DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

THE GREEK PARTY LANDSCAPE IN 2023

Lamprini Rori, Vasiliki Georgiadou, Dimitri A. Sotiropoulos, Eftychia Teperoglou, Emmanouil Tsatsanis, Yannis Tsirbas

Edited by Lamprini Rori
April 2024

→
The post-crisis reinstatement of the Left-Right division.

→
The second formation of a one-party government in a row configures a predominant party system.

→
Increased fragmentation in parliament and the party system.

→
Electoral competition in 2023 is centripetal, with the highest density of voters being situated at the center of the ideological spectrum.

→
ND's electoral victory draws from its capacity to form a solid majority of both self-declared centrist and right-wing voters.

FRIEDRICH EBERT STIFTUNG

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Contents

1
INTRODUCTION: THE GREEK PARTY LANDSCAPE GRAVITATING TOWARDS A PREDOMINANT PARTY SYSTEM

Lamprini Rori

In the wake of Greece's official exit from the bailouts in August 2018, its political landscape gradually reconfigured itself, combining old and new elements of the post-1974 party system and electoral competition. As disputes over the bailout were no longer relevant because the government formed by the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA) and the Independent Greeks (ANEL) had complied with the creditors' terms after – and despite – the referendum result in the summer of 2015 (which resulted in a third bailout from 2015 to 2018), the competing political parties gravitated towards more traditional stances, along the left–right dimension that had structured political competition in Greece from the transition to democracy in 1974 until the beginning of the financial crisis in 2010 (Marantzidis and Rori 2012). Beyond the reinstatement of the left–right division, the one-party government of New Democracy (ND), which was formed after the 2019 parliamentary elections was another sign of a return to a sense of «political normality» (Rori 2020). The decade-long sequence of four coalition governments had been disrupted, indicating that political crisis had been overcome and electoral trust had been restored with regard to one of the two old establishment parties (Teperoglou et al. 2022).

While there is some continuity with the defining characteristics of electoral competition before 2010, there are also discontinuities. Some arise from the unprecedented polycrisis – including the refugee crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the climate and geopolitical crises – shaping the priorities of both parties and voters, while others pertain to the party system, becoming apparent in the aftermath of the 2023 May and June parliamentary elections. ND's landslide victory in May 2023 with 40.79 per cent of the vote, 20.72 points ahead of SYRIZA, was confirmed in the snap June election. ND polled a slightly lower 40.56 per cent (Ministry of the Interior), but widened the gap with SYRIZA to 22.73 points. This confirms ND's dominance, as also manifested in its outright majority of 158 seats, enabling strong one-party government. Besides ND, the new parliament includes three parties of the radical left (SYRIZA, which won 17.83 per cent of the vote, the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) on 7.69 per cent and Plefsi Eleftherias (PE) on 3.17 per cent); a centre-left Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), on 11.84 per cent; and three far right parties, which won similar proportions of the vote [Spartiates on 4.68 per cent, the Greek Solution (EL) on 4.44 per cent and Niki on 3.70 per cent].

This asymmetry in the configuration of electoral power, combined with a highly fragmented parliament of, initially, eight parties – increased to nine since SYRIZA's split in September 2023 – is leading towards the formation of a predominant party system (Sartori 1976). Even though ND won two asymmetrical victories back in 1974 and 1977, in our view the post-2019 configuration is something of a novelty within the framework of post-1974 electoral competition. The political context in the aftermath of the transition to democracy was inevitably volatile and the opposition was in the ascendant in the 1970s, which is not the case either before or after the 2023 elections.

In order to understand these significant shifts in voting behaviour, we need to delve into the supply and the demand for policies in the situation preceding the 2023 elections. What were the salient issues setting the agenda of electoral competition? Which party positions and voter stances drove electoral preferences? How do those issues structure electoral competition in the two-dimensional space of economic and cultural policies? We aim to shed light on these questions, presenting the profiles of parliamentary parties and voters in the 2023 parliamentary elections in Greece, as well as any congruence between these parties and the people expressing likelihood to vote for them. This publication is structured as follows. In Section 2 we present the dataset and the methodology used for data collection and sampling. Section 3 focuses on an analysis of the six parliamentary parties and their prospective electorates, presenting party profiles and positions, as well as voters' sociodemographic profiles and the issues on which parties converge with their voters and those on which they diverge. Finally, we offer some conclusions concerning the configuration of electoral competition in the post-crisis party landscape.

2

DATA COLLECTION AND METHODOLOGY

Lamprini Rori

The data were taken from the What2Vote dataset, an online voting advice application (VAA) launched for the 2023 Greek parliamentary elections. VAAs are technological solutions aimed at helping voters to make more informed decisions when casting a vote. They do so primarily by comparing the positions of voters with those of the candidates or political parties on a set of important policy issues and informing voters about which is the closest party or candidate to their expressed preferences. This dataset contains user responses to the online survey and the relevant positions of political parties. The project was funded by FES Athens, designed by a seven-member academic team (Vasiliki Georgiadou, Costas Roumanias, Dimitri A. Sotiropoulos, Eftichia Teperoglou, Emmanouil Tsatsanis and Yannis Tsirbas) coordinated by Lamprini Rori, and collected by Dutch research institute Kieskompas (Election Compass).

Participants were invited to respond to a three-part questionnaire. In the first part of the questionnaire, respondents were asked a few background questions, such as birth year, gender, education and place of residence. In the second part, they answered 30 questions on policy statements, indicating agreement on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = fully disagree, 5 = fully agree, with a «no opinion» option). The team identified 30 items as the most salient issues in the forthcoming elections, for example, pertaining to the economy, the EU, education, immigration, and social and cultural issues. Respondents were also asked to express their propensity-to-vote (PTV) for the six parties represented in the Greek parliament by answering the question «How likely are you to vote for each of the following parties?» on a scale from 0 to 10. Users were then shown their left–right and conservative–progressive position in a two-dimensional political landscape, amidst the positions of the six parties. After a few seconds, the third part of the questionnaire appeared in the form of a pop-up window with additional questions, for example, on recall of previous voting and voting intentions for the 2023 elections, together with a series of questions seeking information on different aspects of respondents' political behaviour. Out of a total of 137,579 valid responses collected from 18 April until 25 June 2023, 94,564 respondents provided their full background information and were therefore assigned a weight.

Despite the large number of observations, samples collected via VAA recruitment are prone to self-selection and bias. To address this structural limitation, What2Vote data were weighted by Kieskompas using post-stratification methods. Post-stratification involves partitioning sample respondents into demographic cells and then computing frequency weights in each cell to ensure that the cell totals mirror the population totals. A joint demographic distribution of age, gender and region was employed, using data from the 2021 Greek population census obtained from the national statistical authority ELSTAT (https://www.statistics.gr/en/2021-census-res-pop-results). A marginal distribution of education was also used, taking the proportions of the different educational categories (higher, average and lower) from a recent Greek survey (completed in 2022). Respondents were then weighted employing a joint demographic distribution of age (six categories), sex (three categories), education (three categories), geographic location (13 regions) and vote recall in the 2019 parliamentary elections. Weights were consistently trimmed at the 95th percentile to mitigate the effects of extraordinarily large weights and improve the reliability of analyses conducted with the data. The maximum margin of error at the 95th percentile was calculated for each weight, taking the sample design into account. The maximum margin of error at the 95th percentile is 0.7 per cent. The post-stratified What2Vote data quality thus makes it possible to derive nationally representative population estimates.

In the following analysis, we use heatmaps designed by Kieskompas to show the political parties' positions and voter distribution in a two-dimensional space, based on the stances coded on the 30 most salient policy issues. Each issue statement relates either to the economic left–right dimension or to the cultural progressive–conservative dimension. Hence the horizontal axis captures positioning pertaining to the role of the state in the economy, labour norms, taxation policies, welfare provision and redistribution, whereas the vertical spans positions on issues such as immigration, religion, national identity, human rights, gender equality, the environment and European integration. The spatial map is constructed on the basis of the aggregate positions of the parties and the voters on the two dimensions. The brighter the colour in the heatmap, the more concentrated respondents are on this particular position.

3
ANALYSIS OF THE POSITIONS OF THE GREEK PARTIES AND VOTERS

3.1 NEW DEMOCRACY – ΝΕΑ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ (ND)
Dimitri A. Sotiropoulos

Figure 1

The spatial position and density of ND voters.

Spatial Position and Density of ND Voters

Party profile

ND is a political party on the centre-right of the Greek party system. ND supporters generally take centre-right positions on many economic and social issues, based on the attitudes of prospective ND voters among the What2Vote respondents. It is useful to locate ND in the Greek party system that was certainly tilted to the left before the 2023 national parliamentary elections. This is evident in the number of parties with a centre-left or left ideological profile and their electoral influence. Among the six parties represented in parliament in

2019–2023, four positioned themselves on the centre-left or the left: the centre-left PASOK, the radical left SYRIZA and MeRA25, and the communist KKE. These four parties together commanded 48 per cent of the votes cast in the 2019 elections, but because the Greek electoral system facilitates the formation of single-party governments, ND (with 40 per cent of the vote) governed alone in 2019–2023. The far-right end of the Greek party system was occupied by the populist, nationalist EL party.

Voter profile

Turning to the social profile of ND voters, based on the What2Vote data, ND voters tend to be middle aged or older, better educated and primarily male. Most ND likely voters are over 50 years of age and hold a university degree. In terms of employment, ND voters come from a broad range of categories, but the main ones are retired persons and private sector employees. In that respect ND is like PASOK. ND has built a solid electoral base: seven out of 10 of its prospective voters in 2023 had voted for the same party in 2019. Among all the parties ND enjoyed the most success in voter mobilisation.

Party–voter issue congruence

We next examine congruence between party and voter positions on culture and education, law and order, the economy, the labour market, redistribution and foreign policy issues. The responses of ND voters on a number of issues place them on the centre-right. For instance, ND's official party line is generally in favour of restricting further immigration and sceptical about the contributions that immigrants may make to Greek national culture. Compared with the voters of the four centre-left/left parties, ND voters are indeed more sceptical regarding how much Greek culture may be enriched by efforts to integrate immigrants into Greek society. The same voters are in favour of restrictive immigration policies. EL voters, however, are much more negative than ND voters regarding both the further admission of immigrants to Greece and their contribution to Greek culture.

The same pattern emerges regarding What2Vote responses on culture-related questions. ND rejects the relaxation of ties between Church and State and is against making enrolment in Christian Orthodox religious classes in Greek schools voluntary. ND's voters agree on this, but not as fervently as far right voters. Regarding the absolute separation of Church and State, one in six ND voters are against, whereas one in three EL voters disagree, while only a small minority of centre-left/left voters disagree. Similarly, on the abolition of pupils' obligation to take Christian Orthodox religious classes at school, EL voters express far more strenuous disagreement than ND voters. The latter, in turn, disagree more strongly than the voters of other parties. The same holds for the prospect of legalising the adoption of children by same-sex couples: most EL voters disagree with this idea, as do a relative majority of ND voters, whereas only a minority of voters of centre-left/left parties reject the idea. ND strongly favours stricter imposition of law and order, including tightening up sanctions imposed on criminals and police responses to the destruction of public property. The party's voters agree with the party line. Moreover, ND voters come out most strongly in favour of imposing very strict penalties on offenders.

ND supports a rolling back of state intervention in education. The party voters are on board with this. Compared with the voters of all other parties, ND voters are much more in favour of allowing private universities to operate in Greece. (The constitution bans the provision of higher education by non-state-owned universities.) Incidentally, the EL party, which is to the right of ND, appears closer on this issue to the left parties, which support the ban. The same holds for forging linkages between universities and private businesses and the professional rights of private university graduates, which ND voters disproportionately favour compared with those of all other parties.

While they are pro-market and anti-statist, the ND party and its voters are not completely against labour protection. The party disagrees with relaxing labour regulations in the hope that more job opportunities will be created by businesses and rejects unpaid overtime work even if a company needs it. ND voters strongly disagree with these ideas, too, so the party and its supporters converge on these issues. The same holds true of allowing layoffs by a private company at risk of going bankrupt. The voters follow the party line in assenting to such layoffs. But while the official party line is against extending collective agreements between employers and employees to sectors in which they do not exist today, ND voters who, as noted above, largely come from the salaried strata, favour such an extension of collective agreements. Voters, then, do not seem inclined to go as far as their party in favouring business interests.

Regarding foreign policy, ND rejects the allegation that NATO is primarily to blame for the war in Ukraine and also rejects the usefulness of the Prespa Agreement (2018) with which the dispute over the name of North Macedonia was resolved. The party's voters are aligned with the party's positions. Compared with the voters of all other parties, ND voters are the strongest supporters of deepening European integration, exactly as their party claims.

To sum up, the ND party and its voters converge on most issues and hold pro-EU centre-right positions, although the party line is probably more pro-business than its voters are.

3.2 COALITION OF THE RADICAL LEFT – ΣΥΝΑΣΠΙΣΜΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΡΙΖΟΣΠΑΣΤΙΚΗΣ ΑΡΙΣΤΕΡΑΣ (SYRIZA)

Yannis Tsirbas

Figure 2
Spatial position and density of SYRIZA voters

Spatial Position and Density of Syriza Voters
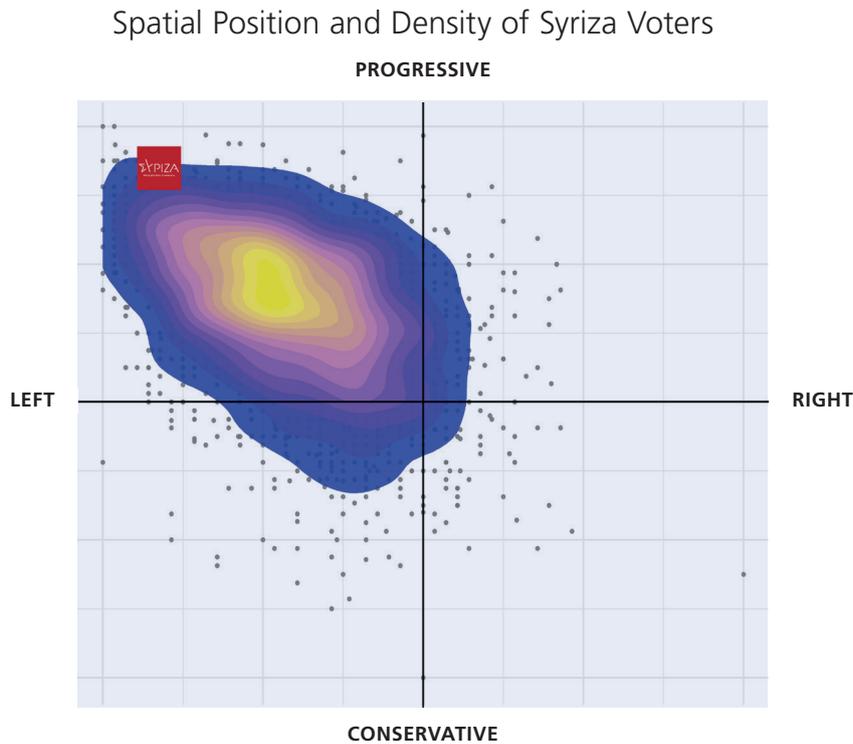
Party profile

SYRIZA is a left-wing political party, which initially comprised a coalition of political forces, ranging from centrist environmentalists and pro-European progressivists to socialists, euro-communists and anti-globalisation activists. Following the eruption of the economic crisis in 2010, SYRIZA, led by Alexis Tsipras, gained momentum. It hardened its stance against the austerity measures imposed by international creditors in exchange for financial support, leading to a ramping up of its rhetoric towards left-wing populism and increasingly anti-EU positions, which resulted in a split with the moderate, pro-EU faction of the party. Subsequently, SYRIZA's rise was meteoric, leading to three consecutive electoral wins, in the European election of 2014, and in the parliamentary elections of January and September 2015, which resulted in two SYRIZA-led coalition governments with the right-wing populist ANEL party. In 2019, SYRIZA lost the election but retained the status of a major contender for power in a reinvigorated Greek two-party system, only to lose this status in the elections of May and June 2023.

Party positions

SYRIZA's positions are what one might expect from the party's ideological and political profile. It is positioned in the upper left quadrant of the two-dimensional space that is defined by the left–right and progressive–conservative dimensions, as shown in the relevant heatmap. This positioning means a left-leaning stance on economic and distributional issues and a progressive outlook on cultural, educational and social matters. Specifically, in the cultural and social dimension, SYRIZA is positive towards immigration, supports the separation of church and state, opposes private universities and promotes the expansion of rights for women and the LGBTQ+ community. With respect to law-and-order issues, the party takes a rather lenient stance, opposing university police, stricter punishment of criminals and the notion that the police should react more strictly in cases of public property destruction.

SYRIZA's positions on the economy and labour market are also what one might expect. It opposes the relaxation of labour rights, as well as the reduction of taxes as a business

incentive. Likewise, as expected from a party of the left, it supports raising taxes on those with high incomes, free medicine for low-income pensioners, and increased public spending even if it means an increase in taxation. In terms of international politics, SYRIZA supports the enhancement of European integration and condemns Russia's war on Ukraine, without making any reference to NATO, according to the What2Vote documentation.

Voter profile

SYRIZA voters present a balanced gender distribution. Also, SYRIZA's prospective electorate consists mainly of middle-aged people, 27 per cent of whom hold a university degree. In terms of employment profile, SYRIZA's potential voters consist mainly of pensioners, private and public sector employees, and self-employed people without employees. Moreover, more than eight out of 10 prospective SYRIZA voters claim left-of-centre ideological positions. According to What2Vote data, SYRIZA managed to retain only 60 per cent of its 2019 voters in 2023.

Party–voter issue congruence

As is apparent from the relevant heatmap, on many of the issues surveyed, the party and its prospective voters exhibit significant congruence regarding all areas, including culture and education, law and order, the economy, labour market and redistribution, and foreign policy. However, there are some notable exceptions, which could in part explain SYRIZA's electoral demise in 2023, as they reveal a representation gap. Clearly, not all 30 issues that were measured in the What2Vote research project can be presented here. However, what follows is a representative illustration of several of these issues.

Congruence. More specifically, 52 per cent of SYRIZA's prospective voters agree or strongly agree that immigrants enrich Greek national identity and culture. This is also the position of the party. Additionally, more than 90 per cent of SYRIZA's prospective voters either agree or strongly agree with the prospect of an absolute separation between church and state, while almost 70 per cent agree or strongly agree with the abolition of compulsory attendance at religious courses in school, again in line with the party's positions. Moreover, more than 60 per cent of SYRIZA's prospective voters support the right of same-sex couples to adopt children, a hotly debated issue. Almost 70 per cent of SYRIZA's prospective voters either disagree or strongly disagree with the establishment of private universities and with the proposition that graduates of public universities and private colleges should have the same professional rights. On all the aforementioned issues, the party and its voters are on the same page.

Looking at labour market issues, SYRIZA's prospective voters overwhelmingly oppose the relaxation of the relevant rules (95 per cent) and unpaid overtime (96 per cent), while they support the proliferation of mandatory collective agreements to more sectors (89 per cent), aligning with the party's positions. Also, both the party and its prospective electorate support tax increases for those on higher incomes (89 per cent). The majority of SYRIZA's prospective voters approve the Prespa agreement (77 per cent), one of the central foreign policy choices of the SYRIZA government. Regarding the EU, 58 per cent would like to see deeper European integration, in line with the party's official position.

Divergence. The first area of divergence between SYRIZA and its prospective voters emerges regarding law and order issues. While the party maintains a tolerant stance, 66 per cent of its prospective voters think that criminals should be punished more severely, while a plurality (45 per cent) back the idea that the police should react more strictly in cases of public property destruction.

Regarding redistribution issues, while the party disagrees that taxes should be lowered to give businesses investment incentives, most (56 per cent) of the party's prospective voters agree with the idea. Another issue on which the party and its prospective voters seem to go their separate ways is the linking of university funding to innovation and entrepreneurship, with regard to which the party tends to be negative but the majority of its voters are positive (55 per cent).

Finally, regarding foreign policy and international issues, SYRIZA's voters deviate from the party's positions on two distinct topics. They believe that EU member states must regain national sovereignty (57 per cent) and agree or strongly agree with the notion that the war in Ukraine is mostly NATO's responsibility (71 per cent).
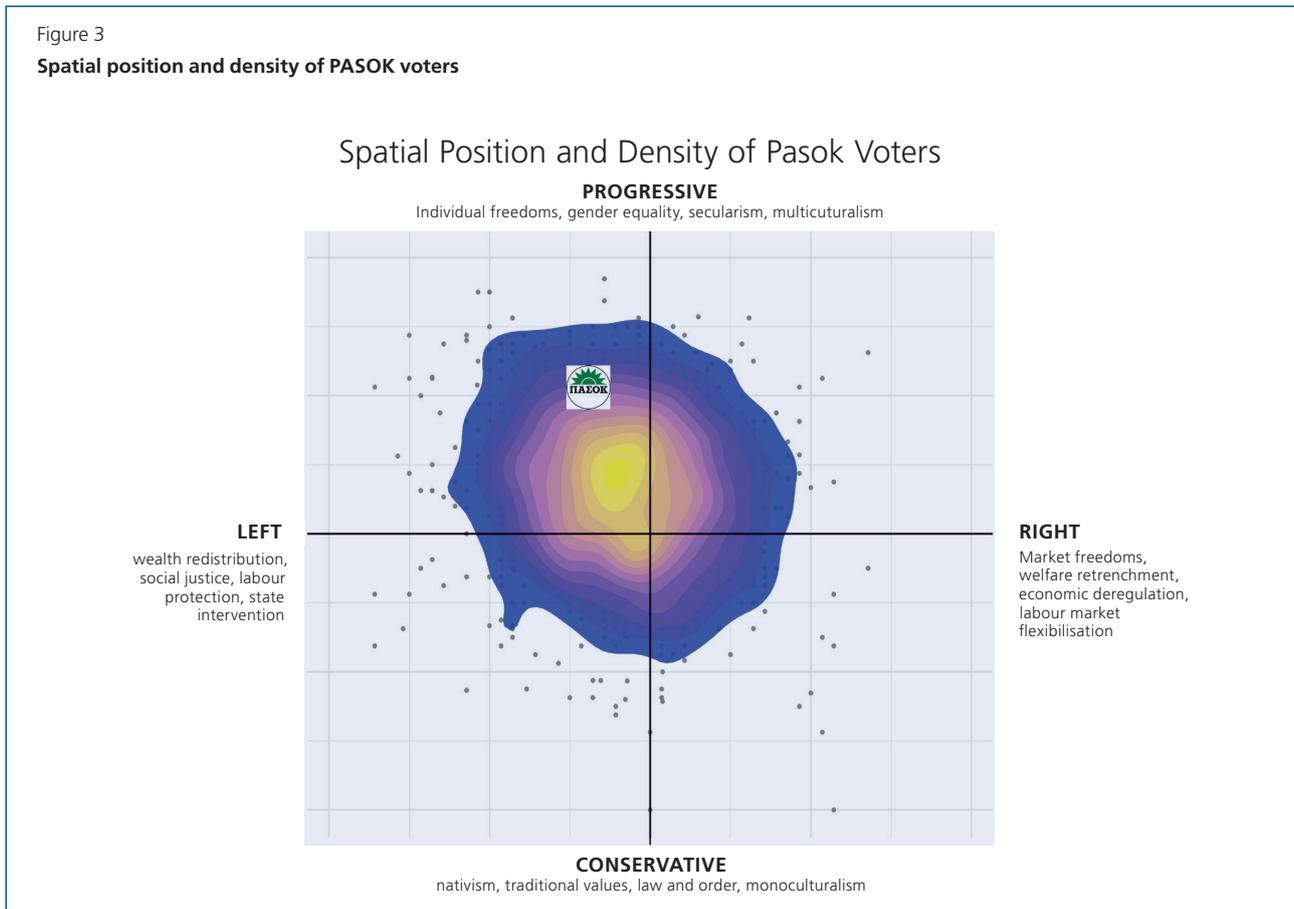
In sum, SYRIZA and its voters converge on most issues, holding expected left-of-centre positions. In some cases, however, its voters seem to be more pro-business and pro-law-and-order than the party, while at the same time maintaining a rather traditional – for specific segments of the Greek electorate – anti-NATO stance, contrary to that of the official party.

3.3 PANHELLENIC SOCIALIST MOVEMENT – ΠΑΝΕΛΛΗΝΙΟ ΣΟΣΙΑΛΙΣΤΙΚΟ ΚΙΝΗΜΑ (PASOK)

Eftichia Teperoglou

Figure 3

Spatial position and density of PASOK voters

Spatial Position and Density of Pasok Voters

PROGRESSIVE
Individual freedoms, gender equality, secularism, multicuturalism

LEFT
wealth redistribution, social justice, labour protection, state intervention

RIGHT
Market freedoms, welfare retrenchment, economic deregulation, labour market flexibilisation

CONSERVATIVE
nativism, traditional values, law and order, monoculturalism

Party profile

The Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) is one of the main political parties of the post-authoritarian period in Greece. It is the main party on the centre-left of the ideological spectrum and one of the most pro-European. Up until the double earthquake elections of May and June 2012 it was the dominant party in the Greek party system. It ruled as a single-party government for 22 years from 1981 to 2012. In the wake of the economic recession, however, PASOK was displaced from its dominant position. PASOK signed the first bailout agreement under the leadership of George Papandreou and at the peak of the economic crisis participated in a coalition government with the centre-right party New Democracy from 2012 to 2015 (the centre-left Democratic Left/DIMAR was also a member of this coalition government for one year). In July 2017 former leader Fofi Gennimata created a new party «Movement for Change» (KINAL), a coalition of centrist and centre-left parties. Since March 2019, however, the only party still in KINAL has been PASOK. In the parliamentary elections of July 2019 the party managed to gain 8.10 per cent of the vote, with 22 MPs. Gennimata died in October 2021 and elections for the new leader took place in

December 2021. Nikos Androulakis was elected as new leader and on May 2022 it was decided to participate in the elections as «PASOK-KINAL». In the double elections of May and June 2023, the party improved its electoral performance compared with 2019. More specifically, in the May 2023 election it gained 11.5 per cent of the vote, while in the June 2023 election it managed to attract 11.8 per cent (electing 32 MPs). Taking into account SYRIZA's steep decline, it remains to be seen whether PASOK-KINAL will leapfrog SYRIZA and recover its place in any future duopoly in the Greek party system.

Voter profile

A central issue is the nature of PASOK-KINAL's electoral base in 2023. Analysis of the sociodemographic characteristics of the What2Vote users who stated that they would vote for PASOK-KINAL in the May 2023 election finds some interesting patterns. One the most interesting findings is a gender gap: the party attracts more men (61 per cent) than women (39 per cent). This is the second biggest difference among all the parties of our study (behind MeRA25). Moreover, we also see that the majority of potential PASOK-KINAL voters are

over 50 years of age. This pattern was discernible in previous elections. In terms of occupational categories, the party's voters work in both the public and the private sector, but also include retired people. Most of PASOK-KINAL's likely voters declared themselves to be centrists (60 per cent place themselves at points 4 or 5 of the eleven-point left–right scale). Interestingly, the vast majority (75 per cent) claim they are not satisfied with the way democracy works in Greece.

Party positions

According to PASOK-KINAL's electoral programme at the last parliamentary elections, it has a pro-EU and pro-euro stance and more moderate positions regarding foreign policy issues. The party is clearly in favour of gender equality and promotes liberal positions on various socio-cultural issues (such as the absolute separation of church and state, and the right of the children of immigrants born in Greece to acquire Greek citizenship) and redistributive policies, while it has more market-liberal positions on economic issues. Placing the party along the two main dimensions of party competition in Greece, the economic and the socio-cultural (see Figure 3) we see that PASOK-KINAL has strong left-libertarian positions on socio-cultural issues, while it is more to the centre-left on economic issues. However, the likely electorate of PASOK-KINAL is near to the median voter. Therefore, the heatmap, which shows the distribution of potential PASOK-KINAL voters along the two axes of political competition, reveals a high level of incongruence between party and voter positions. We will try to explore the roots of this incongruence by comparing the distributions of answers of likely PASOK-KINAL voters on each of the 30 issues included in our survey.

Party–voter issue congruence

The first main area of divergence between the party and its prospective voters concerns law-and-order issues. While the party is in favour of abolishing the university police, 52 per cent of its likely voters take the opposite view. Moreover, a strong majority of likely PASOK-KINAL voters (81 per cent) favour harsher punishment for criminals, in contrast with the party's more moderate position. The same pattern is observed with regard to the statement »The police should react more strictly in cases of public property destruction«, on which 78 per cent of potential PASOK-KINAL voters are in favour. Furthermore, despite the surveillance scandal and the security service monitoring of PASOK's leader, a total of 42 per cent of potential PASOK-KINAL voters approve the statement that »surveillance of political figures should be prohibited even when matters of national security are at stake«. Overall, we might conclude that the party is more progressive on law-and-order issues, while its potential voters are closer to ND here.

There is also considerable inconsistency between the party and its potential electorate on a range of socio-cultural and foreign policy issues. Migration is a case in point. Regarding the statement »immigrants enrich our national identity and culture« 30 per cent of PASOK-KINAL voters are against and 30 per cent are neutral (»neither agree nor disagree«), while the party's electoral programme supports this position. Regarding the Prespa agreement, no clear pattern is discernible among PASOK-KINAL voters (25 per cent declared themselves neutral on the statement «the Prespa agreement was a good agreement», while 30 per cent supported it). Interestingly, on the statement «NATO bears the greatest responsibility for the war in Ukraine», 41 per cent of PASOK-KINAL respondents agree, while the party takes the opposite view. Turning to the disputed issue of the right of same-sex couples to adopt children, 34 per cent of likely PASOK-KINAL voters are against it. Another interesting finding concerns stances towards the EU. Although both the party and its prospective voters share the same, positive positions regarding EU membership and the prospects of EU enlargement, there is a high level of incongruence regarding whether EU member states should «regain national sovereignty». The party firmly shares a less state-centred position on this in conjunction with support for the EU's multi-level system of governance, while half of its electorate is on the other side of the debate. The latter pattern reminds us of PASOK rhetoric under the leadership of Andreas Papandreou back in 1981.

In contrast to their stance on socio-cultural issues, on economic ones PASOK-KINAL voters tend to be more aligned with party positions. For example, the voters agree with the party that unpaid overtime should never be allowed, even when there may be some need for it (94 per cent), that tax rates for people on high incomes should be increased (69 per cent) and that own-risk contributions for medicines should be abolished for low-income pensioners (78 per cent). They also agree that collective agreements should be mandatory in more sectors (76 per cent).

One major conclusion of our analysis is that the high levels of voter/party incongruence can be explained mainly by the differences of opinion on the socio-cultural axis. While the party under the leadership of Androulakis tends to adopt more progressive stances on these issues, its electoral base seems to be more conservative. The same holds for law-and-order issues, as well as on the matter of national sovereignty. In a nutshell, the heatmap produced using What2Vote data shows that the party is more cosmopolitan than its potential voters overall, with more convergence on the economic dimension.

3.4 COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREECE – ΚΟΜΜΟΥΝΙΣΤΙΚΟ ΚΟΜΜΑ ΕΛΛΑΔΟΣ (ΚΚΕ)
Emmanouil Tsatsanis

Figure 4
Spatial position and density of KKE voters

Spatial Position and Density of KKE Voters
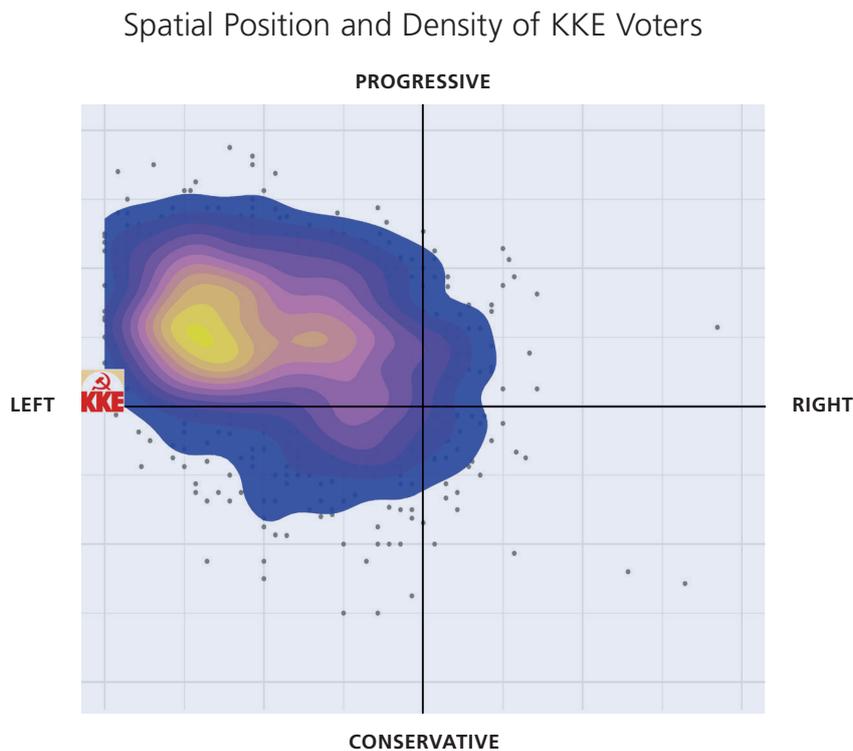
Party profile

The KKE is the oldest party in Greece and one of the last remaining »orthodox« communist parties in Europe. Ever since the transition to democracy in 1974 and the re-legalisation of KKE (the party was outlawed throughout the post-war period following the Greek Civil War in the late 1940s), the Greek Communist Party has consistently managed to secure a presence in the Greek parliament. In the double elections of May and June 2023, the party maintained its position as the fourth largest party in the Greek Parliament while improving its electoral share (over 7 per cent in both elections) and its share of seats (21 seats following the June 2023 election) in comparison with the 2019 election (5.3 per cent and 15 seats, respectively).

Voter profile

We can gauge the sociodemographic profile of the Greek Communist Party's electoral base by examining the characteristics of the What2Vote users who declared their intention to vote for KKE in the May 2023 election. These likely KKE voters do not share a particularly distinct demographic pro-

file. However, there are some noticeable divergences from the demographic makeup of What2Vote users who declared their intention to vote for other parties. There is an even split below and above the age of 50, and KKE voters tend on average to be somewhat younger than ND, SYRIZA or PASOK voters. Even so, a quarter of KKE voters are retired. In terms of occupational categories, about a third of KKE voters are non-managerial employees in both the private and public sectors and only about 15 per cent are self-employed (a low percentage compared with the occupational makeup of other parties' voters). Predictably, KKE voters are the most left-leaning respondents in the What2Vote sample: 41 per cent of likely KKE voters position themselves on the extreme left of the eleven-point left-right scale (the largest proportion of any party, by a large margin), and another 41 per cent place themselves at other left-of-centre points on the scale. The remainder position themselves either in the middle of the scale (11 per cent) or reject the relevance of the left-right distinction (5 per cent). A mere 2 per cent place themselves on the centre-right and none on the right, by far the lowest percentage among the different groups of likely voters.

Party–voter issue congruence

The heatmap that captures the distribution of the self-declared likely KKE voters along the two main dimensions of Greek party competition (economic and cultural) reveals good but not perfect congruence between party and voter positions. The party is positioned at the extreme on the economic dimension and in the middle on the cultural axis, meaning that overall its position is neither outright progressive nor conservative on cultural and political issues. What incongruence is observed between the party and its voters relates to the somewhat more progressive positions of KKE voters on cultural issues in comparison to the party and their comparatively less extreme – overall leftist and statist – positions on economics.

By looking at the distribution of KKE voters' answers on each of the 30 issues included in the What2Vote questionnaire, we are able to identify the main sources of party–voter incongruence. On the cultural axis, much of the incongruence results from the party's conservative stances on issues on which its electoral base appears to be more progressive. For example, there is a clear divergence of preferences related to the right of homosexual couples to adopt children. While the party is against the right to adopt, the majority of its voters (53 per cent) support it and only a minority (28 per cent) are against. Similarly, only 20 per cent of KKE voters agree with the party that same-sex marriage should not be allowed or that femicide should not be recognised as a separate criminal offense. In fact, 60 per cent of KKE voters support the institutionalisation of same-sex marriage and 64 per cent believe that femicide should constitute a separate criminal offense. The KKE and its voters also appear to diverge in their evaluations of the Prespa Agreement between Greece and North Macedonia. While the party is firmly against the agreement, its voters appear to be a bit more divided on the issue (37 per cent disagree with the assessment that it was a good agreement, whereas 28 per cent agree, 25 per cent are unsure and 10 per cent have no opinion).

On other cultural and political issues, KKE voters appear to be largely in alignment with the party. Large majorities of KKE voters agree with the party that church and state should be separated and that compulsory attendance at religion classes in school should be abolished. Similarly, most KKE voters agree with the party that NATO bears the greatest responsibility for the war in Ukraine and that EU member states must regain national sovereignty, even though voters appear to be somewhat more divided on the question of whether EU integration should deepen. In contrast to the party's firm and clear negative position, one-third of KKE voters agree that EU integration should deepen, while about a quarter appear unsure on this issue.

On economic issues, there is similarly a lot of agreement between the party and its voters. Specifically, KKE voters tend to favour the party's leftist positions by a wide margin and agree with the party that labour rights should not be relaxed on the grounds of reducing unemployment (94 per cent), that collective agreements should be mandatory in more sectors (89 per cent), that unemployment benefits do not prevent people from looking for work (67 per cent), that unpaid overtime should never be allowed, even when there is some need to do so (97 per cent), that tax rates for people on high incomes should be increased (87 per cent), that own-risk contributions for medicines should be abolished for low income pensioners (89 per cent), and that the Public Power Corporation should be renationalised in order to deal with the energy crisis (79 per cent).

On issues related to links between tertiary education and the economy, KKE voters agree with the party that establishment of private universities should not be allowed and that graduates of public universities and private colleges should not have the same professional rights, even though voters appear overall more ambivalent on the question of linking the funding of universities to the goals of innovation and entrepreneurship (about half of KKE voters agree), an idea that the party firmly opposes. Other economic-related issues on which the party espouses clear leftist stances while voters appear to be more divided include the position that taxation should be reduced in order to give businesses investment incentives (the party is firmly against but 56 per cent of its potential voters support the idea and a further 19 per cent are unsure), and that government spending must increase even if it means raising taxes (a position that KKE perennially supports but that half of its voters appear to be against and a further 19 per cent are unsure about). Given that KKE has firm leftist and statist positions on economic issues, any issues on which there is diversity of opinion among party voters accounts for the observed low to moderate party–voter incongruence on the economic dimension.

3.5 GREEK SOLUTION – ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΛΥΣΗ (EL)
Vasiliki Georgiadou

Figure 5

Spatial position and density of EL voters

Spatial Position and Density of Greek Solution Voters
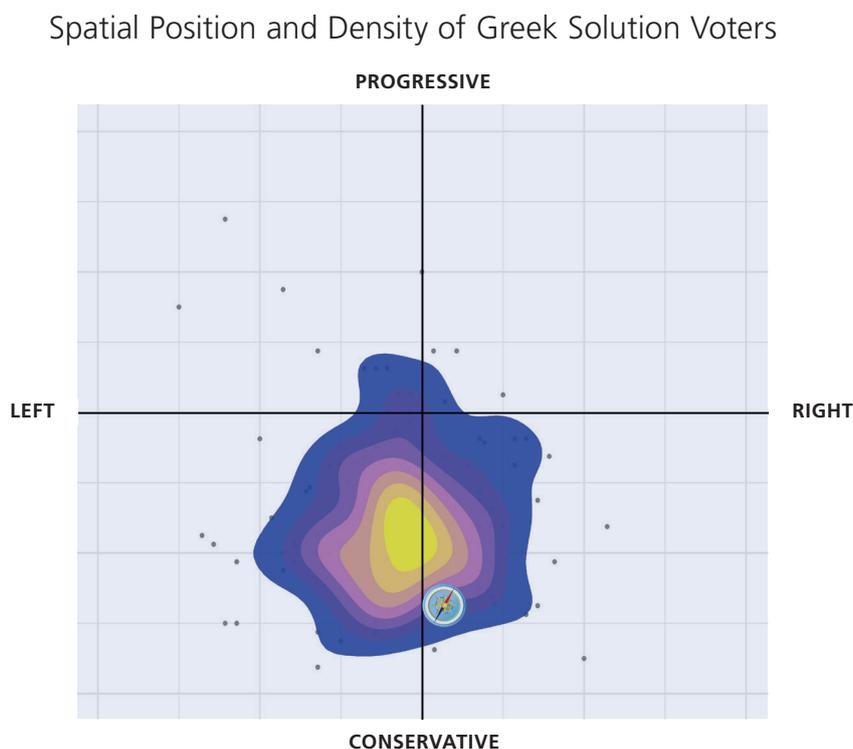
Party profile

Founded in 2016, EL is a far-right party that began to rise in the polls in 2019 amid protests against the Prespa Agreement, signed between Greece and North Macedonia to resolve a long-standing dispute between the two countries. With its ultra-nationalist rhetoric, EL managed to attract the most furious opponents of the Prespa Agreement, thus ensuring the creation of electoral strongholds in northern Greece, where hostility to the agreement was fervent (Georgiadou and Mavropoulou 2022). In four consecutive European and national elections in which it participated between 2019 and 2023, EL secured a vote share ranging from 3.7 per cent to 4.4 per cent. Although its electoral impact was minimal, the party managed to secure parliamentary representation at both national and European level and withstood the antagonism of new party competitors on the far right. According to recent opinion polls (March 2024), EL is gaining ground and is ahead of other far-right parties (Spartans and Victory) in terms of voter intentions.

Party positions

As reflected in its party manifesto and narrative, EL is strongly critical of mainstream parties, has an anti-establishment posture in opposition to political elites and prioritises welfare state services and jobs. Strong conspiratorial elements, anti-globalisation and anti-immigration stances, as well as Euroscepticism and condemnation of EU enlargement further complement its platform and party demands.

Based on the 30 most salient issues of the What2Vote questionnaire, EL is placed on the centre-right of the left–right axis, to the left of the centre-right ND and very close to the absolute middle on the economic dimension (Figure 7), balanced between a preference for social retribution and a pro-market/pro-business stance. On the cultural axis, it is clearly in the conservative zone, distancing itself from all other parties by promoting ethnocentric, xenophobic and law-and-order positions. It overlaps with ND on religious issues, the instrumentalisation of which has become hegemonic

within the European far right, as well as on the more punitive treatment of crime, although the two parties differ on the attribution of blame for criminality. While ND takes a more traditional security stance, EL insists on the existence of an inherent link between immigration and crime, attributing a higher propensity to crime to the non-native population.

Voter profile

The What2Vote dataset shows that EL performed best among male voters, late middle-aged voters (50–69 years of age) and voters with a medium level of education. This gender gap is not limited to likely EL voters, however, because a predominantly male electoral base is also characteristic of some other parties. In terms of age, EL's vote share among young voters (18–29 years of age) is the second highest after MeRA25, while its vote share among the oldest voters (+70 years old) is the second lowest, again after MeRA25. A recurring feature of the far-right parties is their very low penetration among highly educated voters. EL's vote share among highly educated voters is by far the lowest among all parties. Regarding occupational profile, private sector employees, self-employed with no employees, and voters outside the labour force (pensioners, homemakers) are those most likely to express an intention to vote for EL. Potential EL voters are found most often among blue-collar workers and unemployed persons looking for work. As far as their ideological orientation is concerned, 13 per cent of likely EL voters are positioned on the extreme right. This is higher than the corresponding percentage of ND voters, but much lower than the percentage of left-wing voters positioned on the extreme left. Some 11 per cent of likely EL voters think that self-identification on the left–right axis has no meaning, which is the highest percentage among voters rejecting left–right self-identification. Some 30 per cent of potential EL voters placed themselves in the middle (position 5) of the left–right scale, which is the highest among voters of any other party. Likely EL voters are among the most pessimistic in terms of confidence in their ability to influence political issues, and among the most conspiracy-minded, believing that »there are secret organisations that greatly influence political decisions«.

Party–voter issue congruence

Figure 5 shows the dispersion of the likely EL voters along the economic and cultural dimensions: the lighter the colour, the more concentrated the voters, and vice versa.

On the cultural dimension, EL and its likely voters are clearly positioned in the conservative zone, although the concentration of voters is higher with regard to positions to the right of the party and closer to the centre of the conservative–progressive axis. More specifically, a very large majority (±90 per cent) of likely EL voters converge with the party on immigration issues, such as the imposition of strict limits and tough policies against crime, while the vast majority (ca. 75 per cent) of its likely voters are in tune with EL's prioritisation of external security issues and the regaining of national sovereignty over Europeanisation. However, despite the party's rejection of a deepening of European integration, less than 50 per cent of its likely voters are in favour of slowing European integration down. There are also divergences with regard to internal security issues: likely EL voters, unlike their preferred party, do not oppose the surveillance of politicians when it comes to matters of national security. On religious issues, likely EL voters are not opposed to the separation of church and state, although there is voter and party congruence on maintaining compulsory religious education in schools. The fact that a quarter to a third of likely EL voters disagree with their preferred party's position on issues that are at the core of the cultural dimension, such as same-sex marriage, European integration, university police, or the foundation of private universities, shows that even in the most congruent political space, a significant proportion of voters are more progressive than their preferred party.

On the economic dimension, the dispersion of the likely EL voters is even wider (Georgiadou and Mavropoulou 2024). The core of these voters is located in the centre-left zone of the horizontal axis, favouring redistributive policies and prioritising collective bargaining more than their preferred party does. On the other hand, likely EL voters take a more pragmatic view than their preferred party on labour protection at all costs : only a third of them agrees with the party's position that »employee layoffs should not be allowed even if there is a risk of company bankruptcy«, while on government spending only a 13 per cent minority of likely EL voters agree with the party's position that »government spending must increase even if it means raising taxes«. There is a broad congruence between EL and its likely voters against a relaxation of labour rights: 79 per cent of its likely voters disagree with the relaxation of employment rights to reduce unemployment, and regarding support for mandatory collective working arrangements, 71 per cent of likely EL voters agree with the party's demand to expand sectoral collective bargaining. However, 72 per cent of likely EL voters disagree with their preferred party's position that permanent employment of civil servants should be maintained at any cost. The most significant divergence on the economic dimension between EL's electorate and the party concerns fiscal policy: the party is in favour of raising tax rates on high incomes, while 68 per cent of its likely voters disagree. But they do support the abolition of prescription charges for low-income pensioners, while EL disagrees. Beyond likely EL voters' left-wing inclination with regard to economic issues, one can identify both convergences and divergences with the far-right party, which combines pro–welfare state and pro-market attitudes with a nativist socio-cultural orientation.
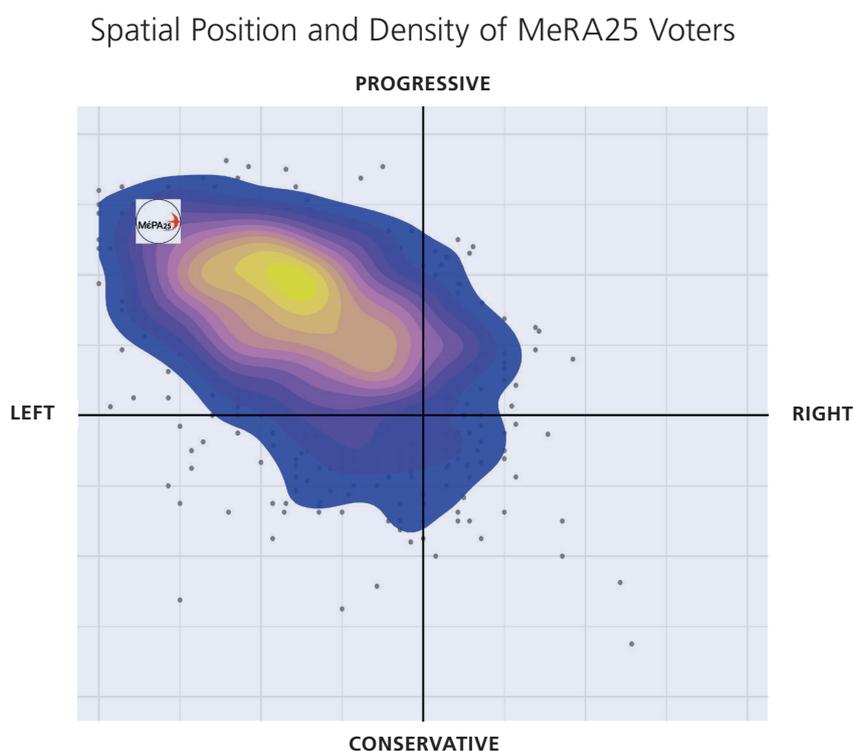
Overall, a significant proportion of EL voters have a less rigid belief system – albeit shaped by far-right ideology – than the party they intend to vote for.

3.6 FRONT OF THE RADICAL LEFT 24 – ΜΕΤΩΠΟ ΡΙΖΟΣΠΑΣΤΙΚΗΣ ΑΡΙΣΤΕΡΑΣ (MERA25)

Dimitri A. Sotiropoulos

Figure 6

Spatial position and density of MeRA25 voters

Spatial Position and Density of MeRA25 Voters

Party profile

MeRA25 is a left-wing Eurosceptic and anti-capitalist party. According to the party's founding manifesto, MeRA25 is against the «Oligarchy without Borders…. that uses weapons such as distortion, division and violence» (MeRA25 2021: 1). The party grew out of the split between leader of SYRIZA and Greek prime minister Alexis Tsipras and his former finance minister, Yanis Varoufakis. The latter rejected the U-turn that the SYRIZA-ANEL coalition government made in late 2015 when it abandoned its anti-EU stance and accepted the austerity policy package that was imposed by Greece's creditors.

The founder of MeRA25 and a few of his associates managed to get elected to parliament in 2019 but failed in 2023. In 2019 MeRA25 obtained 3.4 per cent of the total vote, just above the electoral threshold, but fell below this threshold in 2023. The party is located on the left, jockeying for position to the left of SYRIZA but not particularly close to the Com-

munist Party (KKE). MeRA25 has a volatile electoral base: based on the What2Vote dataset it turns out that only four out of 10 of its prospective voters in 2023 had voted for the party in 2019.

We shall now describe the social profile of MeRA25 voters and their positions on culture and education, law and order, the economy and labour market, and foreign policy issues.

Voter profile

Men are represented disproportionally among MeRA25's voters. Young people are also much more numerous among the party's voters than older ones. As regards education level substantially more potential voters have a secondary rather than a university education. The largest group among MeRA25 voters are public sector employees, followed by retirees. In short, the party's social profile is closer to that of the Communist Party than to that of SYRIZA.

Party–voter issue congruence

In terms of culture and education, the party's voters support multiculturalism. MeRA25 voters are more strongly in favour than voters of all other parties of legalising same-sex marriage (an initiative launched by the Greek government seven months after the 2023 elections) and the right of same-sex couples to adopt children. Most MeRA25 voters believe that immigrants enrich Greek national identity and reject the idea that Greece cannot accept more immigrants. The voters are largely in favour of an absolute separation between church and state and the abolition of compulsory Christian Orthodox religion classes in schools. MeRA25 voters agree with the official party line on all these issues, converging with the views expressed by voters of the other left-wing parties, SYRIZA and KKE.

The MeRA25 party openly rejects the suggestion that Greece's public universities should establish links with business enterprises and opposes the establishment of private universities (which until recently was prohibited in Greece). MeRA25 voters follow the party line on this. But they do part ways with SYRIZA and KKE voters to some extent with regard to relations between universities and the business sector, where they do envisage some possibilities for cooperation. Furthermore, while MeRA25 voters agree with the party line, they are not as adamant as SYRIZA and KKE voters in rejecting private universities.

Regarding law and order, the MeRA25 come out most strongly among all parties against increasing the strictness of police responses to the destruction of public property (a frequent target of the anarchist/extra-parliamentary left in city centres in Greece). The supporters of MeRA25 and SYRIZA are the strongest advocates of abolition of the university police established by the ND government (but never activated) in 2019.

Officially, MeRA25 rejects the intensification of criminal sanctions and any restrictions on individual freedoms on the grounds of maintaining public order. MeRA25 voters are very strongly against more severe punishments for criminals. They oppose restrictions on individual freedoms as much as SYRIZA's voters do, far more than the voters of other parties.

Regarding relations between the state and economy, labour relations and redistribution issues, the MeRA25's official line is statist, favouring large-scale state intervention in the economy. The official party line opposes unpaid overtime and relaxation of lay-off regulations, regardless of the circumstances. MeRA25 voters are aligned with the party position and with supporters of the other left parties. They are strongly against unpaid overtime even if a business needs it. They are also against the relaxation of lay-off regulations even if a company risks bankruptcy, but to a lesser extent than SYRIZA and KKE voters.

Regarding taxation, MeRA25 believes in taxing high incomes more than current levels and rejects tax breaks for businesses to stimulate private investment. Likely voters agree on increasing taxes on higher incomes, but not to the same extent as SYRIZA and KKE voters. Similarly, MeRA25 voters are not as negative about tax breaks for businesses as the voters of the other two parties. The divergence of MeRA25 voters from the party line on this probably reflects the fact that the party itself is not clear on whether government expenditure, based on general taxation, should be increased or not.

Finally, regarding foreign policy issues, MeRA25's official line is anti-Western, mildly Eurosceptic and in favour of reconciliation with neighbouring countries in relation to Greece's problems. MeRA25 voters adhere to their party's anti-Western line but some of them do not follow the party line on Greek national issues. They strongly believe that NATO bears the greatest responsibility for the war in Ukraine but believe less strongly in the 2018 Prespa Agreement, which resolved the name dispute between Greece and North Macedonia. While their party's line favours further European integration (as long as it progresses in accordance with Diem25 policy choices), MeRA25 voters only mildly support further deepening.

To sum up, the What2Vote data analysis shows that MeRA25 voters are generally faithful to the party line and support their party's left-wing positions. However, they do not strongly subscribe to the anti-business mentality of other left-wing party voters and are also more sceptical than SYRIZA voters regarding conciliatory, anti-nationalist foreign policy initiatives.

4
# CONCLUSIONS: A NEW, CENTRIPETAL ELECTORAL COMPETITION

Lamprini Rori

Combining the issues surveyed for the two dimensions – left–right on the economy and progressive–conservative on the cultural dimension – enables us to extract some overarching preliminary conclusions regarding party positioning in the context of the 2023 campaign. First, political parties form two clusters: the first comprises PASOK, SYRIZA, MeRA25 and – albeit only marginally – KKE in the upper left quadrant, while ND and EL are located in the lower right quadrant.

Figure 7

Spatial position and density of Greek voters

Spatial Position and Density of Greek Voters
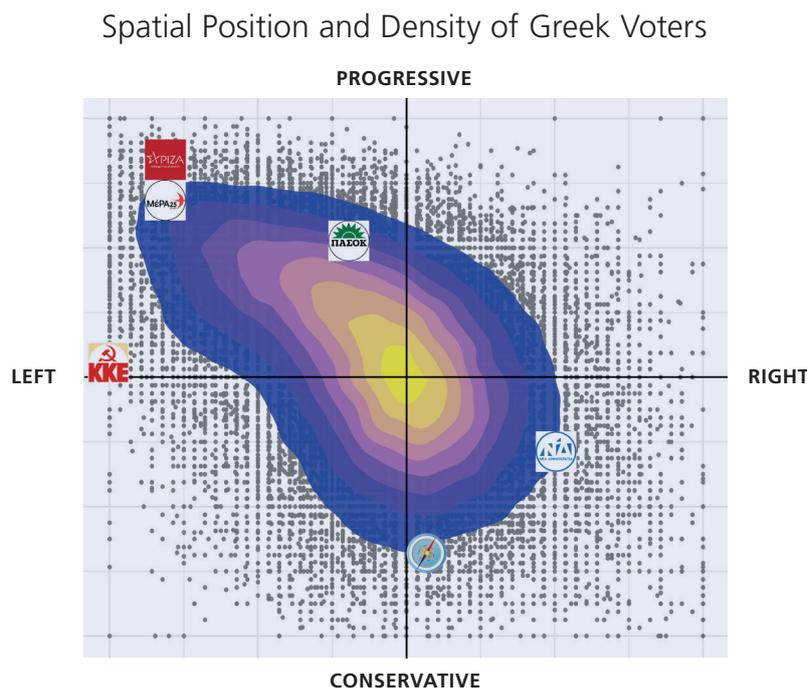
Despite their numerous differences and peculiarities, the three parties of the radical left – KKE, SYRIZA and MeRA25 – form a distinct cluster, in the sense of positioning themselves on the extreme left on the economy, favouring strong labour protection, combined with a strong role for the state in the economy and public spending. That said, SYRIZA and MeRA25 converge strongly in terms of cultural progressiveness and both diverge from KKE on a series of policies related to socio-cultural issues, such as the right of homosexual couples to adopt children, the institutionalisation of same-sex marriage and the Prespa Agreement between Greece and North Macedonia. KKE's opposition to those policies locates it in a distinctively more conservative aggregate position than its radical left counterparts.

PASOK stands between SYRIZA and ND in terms of economic positioning, with a mixed role for the state in the economy, depending on the issue. PASOK is protective of labour rights and favours public spending with fiscal prudence, but when it comes to sociocultural issues it is closer to the more culturally progressive parties of the radical left than to ND. Despite facing electoral competition from SYRIZA for left-wing voters and ND for centrist voters, PASOK's voter base is more conservative than the party, holding positions closer to those of

ND on socio-cultural and law-and-order issues. The party is more representative of its electoral base when it comes to the economic agenda.

ND takes a right-wing position on the economy, favouring neoliberalism, less public spending and less labour protectionism than other parties. It is also culturally conservative in its religious stance and its supporting for law and order. ND voters are more right-wing economically and socially conservative than PASOK voters, and more in favour of labour market flexibility and financial austerity. They want less state interventionism and are less interested in labour protection, preferring to cut costs for employers.

EL stands in the centre in terms of its economic position, favouring welfare chauvinism, but also balancing between social redistributive policies and a neoliberal stance. It is culturally the most conservative party in this study, favouring anti-immigrant, nationalist and religious stances. Its voters also combine a preference for left-wing economic policies with some labour market flexibility and austerity, whereas they are clearly conservative on culture.

Interestingly, if we move away from the two-dimensional space and look at voters' self-placement on the left–right axis, 40 per cent place themselves on the left, 22 per cent in the centre and 28 per cent on the right, implying that ND's electoral victory in 2023 was based on its ability to form a solid majority among self-declared centrists and right-wing voters. Overall, taking into account the What2Vote dataset and the electoral results, we can argue that, in contrast to the decade of the crisis, electoral competition in May and June 2023 was centripetal, not centrifugal, with a highest density of voters at the centre of the ideological spectrum.

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THE GREEK PARTY LANDSCAPE IN 2023

In this publication, we aim to understand the configuration of a new, predominant party system and the significant shifts in voting behaviour in the context of the 2023 parliamentary elections in Greece, by delving into the supply and the demand for policies. By using post-stratified data collected via the voting advice application What2vote, we identify which were the salient issues setting the agenda of electoral competition, we shed light to the party positions and voter stances that drove electoral preferences and examine how those issues structure the new centripetal electoral competition in the two-dimensional space portraying economic and socio-cultural policies. We present the profile of parliamentary parties and voters competing for the 2023 parliamentary elections in Greece, as well as the levels of congruence between each of those parties and individuals expressing likelihood to vote for them.

This publication is the outcome of a successful collaboration between a group of experts on Greek politics with the Friedrich Ebert office in Athens. The contributors of the publication are grateful to the director of the FES office in Athens, Arne Schildberg and would also like to extend their gratitude to Stefanos Spiliotopoulos, project manager at FES for their great coordination and support. The Greek group of experts would also like to thank Kieskompas (Election Compass) who designed the What2vote.gr platform, weighted the data using post-stratification methods and created the graphic visualisations.