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First thoughts on the 20 September 2015 election in Greece

Edited by
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Out With the 'Anti-Memorandum', In With the 'New'

Since Syriza's rise to power in January 2015, a new landscape has rapidly emerged in Greek politics. Greek political parties have had to reshape their messages on the road to these elections. The shifts in the parties' discourse in the September elections can be highlighted through an overview of the scheme we have suggested in our previous works on party and journalist discourse in the 'period of crisis', in which three sets of opposing identifications (comparable to Laclau and Mouffe's 'antagonisms' and to the classic Lipset and Rokkan's 'cleavages') were seen as providing an encompassing scheme for the ways through which Greek opinion leaders tried to direct their audiences toward one choice or another.

These were:

1. **Left vs Right** - already in wide circulation in Greek politics since mid-1940s.
2. **Modernisation vs Populism** - identifiable in Greek politics at least since the 1974 transition to democracy [*Metapolitefsi*], if not much earlier.
3. **Anti-Memorandum vs Pro-Memorandum** – merging as an effective slogan in the years of the crisis, partially substituting the populist reaction to the previous period of economic welfare, which is usually conceived as the 'modernisation period'.

The pre-electoral discourse of all parties seems to have moved through modifications of one or more identification sets. Syriza downplayed their earlier extensive use of the 'anti-Memorandum' frame in favour of their key electoral slogan "We are getting over with the old. We are earning the new" (replacing the original slogan of "[We] Only [Move] Forward"), whereas its brand as the 'first government of the Left' remained strongly present in the party's discourse just like before the elections.

As for Syriza's main opponent, New Democracy, and its new conciliatory leader, who accused Syriza as a neo-Memorandum party, their pre-electoral period began with an effort to present themselves as 'combining the old and the new', whereas their main pre-electoral slogan, "Greece Forward", was respectively combining the right-wing reference to 'Greece' with the new.

Popular Unity's [LAE] (Syriza's splinter faction) and Independent Greeks' [ANEL] (Syriza's right-wing populist ally) strong insistence on the 'anti-Memorandum' frame does not seem to have earned them a wide audience, whereas neo-Nazi Golden Dawn's mixture of 'anti-Memorandum' and simpler populism received some gains, as is the case with the Communist Party's [KKE] simple persisting 'pro-people' discourse.

In the case of centre-left parties, The River's [To Potami] turn to an old-fashioned modernisation discourse seems to have alienated its young voters, whereas PASOK's insistence on a similar line seems to have had limited gains if one considers the absence of Papandreou's rival KIDISO from these elections. Finally, increased support for the caricature party of Centrist Union [Enosi Kentroon], whose actual views most of its voters did probably not know, suggests a turn of the Greek protest vote towards milder expressions, possibly at a certain distance from clear-cut populism.

Consequently, a retreat of the force of the 'anti-Memorandum' identification in favour of a milder modernisation of the 'New' seems to have taken place in the voters' attitudes, whereas simpler populism has had limited gains out of the 'anti-Memorandum's' fall, and more conventional appeals to modernisation seem to have remained unattractive. Therefore, Greek society seems to have come to terms with the age of the Memorandum and to have started to engage with how to move on in this new

environment. As concerns traditional left-right politics and slogans, they seem to have retained their socio-political force in the background of the trends that are recorded at the level of discourse.

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Official account of the Greek Prime Minister on [Flickr](#)