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, he focuses on the study of the phenomenon of populism based on the comparative analysis of a number of case studies. These do not include Greece, which is an inexplicable, in part, omission, because, on the one hand, international literature pays more and more attention on the ‘Greek case’, which has some peculiarities and ‘exceptional’ characteristics, as the cases of XA and SYRIZA. On the other hand, Greek scholars have already used the concept of populism as an explanatory tool for the analysis of the Greek case. Moreover, Mudde has been writing many articles on Greek populism, both right- and left-wing (*Huffington Post*, *Open Democracy*, *To Vima*). However, the editors have written an extensive preface for the Greek edition of the book expressing their views and thoughts on Greek populism. These are well complemented by a highly informative preface and apt remarks by the translator of the book, Paris Aslanidis.

As indicated by the subtitle of the book, its central question is the relation of populism and democracy, and particularly, liberal democracy. As in every study on populism, Mudde and Kaltwasser start by pointing out that populism is a vague term and it usually has an a priori negative connotation associating it with demagogic, opportunism, irresponsibility and the stigmatisation of the minorities. So, they conclude that what is needed is an explicit and less normative definition, which, on the one hand, clearly conceptualises the phenomenon for a comparative research and, on the other hand, produces empirically verifiable hypotheses on its relation to democracy.

That reminds us of Giovanni Sartori’s argument on conceptualisation, that when we define a concept, we compromise between width and depth. The more we increase the number of attributes of a concept (depth), the

more we decrease the number of cases (width) that belong to its class; and the more we decrease the number of attributes of a concept, the more we increase the number of cases that belong to its class. So, Mudde and Kaltwasser choose to do the latter. They define populism as a ‘thin-centred ideology’. According to that, society is divided into two groups: the ‘pure people’ and the ‘corrupt elite’, which are homogenous and antagonistic with each other. Politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people. So populism translates politics into an ethical code. Mudde and Kaltwasser agree with Paul Taggart on the chameleon-like qualities of populism.¹⁸ They believe that populism, as a ‘thin-centred ideology’, is attached to a broad variety of ‘host ideologies’, left or right (socialism, liberalism, nationalism etc.).

Based on this conceptualisation, they ask the well-known question: What is the effect of populism on democracy? Is it a threat or a correction? Or, even better, when is it a threat and when a correction? They propose an analytical framework which allows an empirical examination of the effects. In fact, they follow a conventional analytical process for the explanation of populism which Margaret Canovan has called the ‘two-strand theory of democracy’.¹⁹

According to this theory, modern democracies struggle with their liberal face on the one hand and their populist/democratic on the other. The ‘democratic’ strand is based on majority rule and ‘liberalism’ is concerned with individual rights, the rule of law, checks and balances, and is mostly expressed in a written constitution. When these strands co-exist and there is a balance between them, the smooth functioning of a constitutional democracy is guaranteed. However, in periods of generalised consensus, which restrain antagonism or when in the name of the ‘politically correct’ behaviour issues that concern the poorest parts of the population (e.g. immigration) are left out of the political agenda, there is a tension between them. Populism is the manifestation of this tension. So, some have suggested that, ‘populism is democracy without a constitution’²⁰ or that it is ‘the shadow of democracy’²¹ or a ‘normal pathology of democracy’.²²

In a few words, Mudde and Kaltwasser conclude that populism can be both a friend and a foe to democracy. They argue that populism can support democracy/majority rule while weakening liberal/constitutional democracy. And as democracies today are not, as a rule, threatened by dictatorships, the question focuses mainly on the effects of populism on the quality of democracy, and particularly, on the processes, the content and the efficiency of the government. Their research includes cases of both

right- and left-wing populism, distinguishes between cases of populism in the government and populism in the opposition, and looks, separately, at its effects on established and new democracies.

Their analysis is very interesting and contributes to the general debate as well to the debate that concerns the Greek case. On this premise, I would like to make some comments and remarks concerning two things: first, Mudde and Kaltwasser's views on Greece and Greek populism and, second, the general theoretical framework that they use.

Mudde and Kaltwasser maintain the exceptionalism of Greek populism concerning both its characteristics and its trajectory compared to the European experience. Its peculiarity concerns both the time of its advent and its ideological orientation. European populism came into being at the end of the 1980s and it was far right, while Greek populism was already present in 1974 and it was left. It is obvious that this argument is based on the assumption that Andreas Papandreou's PASOK was a pure populist party and that populism was the main feature of its character and politics. If this assumption is true, then Mudde and Kaltwasser put Greece in the category of 'populism in government in an established democracy, such as the cases of Slovakia (1992–1998) and Peru (1990–2000)'... more similar to Slovakia than Peru, both as far as the type of populism (left-wing) and its effects (establishment of an electoral democracy and resistance to an actual transformation to a liberal democracy) are concerned.

Undoubtedly, populism(s) has been a constant feature of Greek politics. We could say that it has been the shadow of Greek democracy after 1974. However, it has appeared under various circumstances, with various contents and various actors. It has been mainly national populism as a result of the powerful nationalist ideology and the 'politicians' populism', to misuse Canovan's term; a kind of populism, in other words, that has been endogenous to catch-all politics in an antagonistic party system. However, populism as a synonym of demagogic and manipulation of the people has been also constantly present.

But that does not mean that we can raise populism to the key explanatory tool of all the political, economic and cultural transformations in Greece from the last quarter of the 20th century to the international economic crisis of 2008. And it certainly does not mean that we can ignore the historical time and framework of these transformations, in order to make comparisons to, for example, Slovakia or Peru. The populism of the post-1974 period in Greece belongs to a different historical

cycle than that of the European right-wing populism that occurred at the end of the 1980s. They are neither historically nor theoretically related. The latter occurred within the framework of the European integration and globalisation, while the former is part of the huge surge of democratisation and social modernisation of Southern Europe in the aftermath of a great growth in the 1960s. That cycle was completed with the establishment of ‘normal’ democracies and their ‘European’ orientation.

The main characteristics of that period include the consolidation of freedoms, the advent of mass democracy, the modernisation of social and gender relations, and in the cases of France and Greece, the implementation of an overdue Keynesianism at the beginning of the 1980s, which they had to abandon in order to participate in European integration. Andreas Papandreou’s PASOK can be distinguished due to its populist character and politics, which, however, did not dominate its political decisions. We should not forget that some years later PASOK was in charge of the process of the integration of Greece into the Economic and Monetary Union, opposed by both the right and the left as a more reliable Europeanisation/modernisation factor. I believe that this perspective of the events can bring more convincing conclusions than an overuse of the concept of populism.

Incidentally, Greece has also some less significant ‘peculiarities’ that can confuse any observer. For instance, after its bankruptcy and the parliamentary elections in 2012, which resulted in a new polarised multi-party political system, Greek democracy is threatened by both the far right and the far left, that is XA and KKE, respectively. I believe that this is true as far as XA is concerned. However, it is not true for KKE, whose members, in June 2011, in a crucial moment for democracy, who were outside the Parliament demonstrating against the government, prevented some of the Greek ‘Indignados’ from breaking in – although they do not want to admit it. In other words, a historical party like KKE should not be judged solely through the analysis of its political discourse, because that can lead to misinterpretations.

In any case, having recognised the discontinuity between the first period after 1974 and today, I believe that what can help us understand Greece today is the concept of national populism. In this respect the Greek case becomes symbolic and can be of great interest to the scholars who study populism. The reason is that it raises many questions: How a meta-communist discourse is gradually combined with national populism in SYRIZA’s political discourse? How compatible is this combination to

the dominant national myth and the modern Greek ideology? How did left-wing national populism come to coincide with right-wing national populism, disproving the argument that the former would focus on the socio-economic level while the latter on the national-cultural level? It can also be demonstrated that in contrast to the theoretical assumption of a ‘progressive populism’ and according to other theories,²³ both SYRIZA’s discourse and practice appear to be conservative, in the sense that they reproduce the structure of the interests developed before the crisis. In a few words, we should distinguish left wing from ‘progressive’ populism, whatever the latter means in Europe.

I paid particular attention to Mudde and Kaltwasser’s views on ‘Greek populism’ because it is of great significance to us, especially under the present circumstances, but also because the book is a collection of case studies. The two scholars propose a more general conceptualisation and analysis, both in their introduction and conclusion, which is particularly interesting, as it gives rise to thoughts and questions I will discuss below, focusing on populism in established democracies like ours.

Mudde and Kaltwasser start, as I believe they should, with a dynamic approach to liberal/constitutional democracy, that is, the historical dynamics that arose from great revolutionary changes and can be summarised in the words ‘We, the people’ and ‘Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité’. Modern democracy seeks to combine the fundamental values of freedom, equality, participation, security in an unstable and ever-changing balance. Political theories on democracy have conceptualised the ‘inner tension’ between these values in various ways.

Historically, this tension did not prevent, for many historians and theorists it actually helped, these values of democratic modernity from being mutually reinforced and strengthened, at different degrees depending on the place and time this happened – making democracy more liberal, more social, more communal or more insecure and incomplete.

One of the mechanisms of this mutual reinforcement was, both historically and theoretically, the constant tension/conflict between ‘actual’ and ‘ideal’ democracy; the driving force for self-criticism to find the limits of democracy and make it deeper. At the same time, it produced perversions in the name of true democracy, or fed the ‘inner enemies of democracy’, to quote Tzvetan Todorov. ‘When one of these elements [popular sovereignty, freedom and progress] breaks free, [it] turns into an over-riding principle, it becomes dangerous: populism, ultra-liberalism and messianism’.²⁴

Mudde and Kaltwasser would put a footnote in the characterisation of populism as an enemy of democracy, but they would agree on the idea of the ‘inner tension’ in modern democracy. Moreover, they use it to criticise the so-called ‘radical democracy’ of Laclau and Mouffe, as they believe it was more important than the theory of the historical sequence of coincidental practices of articulating ‘militant’ emancipating discourses. By the way, Mudde and Kaltwasser do not look for a ‘progressive populism’ but the conditions on which populism could improve ‘actual’ liberal democracy.

They believe that populism can exist within the democratic discourse but not, as a rule, within the liberal discourse. This two-strand theory of democracy is simplistic, as Canovan rightly warns. However, this is not the moment to talk more extensively about that. But we shouldn’t forget that the increasing importance of ‘Islamophobia’ in the far-right populist political discourse is expressed in liberal terms. Taguieff refers to that when he talks about the Dutch, Swiss and Scandinavian movements, but also about Marine Le Pen’s Front National: ‘Freedom of expression, tolerance, secularisation, gender equality, respect of minority and homosexual rights, against the threat that take the form of Muslim immigration that is accused of wishing to impose its own values and rules’.²⁵

This is an example of the complications that arise from the two-strand theory of democracy. But a historical osmosis has been achieved between liberalism and democracy in such a degree in European societies that they can be distinguished only theoretically, but not in the collective mind of European citizens. The only inner tension that still exists is that between the liberal/democratic and the nationalist discourse. That is the reason why populism in Europe came as a reaction to globalisation and mostly to the process of European integration.

Mudde and Kaltwasser are right when they point out that populism is not only a far-right phenomenon. In one of his article, Mudde argues that SYRIZA’s and Podemos’ electoral successes make the study of left-wing populism necessary and urgent (see [Chap. 2](#)). And this could be helped by defining populism as a thin-centred ideology that is attached to a so-called ‘host ideology’ (socialism, nationalism and liberalism).

What should be examined further are the consequences of populism. For instance, can we distinguish the consequences of the thin-centred populism in society from the consequences of the host ideology to which it has been attached? Moreover, should we examine their consequences simultaneously? What changes occur, for example, to socialism

when it is combined with populism? Does the thin-centred ideology (populism) change the host ideology (socialism) fundamentally when it gets attached to it?

When we talk about consequences and especially when we want to evaluate them, we should consider the variable of *time*. How long is the time we should examine, for example, to be able to tell whether the correction is temporary or not, and whether other more permanent effects have followed or not? In Greece we can understand why time is so important.

That is rightly pointed out by Mudde and Kaltwasser in their preface to the Greek edition of their book; the fact that populism has been present in Greek politics for almost 40 years has had negative consequences to state institutions and their efficiency. The cost that we had to pay is obvious – bankruptcy. We could generalise that and say that the consequences of populism are evident in state capacity whose low levels can harm all kinds of democracy.²⁶ Mudde and Kaltwasser acknowledge that when they talk about further research. But we should probably add another variable too, and that is political culture. Populism constructs collective identities, forms individualisms that last in time. These can have long-lasting consequences in the quality of democracy and outlive the conditions that generated them. These identities, as we know from the Greek experience, usually deteriorate public and political life.

An essential part of every study on the relation between populism and democracy is, or should be, evaluation. Is populism useful as the symptom of the disease or as its remedy? Does it ask ‘right questions but offer wrong answers’? Or, according to Taguieff, does it only sometimes pose right questions? Most studies do not provide clear answers to the reader on that – with the exception of Laclau’s evaluation of populism as positive.²⁷ That is probably because, on a theoretical/analytical level, the question is closely connected to the person who poses it. The same happens with Mudde and Kaltwasser’s question about the threat or the correction. As Paris Aslanidis aptly argues in his preface in the Greek edition of the book, the so-called ‘positive effects of populism in liberal democracy are just unpredictable consequences of populism at its peak and not a consciously made positive contribution to democracy’ (p. 27).

Considering all the above, we can go back to where we started. Undoubtedly, Mudde and Kaltwasser’s approach is a significant contribution to the study of populism. It asks crucial questions, it analyses particular

cases in order to contextualise a volatile concept that refers to a political phenomenon which is unstable, discontinuous and changeable. To be sure, their contribution is really valuable for Greece under the present circumstances.

3 RADICALISM AND EXTREMISM: DEFINITIONS AND SIMILARITIES

Petros Papasaranopoulos

The formation of a coalition government in Greece, after the parliamentary elections on 25th January 2015, between a radical left party, SYRIZA, and a populist right party, ANEL, as well as its first 100 days in power, dictate a need for a theoretical explanation and a conceptualisation of two crucial political terms: radicalism and extremism.²⁸

In this respect, Cas Mudde's contribution is significant, as he is considered as one of the greatest international experts on political extremism, radicalism and populism. Mudde's scientific work is built around a very crucial question: how can a liberal democracy defend itself against extremist challengers without undermining its own core values? Based on the typology of the extremist challenges on liberal democracy, he tries to answer the question both on empirical and normative terms.

He particularly insists that these phenomena should be clearly defined. He starts with a minimal Schumpeterian definition of democracy, as the combination of popular sovereignty and majority rule. Liberal democracy is a kind of democracy in which minority rights are an important feature added to popular sovereignty and majority rule.

Radicalism and Extremism

Based on the above, Mudde argues that 'radicalism is pro-democracy but anti-liberal democracy; they accept popular sovereignty and majority rule, but oppose specific liberal aspects, such as constitutional rule and minority rights' (see chap. 15). So, in this respect, SYRIZA is a radical party.

On the other hand, according to Mudde, extremism is anti-democracy, as it opposes the very essence of democracy. In other words, 'all extremists oppose the ideal and system in which the majority of the people decide upon their own rulers'.²⁹ Golden Dawn is an ideal type of an extremist

party. In Mudde's words, 'Golden Dawn is clearly anti-democratic. I don't consider Golden Dawn a populist party. I think Golden Dawn is the only relevant extreme right party in Europe.'³⁰

So, Mudde concludes that 'in a liberal democratic context both extremists and radicals are anti-system, even if the latter are not strictly anti-democratic'. This distinction between radicalism and extremism is widely accepted among political scientists. For instance, Paul Lucardie has talked about *purifiers*, who refer to 'an ideology that has been betrayed or diluted by established parties', and *prolocutors*, 'who develop a new political identity'.³¹ A very important difference between radicals and extremists, apart from how they see democracy, has to do with political violence. Radicals denounce violence, whereas extremists think it is absolutely legitimate and necessary.³²

However, when we talk about ideal types,³³ we actually outline a set of fundamental characteristics that comprise each type. Therefore, we describe a concept in its pure form, which, however, cannot be found as such in real life. That is the reason why Luke March, who has been studying the phenomenon of the far left in Europe for many years, argues that 'In practice, any strict distinction between radicalism and extremism is hard to operationalise.'³⁴

Similarities and Coincidence

We have already said that SYRIZA is a radical political party. This assumption can be considered true if we take into consideration the fact that radicals and extremists co-exist within the party. And this is where the two ideal types can no longer be found in their pure forms, where they are interconnected, thus confirming March's argument.

This very coexistence of radicals and extremists in Greece during the years of the economic crisis is one of its main pathologies. Before January 2015, that was encouraged by radical left when it fomented actions of political violence. Even when political violence was verbally objected, it was actually supported by a 'finlandisation' attitude towards it.³⁵

After the elections, we have witnessed a very interesting phenomenon. Ministers and leading members of the radical left actually tolerate and, often, support extremist actions. Universities are occupied by extremists as a form of protest; far leftists go on demonstrations and vandalise public and private property while the police do not react; legislation that facilitates terrorists' (Savvas Ksyros) release from prison is passed; face covering in demonstrations is de-penalised; SYRIZA's MPs object to the minister's

decision to send police forces to the University of Athens to end its occupation. All these examples show that the radical left in power favours a part of society on its extreme left margins.

This can only be explained by looking at how they both see political violence. Extremists clearly approve of its use, while hardcore radicals do not reject it; on the contrary they see it as a useful last resort.

Needless to say that SYRIZA's connection to extremism is the main impediment to its turn to pragmatism in government.

Mudde believes that it is very possible that SYRIZA will make a turn to pragmatism, based on the populist characteristics of the party, but also on empirical data from many European countries where governmental responsibilities incur conflicts within populist parties which can be divided between realists and fundamentalists.³⁶ He readily says: 'While the voters might not be the same, SYRIZA will play roughly the same role in the Greek party system as PASOK has done for decades, i.e. provide the populist left-wing alternative to the conservative ND'.

Personally, I have serious objections to that, as the host ideology³⁷ of SYRIZA's left-wing populism, which is radicalism in its Greek version, has many common characteristics with political extremism. The 'anti-capitalism' views of the majority of SYRIZA's members seem to be on the border line, the grey zone, between radicalism and extremism.³⁸ They express more than an opposition to liberal democracy. It is highly probable that their host ideology will dominate within the parasitic and chameleon-like ideology of populism.

Knowing the individuals that comprise SYRIZA, someone can easily see that, to a great extent, their actions and behaviour reveal a perpetual shift and whirl in their search of a political identity between the 'purifier' and the 'prophet', leading to contradictions, surrealistic decisions or political immobility.

NOTES

1. It was published in *The Books' Journal*, issue 55, May 2015. It summarises the main points of Cas Mudde's lectures in Thessaloniki (20 March 2015) and Athens (26 March 2015) at events organised in his honour by Epikentro Publishing.
2. See, Cas Mudde, 'The Populist Zeitgeist', *Government and Opposition* 39, no. 3 (2004): 541–63; (Mudde 2004) and Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rivera Kaltwasser, 'Populism', in *Oxford Handbook on Political Ideologies*, ed.

- Michael Freedon, Marc Stears, and Lyman Tower Sargent (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 493–512. (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2013)
3. See Paul Taggart, *Populism*. (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000). (Taggart 2000)
 4. Obviously, there are important exceptions, such as the left populist *Die Linke* (The Left) in Germany or the right populist Independent Greeks (ANEL) in Greece.
 5. In the case of countries with bicameral parliaments, only the results for the ‘lower house’ of the national parliament are included.
 6. To be fair, coalition governments of left and right populists had been formed before in Slovakia (1992–1998 and 2006–2010).
 7. See, among many more, Susan J. Pharr and Robert D. Putnam, eds., *Disaffected Democracies: What’s Troubling the Trilateral Countries?*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). (Pharr and Putnam 2000)
 8. See, most notably, Ronald Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles among Western Publics*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977). (Inglehart 1977)
 9. See Russell J. Dalton, *Citizen Politics: Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Industrial Democracies*, 6th ed. (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2013). (Dalton 2013)
 10. See, for example, Demetres A. Soteropoulos and Dimitri A. Sotiropoulos, *Populism and Bureaucracy: The Case of Greece under PASOK, 1981–1989*. (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996) (Soteropoulos and Sotiropoulos 1996); Christos Lyrintzis, ‘The Power of Populism: The Greek Case’, *European Journal of Political Research* 15, no. 6 (1987): 667–86. (Lyrintzis 1987)
 11. See, for instance, George Th. Mavrogordatos, ‘From Traditional Clientelism to Machine Politics: The Impact of PASOK Populism on Greece’, *South European Society and Politics* 2, no. 3 (1997): 1–26. (Mavrogordatos 1997)
 12. For a powerful recent analysis, see Takis Pappas, *Populism and Crisis Politics in Greece*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014b). (Pappas 2014b)
 13. Ibid. See also Takis Pappas, ‘Populist Democracies: Post-Authoritarian Greece and Post-Communist Hungary’, *Government & Opposition* 49, no. 1 (2014a): 1–23. (Pappas 2014a)
 14. See, for instance, Mark Blyth, *Austerity: The History of a Dangerous Idea*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) (Blyth 2013); Monas Matsaganis, ‘The Welfare State and the Crisis: The Case of Greece’, *Journal of European Social Policy* 21, no. 5 (2011): 501–12. (Matsaganis 2011)
 15. See the various contributions in Kevin Featherstone, ed., ‘Special Issue: The Challenge of Modernisation: Politics and Policy in Greece’, *West European Politics* 28, no. 2 (2005).

16. It was first published in *The Books' Journal*, issue 55, May 2015. Giannis Voulgaris is a Professor of Political Sociology at the Department of Political Science and History, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences. He comments on the Greek edition of Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy?* (Thessaloniki: Epikentro, 2013). Mudde Kaltwasser (2013)
17. Luke March and Cas Mudde, 'What's Left of the Radical Left. The European Radical Left After 1989: Decline and Mutation', *Comparative European Politics* 3, no. 3 (2005): 23–49. (March and Mudde 2005)
18. See Paul Taggart, 'Populism and Representative Politics in Contemporary Europe', *Journal of Political Ideologies* 9, no. 3 (2004): 269–88. (Taggart 2004)
19. Margaret Canovan, 'Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy', *Political Studies* 47, no. 1 (1999): 2–16. (Canovan 1999)
20. See Carlo Donolo, *Italia sperduta* (Rome: Donizelli, 2011). (Donolo 2011)
21. Margaret Canovan, 'Populism for Political Theorists?', *Journal of Political Ideologies* 9, no. 3 (2004): pp. 241–52. (Canovan 2004)
22. Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). (Mudde 2007)
23. Hanspeter Kriesi, 'The Populist Challenge', *West European Politics* 37, no. 2 (2014): 361–78. (Kriesi 2014)
24. Tzvetan Todorov, *The Inner Enemies of Democracy*. (Oxford: Polity Press, 2014), 12. (Todorov 2014)
25. Pierre-André Taguieff, *Le nouveau national-populism*. (Paris: CNRS, 2012), 52. (Taguieff 2012)
26. See Charles Tilly, *Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). (Tilly 2007)
27. Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005). (Laclau 2005)
28. It was first published in *The Books' Journal*, issue 55, May 2015. It includes the main points of Petros Papasarantopoulos' lectures at the events organised in Cas Mudde's honour by Epikentro Publishing, in Thessaloniki (20 March 2015) and Athens (26 March 2015).
29. Ibid.
30. See Cas Mudde and Antonis Galanopoulos, 'Populism and Liberal Democracy: Is Greece the Exception or the Future of Europe?', *Open Democracy*, 29 April 2015, available at: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/antonis-galanopoulos/interview-with-cas-mudde-populism-and-liberal-democracy-is-greece-exception-or>
31. Paul Lucardie, 'Prophets, Purifiers and Prolocutors: Towards a Theory on the Emergence of New Parties', *Party Politics* 6, no. 2 (2000): 175–85. (Lucardie 2000)

32. Petros Papasaranopoulos, *Εξτρεμισμός και πολιτική βία στην Ελλάδα* [Extremism and political violence in Greece]. Thessaloniki: Epikentro, 2014b. (Papasaranopoulos 2014b)
33. Max Weber was the first to explore the idea of the ideal type. See Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. (London: Routledge, 2001). (Weber 2001)
34. Luke March, *Radical Left Parties in Europe*. (New York: Routledge 2011). (March 2011)
35. Petros Papasaranopoulos, ‘Η φινλανδοποίηση απέναντι στην πολιτική βία’, in *Εξτρεμισμός και πολιτική βία στην Ελλάδα* [‘Finlandisation towards political violence’ in *Extremism and Political Violence in Greece*]. (Thessaloniki: Epikentro, 2014a). (Papasaranopoulos 2014a)
36. Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). (Mudde 2007)
37. See Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy?*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2012)
38. See more Petros Papasaranopoulos, *Μύθοι και στερεότυπα της ελληνικής κρίσης* [Myths and Stereotypes of the Greek Crisis]. Thessaloniki: Epikentro 2012 (Papasaranopoulos 2012) and *Εξτρεμισμός και πολιτική βία στην Ελλάδα* [Extremism and Political Violence in Greece]. (Thessaloniki: Epikentro, 2014b). (Papasaranopoulos 2014b)

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