

Greece

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Introduction

Following the 25 January elections, the new Coalition of the Radical Left-Independent Hellenes (SYRIZA-ANEL) government held protracted negotiations with the country's lenders, which ended in deadlock in June. Alexis Tsipras responded by calling for a referendum on the lenders' draft proposals to be held on 5 July. This led to the third memorandum with Greece's creditors and a showdown within SYRIZA in August that led to a party split and new elections that returned SYRIZA and ANEL to power. Unemployment remained high (25 per cent in November), the economy remained in recession, capital flight continued and investment plummeted.

Election report

Early parliamentary elections took place on 25 January as a result of the inability of the New Democracy-Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (ND-PASOK) government to elect a new President in December 2014 (Mylonas 2015: 125). SYRIZA won the elections with a significant advantage of 9 per cent over ND. Golden Dawn (XA), whose party leader and several prominent members had been imprisoned but were released before the election pending trial (see Mylonas 2015: 128), slightly under-performed compared to the May 2014 European Parliament elections but still came in third. The River, the Communist Party of Greece (KKE), ANEL and PASOK all passed the 3 per cent electoral threshold and together produced a seven-party parliament. All other parties that did not make it into the parliament received almost 9 per cent of the vote. Among them was the Greens-Democratic Left (DIMAR), the former government coalition partner of ND and PASOK in 2012, which received less than 1 per cent (see Table 1).

SYRIZA won the January 2015 election with the slogan 'Hope is on its way' and the promise to end austerity. The party formed a government with right-wing ANEL on the basis of a common anti-austerity platform. In cooperation with ND, the new coalition government managed to elect a new President, Prokipsis Pavlopoulos, an old school politician from former Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis's inner circle, and former ND Minister.

The negotiations, marred by the tactic of 'creative ambiguity' followed by the controversial Minister of Finance, Yanis Varoufakis, reached a crisis point in June. The Greek government faced severe fiscal problems and was forced to tap into local administration funds. SYRIZA was divided into at least two factions: the first was ready to steadfastly oppose new austerity measures, even if that meant the exit of Greece from the Eurozone, the

Table 1. Elections to parliament (*Vouli*) of Greece in January 2015

Date of election	25 January 2015			Previous election	17 June 2012		
Electorate	9,900,403 ^a			Total seats	300		
Total votes cast	6,330,356			Turnout	63.9%		
Valid votes cast	6,180,872			Share of valid vote	97.6%		
Party	Votes			Seats			
	N	%	Δ%	N	%	ΔN	Δ%
Coalition of the Radical Left/ <i>Synaspismos tis Rizospastikis Aristeras</i> (SYRIZA)	2,245,978	36.3%	+9.4%	149	49.7%	+78	+26.0%
New Democracy/ <i>Nea Dimokratia</i> (ND)	1,718,694	27.8%	-1.89%	76	25.3%	-53	-17.7%
Golden Dawn/ <i>Chrysi Avgi</i> (XA)	388,387	6.3%	-0.6%	17	5.7%	-1	-0.3%
The River/ <i>To Potami</i> (P) ^b	373,924	6.0%	+6.0% ^b	17	5.7%	+17	+5.7% ^b
Communist Party of Greece/ <i>Kommounistiko Komma Elladas</i> (KKE)	338,387	5.5%	+1.0%	15	5.0%	+3	-1.0%
Independent Hellenes/ <i>Anexartitoi Ellines</i> (ANEL)	293,683	4.8%	-2.8%	13	4.3%	-7	-2.3%
Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement/ <i>Panellinio Sosialistiko Kinima</i> (PASOK)	289,469	4.7%	-7.6%	13	4.3%	-20	-6.7%
Movement of Democratic Socialists/ <i>Kinima Dimokraton Sosialiston</i> (KIDISO) ^b	152,557	2.5%	+2.5% ^b	-	-	-	-
The Union of Centrists/ <i>Enosi Kentroon</i> (EK)	110,923	1.8%	+1.5%	-	-	-	-
Teleia-Apostolos Gletsos ^b	109,500	1.8%	+1.8% ^b	-	-	-	-
Popular Orthodox Rally/ <i>Laikos Orthodoxos Synagermos</i> (LAOS)	63,669	1.0%	-0.5%	-	-	-	-
Anticapitalist Left Cooperation for the Overthrow/ <i>Antikapitalistiki Aristeri Synergasia gia tin Anatropi</i> (ANTARSYA)	39,497	0.6%	+0.3%	-	-	-	-
Greens-Democratic Left/ <i>Prasinoi-Dimokratiki Aristera</i> (Greens-DIMAR)	29,820	0.5%	-5.8% ^c	0	0.0%	-17	-
Others	26,583	0.4%	-	-	-	-	-

Notes: ^aThis is the official number of registered voters according to the Ministry of Interior. This number is regarded as inflated (see Mavrogordatos & Marantzidis 2010), but there are no reliable sources providing a better estimate.

^bNew party or first time running in parliamentary elections. Figures for change over time are calculated against a baseline of 0.0 for such parties.

^cIf we add the 2012 percentage of the Greens (0.9 per cent) to DIMAR's percentage in 2012 (6.3 per cent) we get a total change of -6.7 per cent.

Source: Hellenic Ministry of Interior (2015).

so-called ‘Grexit’; and the second prioritised Greece’s position in the Eurozone, while also standing by its anti-austerity positions. On 26 June, Tsipras proposed a referendum to break this Gordian knot and passed the referendum proposal through the parliament with 178 votes out of 300 (this majority came with the support of XA), launching the first referendum to be held in Greece since a 1974 vote on the institution of monarchy. The governing coalition asked the Greek people to vote ‘no’ to the creditor’s proposals and so did XA, while the rest of the opposition parties supported the ‘Yes’ vote as affirmation of the euro and the European direction of Greece (KKE prepared its own unofficial invalid ballot!).

In the days leading up to the vote, the government had to introduce capital controls and close the banks to prevent massive capital flight. Polarisation was emotionally exhausting and unprecedented for my generation – those born in the post-Junta period. A ‘Yes’ to the question of the referendum on the bail-out conditions in Greece would allow the Prime Minister to share the burden of a third bail-out agreement with the Greek people. The resounding ‘No’ on 5 July, however, which many observers believe that even Tsipras himself was not anticipating, was generally understood at the time as a personal victory for Tsipras (see Table 2). Overcoming internal party opposition, and given the support of the public opinion in favour of a solution within the Eurozone, Tsipras travelled to Brussels to negotiate a third bail-out plan for Greece.

A week later, the memorandum/anti-memorandum cleavage (Mylonas 2014), which had dominated Greek politics since 2010, dissolved when the SYRIZA-ANEL government (hitherto anti-memorandum parties) voted in favour of all the prerequisite measures to secure a third bail-out agreement for the next three years from the European Stability Mechanism (ESM). The measures passed with the support of two-thirds of SYRIZA’s MPs, all of ANEL MPs and those of the opposition parties except KKE and XA (the only remaining anti-memorandum parties left in the Greek parliament).

The fragmentation of SYRIZA and the democratic legitimation problem which resulted from the fact that the governmental majority had dropped to 118 out of 300 MPs – at least

Table 2. Results of the referendum on bail-out conditions in Greece in 2015

Date of referendum	5 July 2015			
Electorate	9,914,244			
Total votes cast	6,161,338	Votes cast as share of electorate	62.2%	
Total valid votes	5,804,232	Valid votes as share of votes cast	94.2%	
Referendum question	Valid answers	N	%	Outcome
Should the agreement plan submitted by the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund to the Eurogroup of 25 June 2015, and comprised of two parts which make up their joint proposal, be accepted? The first document is titled ‘Reforms for the Completion of the Current Program and Beyond’ and the second ‘Preliminary Debt Sustainability Analysis’.	Not Approved/No	3,558,864	61.3%	Not Approved
	Approved/Yes	2,245,368	38.7%	

Source: Hellenic Ministry of Interior (2015).

based on the voting behaviour during the critical third bail-out package vote – prompted Tsipras to submit the resignation of his government and call for new elections to be held as soon as possible.

The timing of the election favoured Tsipras since his internal opposition, which formed a new party (Popular Unity [LAE]), did not have enough time to prepare for the elections. Moreover, ND and PASOK were both undergoing changes in leadership and the harsh austerity measures stipulated in the new agreement had not yet been implemented. SYRIZA, despite its policy change, won this election with a similar vote share to the January election, on substantially lower turnout. ANEL and The River both did slightly worse than January 2015, while XA, ND and PASOK in collaboration with DIMAR did slightly better. The Union of Centrists (EK) entered the now eight-party parliament for the first time, but SYRIZA's splinter LAE, led by former SYRIZA minister Panagiotis Lafazanis, fell just short of the parliamentary threshold (see Table 3).

Table 3. Elections to parliament (*Vouli*) of Greece in September 2015

Date of election	20 September 2015	Previous election	25 January 2015
Electorate	9,913,609 ^a	Total seats	300
Total votes cast	5,567,930	Turnout	56.2%
Valid votes cast	5,433,376	Share of valid vote	97.6%

Party	Votes			Seats			
	N	%	Δ%	N	%	ΔN	Δ%
Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA)	1,926,526	35.5%	-0.9%	145	48.3%	-4	-1.3%
New Democracy (ND)	1,526,400	28.1%	+0.3%	75	25.0%	-1	-0.3%
Golden Dawn (XA)	379,722	7.0%	+0.7%	18	6.0%	+1	+0.3%
Democratic Coalition/ <i>Dimokratiki Symparataksi</i> [formed by Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) and Democratic Left (DIMAR)] ^b	341,732	6.3%	+1.6% ^c	17	5.7%	+4	+1.3%
Communist Party of Greece (KKE)	301,684	5.6%	+0.1%	15	5.0%	0	0.0%
The River (P)	222,349	4.1%	-2.0%	11	3.7%	-6	-2.0%
Independent Hellenes (ANEL)	200,532	3.7%	-1.1%	10	3.3%	-3	-1.0%
The Union of Centrists (EK)	186,644	3.4%	+1.6%	9	3.0%	+9	+3.0%
Popular Unity/ <i>Laiki Enotita</i> (LAE) ^b	155,320	2.9%	+2.9% ^b	-	-	-	-
Anticapitalist Left Cooperation for the Overthrow (ANTARSYA)-Workers Revolutionary Party/ <i>Ergatiko Epanastatiko Komma</i> (EEK)	46,183	0.8%	+0.2%	-	-	-	-
United Popular Front/ <i>Eniaio Palaiko Metopo</i> (EPAM) ^d	41,626	0.8%	-	-	-	-	-
Society/ <i>Koinonia</i> ^d	35,594	0.7%	-	-	-	-	-
Recreate Greece!/ <i>Dimiourgia Xana</i> ^d	28,909	0.5%	-	-	-	-	-
Others	40,155	0.7%	-	-	-	-	-

Notes: ^aAs in Table 1, official electorate figures are over-estimated, but there is no clear alternative.

^bNew party or first time running in parliamentary elections. Figures for change over time are calculated against a baseline of 0.0 for such parties.

^cIf we add the percentage of DIMAR in January 2015 (0.5 per cent) to that of PASOK (4.7 per cent), then the change was +1.1 per cent.

^dDid not participate in the January 2015 elections.

Source: Hellenic Ministry of Interior (2015).

Cabinet report

After the January election, SYRIZA formed a coalition government with ANEL on the basis of their common anti-memorandum agenda (see Table 4). For the first time in Greece's history, the Prime Minister and several ministers took a political, rather than a religious, oath. This cabinet was shortlived since the dead end in the negotiations with the country's lenders became a catalyst for political developments that ultimately led to new elections. On 6 July, Minister of Finance Yanis Varoufakis was forced to resign and was replaced by Euclid Tsakalotos because his interpretation of the 'No' vote in the referendum was not in

Table 4. Cabinet composition of Tsipras I in Greece in 2015

Duration of cabinet Period covered by table Type of cabinet	Inception From Minimum Winning Coalition (MWC)	26 January 2015 ^a 26 January 2015	Dissolution Until	27 August 2015 27 August 2015
A. Party/gender composition on 26 January 2015				
		Seats in cabinet N %	Seats held by women N % of party	Seats in parliament N %
Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA)		11 73.3%	0 0.0%	149 49.7%
Independent Hellenes (ANEL)		1 6.7%	0 0.0%	13 4.3%
Non-party		3 20.0%	0 0.0%	– –
Totals		15 100.0%	0 0.0%	162 54.0%
B. Composition of Alexis Tsipras I cabinet				
Prime Minister: Alexis Tsipras (1974 male, SYRIZA)				
Deputy Prime Minister: Yannis Dragasakis (1947 male, SYRIZA)				
Minister of Interior and Administrative Reconstruction: ^b Nikos Voutsis (1951 male, SYRIZA)				
Minister of Economy, Infrastructure, Shipping and Tourism: ^c George Stathakis (1953 male, SYRIZA)				
Minister of National Defence: Panos Kammenos (1965 male, ANEL)				
Minister of Culture, Education and Religious Affairs: ^d Aristides Baltas (1943 male, SYRIZA)				
Minister of Productive Reconstruction, Environment and Energy: ^e Panagiotis Lafazanis (1951 male, SYRIZA)				
Ministry of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights: Nikos Paraskevopoulos (1946 male, non-party, nominated by SYRIZA)				
Minister of Foreign Affairs: Nikos Kotzias (1950 male, non-party, nominated by SYRIZA)				
Minister of Finance: Yanis Varoufakis (1961 male, SYRIZA)				
Minister of Labour and Social Solidarity: Panos Skourletis (1962 male, SYRIZA)				
Minister of Health and Social Security: Panagiotis Kouroumbilis (1951 male, SYRIZA)				
Minister of State: Nikos Pappas (1975 male, SYRIZA)				
Minister of State for Coordinating Government Operations: Alekos Flambouraris (1944 male, SYRIZA)				
Minister of State for Combatting Corruption: Panagiotis Nikoloudis (1949 male, non-party, nominated by SYRIZA)				
C. Changes in composition of Alexis Tsipras I cabinet				
Minister of Finance: Yanis Varoufakis (1961 male, SYRIZA) resigned on 6 July, and was replaced by Euclid Tsakalotos (1960 male, SYRIZA)				
Minister of Productive Reconstruction, Environment and Energy: Panagiotis Lafazanis (1951 male, SYRIZA) was replaced on 17 July by Panos Skourletis (1962 male, SYRIZA)				
Minister of Labour and Social Solidarity: Panos Skourletis (1962 male, SYRIZA) was replaced on 17 July by Georgios Katrougalos (1963 male, SYRIZA)				

Table 4. Continued

D. Party/gender composition on 27 August 2015	Seats in cabinet		Seats held by women		Seats in parliament	
	N	%	N	% of party	N	%
Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA)	11	73.3%	0	0.0%	124	41.3%
Independent Hellenes (ANEL)	1	6.7%	0	0.0%	13	4.3%
Non-party	3	20.0%	0	–	–	–
Totals	15	100.0%	0	0.0%	137	44.6%

Notes: ^aThe composition of the Samaras I cabinet was unchanged from 1 January 2015 until its dissolution on 26 January. For the composition of Samaras I, see Mylonas (2015: 127).

^bMerger of the ministries of (1) Interior, (2) Administrative Reform and e-Government, (3) Public Order and Citizen Protection and (4) Macedonia and Thrace.

^cMerger of the ministries of (1) Development and Competitiveness, (2) Marine and Aegean, (3) Tourism and (4) Infrastructure, Transport and Networks.

^dMerger of the ministries of (1) Culture and Sport and (2) Education.

^eMerger of the ministries of (1) Environment, Energy and Climate Change, (2) Rural Development and Food and (3) the services of the General Secretariat of the Ministry of Industry Development and Competitiveness.

Sources: Hellenic Parliament (2015); General Secretariat of the Greek Government (2015).

Table 5. Cabinet composition of Vassiliki Thanou-Christophilou in Greece in 2015

Duration of cabinet	Inception	28 August 2015	Dissolution	20 September 2015		
Period covered by table	From	28 August 2015	Until	20 September 2015		
Type of cabinet	Nonpartisan (Caretaker)					
A. Gender composition on 28 August 2015	Seats in cabinet		Seats held by women		Seats in parliament	
	N	%	N	% of party	N	%
Non-party	13	100.0%	2	15.4%	–	–
B. Composition of Thanou-Christophilou I cabinet						
Prime Minister: Vassiliki Thanou-Christophilou (1950 female, non-party)						
Minister of Interior and Administrative Reconstruction: Antonis Maniatakis (1944 male, non-party, former DIMAR)						
Minister of Economy, Infrastructure, Shipping and Tourism: Nikos Christodoulakis (1952 male, PASOK)						
Minister of National Defence: Ioannis Giangos (1951 male, non-party)						
Minister of Culture, Education and Religious Affairs: Frosso Kiaou (1946 female, non-party)						
Minister of Productive Reconstruction, Environment and Energy: Ioannis Golias (1954 male, non-party)						
Ministry of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights: Dimitris Papangelopoulos (1952 male, non-party)						
Minister of Foreign Affairs: Petros Molyviatis (1928 male, ND)						
Minister of Finance: George Chouliarakis (1966 male, non-party)						
Minister of Labour and Social Solidarity: Dimitris Moustakas (1948 male, non-party)						
Minister of Health and Social Security: Athanasios Dimopoulos (1961 male, non-party)						
Minister of State: Eleftherios Papageorgopoulos (1947 male, ND)						
Minister of State for Combatting Corruption: Panagiotis Nikoloudis (1949 male, non-party)						
C. Changes in composition of Thanou-Christophilou I cabinet during 2015						
There were no changes						

Source: *To Vima* (2015).

agreement with Tsipras's. Ten days later, as a result of the backlash within SYRIZA from the initial agreement with the creditors on a third bail-out package, a limited government reshuffle took place.

Table 6. Cabinet composition of Tsipras II in Greece in 2015

Duration of cabinet Period covered by table Type of cabinet	Inception 23 September 2015 From 23 September 2015 Minimum Winning Coalition (MWC)	Dissolution Until	Still in office at the end of the year 31 December 2015			
A. Party/gender composition on 23 September 2015						
	Seats in cabinet		Seats held by women	Seats in parliament		
	N	%	N	% of party	N	%
Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA)	15	83.3%	0	0.0%	145	48.3%
Independent Hellenes (ANEL)	1	5.6%	0	0.0%	10	3.3%
Non-party	2	11.1%	0	0.0%	–	–
Totals	18	100.0%	0	0.0%	155	51.6%
B. Composition of Alexis Tsipras II cabinet						
Prime Minister: Alexis Tsipras (1974 male, SYRIZA)						
Deputy Prime Minister: Yannis Dragasakis (1947 male, SYRIZA)						
Minister of Interior and Administrative Reconstruction: Panagiotis Kouroumbli (1951 male, SYRIZA)						
Minister of Economy, Development and Tourism: ^a George Stathakis (1953 male, SYRIZA)						
Minister of National Defence: Panos Kammenos (1965 male, ANEL)						
Minister of Education, Research and Religious Affairs: ^b Nikos Filis (1960 male, SYRIZA)						
Minister of Foreign Affairs: Nikos Kotzias (1950 male, SYRIZA)						
Ministry of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights: Nikos Paraskevopoulos (1946 male, non-party, nominated by SYRIZA)						
Minister of Labour, Social Security and Social Solidarity: ^c Georgios Katrougalos (1963 male, SYRIZA)						
Minister of Health: ^d Andreas Xanthos (1960 male, SYRIZA)						
Minister of Culture and Sports: ^e Aristides Baltas (1943 male, SYRIZA)						
Minister of Finance: Euclid Tsakalotos (1960 male, SYRIZA)						
Minister of Environment and Energy: ^f Panos Skourletis (1962 male, SYRIZA)						
Minister of Infrastructure, Transportation and Networks: ^e Christos Spirtzis (1969 male, non-party, nominated by SYRIZA)						
Minister of Shipping and Island Policy: ^e Thodoris Dritsas (1947 male, SYRIZA)						
Minister of Agricultural Development and Food: ^e Evangelos Apostolou (1949 male, SYRIZA)						
Minister of State: Nikos Pappas (1975 male, SYRIZA)						
Minister of State for Coordinating Government Operations: Alekos Flambouraris (1944 male, SYRIZA)						
C. Changes in composition of Tsipras II cabinet during 2015						
No changes in cabinet composition. Seats in parliament of SYRIZA and ANEL each fell by one (0.3 per cent) by the end of 2015						

Notes: ^a Renamed from Ministry of Economy, Infrastructure, Shipping and Tourism.

^b Renamed from Ministry of Culture, Education and Religious Affairs.

^c Ministry absorbed Social Security from former Ministry of Health and Social Security.

^d Renamed from Ministry of Health and Social Security.

^e Resuscitated as a separate ministry.

^f Renamed from Ministry of Productive Reconstruction, Environment and Energy.

Source: *ekathimerini.com* (2015a).

Once the third bail-out agreement passed, new elections were announced for 20 September and a caretaker government was formed (see Table 5). Vassiliki Thanou-Christophilou, President of Greece's Supreme Court (*Areios Pagos*) since July, became Greece's first ever female (caretaker) Prime Minister.

Following the September 2015 elections, Tsipras's SYRIZA again formed a government with Kammenos's ANEL (see Table 6). Within a day of the announcement of the government, an ANEL MP sworn in as Deputy Minister of Infrastructure, Transport and Networks in the Tsipras II cabinet, resigned 'over antisemitic and homophobic remarks' he apparently posted on social media and was replaced (BBC News 2015). It is important to note that no women were appointed ministers to either of Tsipras's cabinets.

Parliament report

The January elections produced an enormous increase in first-time members of parliament (120 out of 300 MPs), while many prominent politicians did not make the cut. A characteristic example is that of George A. Papandreou, former head of PASOK and Prime Minister, marking the first election since 1923 that did not bring a representative of the Papandreou political dynasty to parliament. This parliament also included 70 female MPs, the largest share in Greek political history. Nearly two-thirds of these were elected on the SYRIZA list. Zoe Konstantopoulou was elected the first woman President of the Greek parliament, serving a short and contentious tenure. The coalition of SYRIZA and ANEL governed with a severely weakened governmental majority, ranging from 162

Table 7 Party and gender composition of parliament (*Vouli*) in Greece before the election in September 2015

Party	1 January 2015				5 February 2015				19 September 2015			
	All		Women		All		Women		All		Women	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA)	71	23.7%	27	38.0%	149	49.7%	45	30.2%	124	41.3%	37	29.8%
New Democracy (ND)	127	42.3%	21	16.5%	76	25.3%	10	13.2%	76	25.3%	10	25.3%
Popular Unity (LAE) ^a	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	25	8.3%	8	32.0%
Golden Dawn (XA)	16	5.3%	1	6.3%	17	5.7%	2	11.8%	17	5.7%	2	11.8%
The River (P) ^b	–	–	–	–	17	5.7%	4	23.5%	17	5.7%	4	23.5%
Communist Party of Greece (KKE)	12	4.0%	4	33.3%	15	5.0%	4	26.7%	15	5.0%	4	26.7%
Independent Greeks (ANEL)	12	4.0%	4	33.3%	13	4.3%	3	23.1%	13	4.3%	3	23.1%
Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK)	28	9.3%	2	7.1%	13	4.3%	2	15.4%	13	4.3%	2	15.4%
Democratic Left (DIMAR)	9	3.0%	3	33.3%	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Independent Democratic Parliamentarians	17	5.7%	4	23.5%	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Independents	8	2.7%	2	25.0%	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Totals	300	100.0%	68	22.7%	300	100.0%	70	23.3%	300	100.0%	70	23.3%

Notes: ^aParty formed as a splinter from SYRIZA on 21 August 2015.

^bEntered parliament for the first time on 25 January 2015.

Source: Hellenic Parliament (2015).

Table 8. Party and gender composition of parliament (*Vouli*) in Greece after the election in September 2015

Party	1 October 2015				31 December 2015			
	All		Women		All		Women	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA)	145	48.3%	33	22.8%	144	48.33%	33	22.9%
New Democracy (ND)	75	25.0%	11	14.7%	75	25.0%	11	14.7%
Golden Dawn (XA)	18	6.0%	2	11.1%	18	6.0%	2	11.1%
Democratic Coalition ^a	17	5.7%	3	17.6%	17	5.7%	3	17.6%
Communist Party of Greece (KKE)	15	5.0%	3	20.0%	15	5.0%	3	20.0%
The River (P)	11	3.7%	1	9.0%	11	3.7%	1	9.0%
Independent Hellenes (ANEL)	10	3.3%	2	20.0%	9	3.3%	2	22.2%
The Union of Centrists (EK) ^b	9	3.0%	1	11.1%	9	3.0%	1	11.1%
Independents	–	–	–	–	2	0.7%	0	0.0%
Totals	300	100.0%	56	18.7%	300	100.0%	56	18.7%

Notes: ^aNew Coalition formed by PASOK and DIMAR.

^bEntered parliament for the first time in September 2015.

^cSource: Hellenic Parliament (2015).

to 137 MPs – or 118, depending on how we count – out of a 300-member parliament (see Table 7).

The snap legislative election held on 20 September 2015 also produced significant change in parliament despite the short period between the two elections. Many former SYRIZA MPs who had defected to LAE did not return to parliament in September, and the first-time entry of EK in parliament brought with it another group of new MPs. In the process, the number of women in parliament dropped to from 70 to 56, and Nikos Voutsis was elected President of the parliament. Finally, party defections declined in comparison to the January–August period, and the SYRIZA–ANEL coalition managed to sustain a weak governmental majority, beginning with 155 MPs out of a 300-member parliament and dropping to 153 by the end of the year (see Table 8).

Institutional changes

New parties were formed and important changes in party leadership took place in 2015. Former Prime Minister George Papandreou founded the Movement of Democratic Socialists (KIDISO); Democratic Coalition – an electoral alliance between the PASOK and DIMAR – was formed in order to contest in the September elections; and LAE was founded in August by MPs and Ministers belonging to SYRIZA’s left platform (see Table 9).

Party leadership changed hands in DIMAR, PASOK and ND. DIMAR had diminished to less than 1 per cent of the vote in the January elections and a couple of months later Fotis Kouvelis resigned and was ultimately replaced by 36 year-old Thanasis Theocharopoulos on 7 June. Similarly, PASOK’s record low (below 5 per cent) in January led Evangelos Venizelos to resign in June. Fofi Gennimata was elected President of PASOK on 14 June. In ND, things were more complicated. Former Prime Minister Antonis Samaras remained at the helm of ND, despite the demoralising defeat in the January elections, in the hope of a ‘left parenthesis’ – in the form of a rapid deligitimisation and collapse of SYRIZA’s government

Table 9. Changes in political parties in Greece in 2015

A. Party institutional changes in 2015

Movement of Democratic Socialists/*Kinima Dimokraton Sosialiston* (KIDISO) was founded on 3 January by former Prime Minister George Papandreou (1952 male) but was not elected to the parliament in the January election

PASOK and DIMAR formed an electoral alliance, Democratic Coalition/*Dimokratiki Symparataxi*, on 30 August in order to contest in the September election

Popular Unity/*Laiki Enotita* (LAE) was founded on 21 August by Panagiotis Lafazanis (1951 male), head of SYRIZA's left platform and minister in the Tsipras I cabinet, but was not elected to parliament in the September election

B. Party leadership changes in 2015

DIMAR president Fotis Kouvelis (1948 male) resigned in March, and Thanasis Theocharopoulos (1980 male) was elected the new leader of the party on 7 June

PASOK president Evangelos Venizelos (1957 male) resigned on 6 June during the party's tenth congress, and Fofi Gennimata (1964 female) was elected the new president of the party on 14 June, defeating both Andreas Loverdos (1956 male) and Odysseas Konstantinopoulos (1964 male)

ND president Antonis Samaras (1951 male) resigned following the 5 July referendum; Vangelis Meimarakis (1953 male) became interim president. ND took part in the September 2015 parliamentary elections under Meimarakis and held internal elections to elect a new president on 22 November. Due to technical problems the first round with four candidates took place on 20 December instead. Two candidates – Vangelis Meimarakis and Kyriakos Mitsotakis (1968 male) – advanced to the second round scheduled for January 10. Mitsotakis prevailed.

Sources: Athens News Agency (2015a, 2015b); *Ekathimerini.com* (2015b, 2015c, 2015d, 2015e); Kouvelakis (2015); Makris (2015).

and the return of ND to power. The results of the 5 July referendum, however, led to Samaras's resignation and the appointment of Vangelis Meimarakis as interim president of the party. Following the second defeat by SYRIZA within a year, the party initiated an internal process to elect a new president. In the first round, 404,078 people went to the polls to registered as party members in order to vote. Vangelis Meimarakis and Kyriakos Mitsotakis moved to the second round of voting scheduled for early 2016, and the latter prevailed.

Issues in national politics

The issues discussed above – economic recession, the stakes involved in the two elections, the austerity measures stipulated in the country's agreements with its creditors and the referendum – dominated domestic politics. But several other issues also preoccupied public opinion: Greece's public television network, ERT, returned to broadcasting; the trial of XA members accused of running a criminal organisation began in April; a law granting citizenship to children of foreign nationals based on several residency and educational history criteria passed in June; the refugee crisis exploded, with over 850,000 refugees and migrants crossing to Europe through Greece; and the recognition of same-sex civil partnerships was approved by parliament in December.

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