The Transformation of the Greek Party System Since 1951

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This study is about party-system change in modern Greece and has two chief aims. First, it seeks to make sense of and explain the evolution of that country’s party system from its early post-war years until today. Far from being ‘frozen’, the Greek party system has displayed continuous transformations from a system featuring significant party fragmentation into another characterised by the high concentration of its political forces. Second, the paper proposes a classification of the changes that took place during the development of the Greek party system. This classification will yield three distinct types of party system which developed in consecutive order; namely, a predominant-party system (from 1952 to 1963), a system of polarised pluralism (between 1963 and 1981), and a two-party system (since 1981).

When Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan in 1967 advanced their well-known hypothesis about the ‘freezing’ of party systems,1 what they primarily had in mind and put under empirical observation were the developed Western democracies, that is, countries which had experienced revolutions, both national and industrial. There, full social and electoral mobilisation had occurred early in the twentieth century, and this development eventually led to the formation of stable party systems. By the 1920s, those early party systems and alignments had already become frozen into place and in several cases seem to be surviving still.2 The applicability of the ‘freezing hypothesis’, however, becomes more problematic with respect to the party systems in countries with historical experiences different from those of Western Europe. States that became nationally independent during the nineteenth century, post-colonial states and, more recently, post-communist states have all followed divergent, less continuous historical paths. None of those states has been directly involved in the Industrial Revolution; all have been affected by experiences unknown to the advanced Western democracies, such as colonial domination, civil war, or prolonged non-democratic rule. It is only in recent times that several of
those latecomers have managed to establish functional party democracies. Even in those cases, however, party-system freezing is very rare or, wherever it did occur, a very recent phenomenon.

This study is about party-system change in modern Greece – a country with a modern history of dramatic political transformations, that has moved during the last half-century from political tumult to institutional stability, while at the same time being transformed from a ‘democracy with adjectives’ to an unqualified democracy. The analytical purpose of this study is twofold. First, it explains the evolution of the party system in Greece from the early post-war years until today, and accounts for its transformation from a system featuring significant party fragmentation into another characterised by the high concentration of its political forces. Given that each party system represents a particular structure of competition, party system change is expected to result from any social, political, electoral, or policy shifts that transform the system of interactions which characterise the party system itself. The second analytical aim is to propose a classification of the changes that took place during the development of the Greek post-war party system. Since party-system change is understood in this study to occur when ‘a party system is transformed from one class or type of party system into another’, the development of party politics in post-war Greece has been anything but linear. In point of fact, the classification of party systems in the period under examination will yield two distinct classes, poly-partyism and two-partyism, of which the former may be further distinguished into two types, predominant-party system and polarised pluralism.

The analysis proceeds as follows: the next section is mostly empirical and includes a comprehensive description of the chief political forces, systemic properties, and developments that caused the continuous transformations of the Greek party system in the last five decades. The third section is an analytical effort to locate party system change over time, and also to sort party politics in post-war Greece into meaningful classes and types. Each of these sections delineates a particular long-term movement in Greek politics: in the first case, a movement from fragmentation to concentration of political parties, and, in the second, the movement from poly-partyism to two-partyism. Both movements are interdependent and develop parallel to one another. Of course, none of them can be said to be unique to the Greek case.

A CHANGING POLITICAL WORLD

For all practical purposes, the development of a solid party system in post-war Greece did not begin until 1951. The civil war (1946–49) which divided
the country immediately after the end of the Axis occupation caused protracted instability and political disorder. With the Communist Party outlawed already in 1947, both the right and the centre presented badly fragmented governments which were neither stable nor lasting. In those conditions, a multitude of ‘shapeless and volatile’ political formations emerged, some appearing as assemblages of old leaders and past ideas, others led by unaccomplished neophytes of politics, but none of them able to present a solid mass party. The situation changed in 1951 when two new parties appeared on the scene, one representing the unified right, the other the united (but never to be unified) left. In this way, the Greek party system entered the stage of structural consolidation, although the centre was to remain fragmented for another decade.

Having established a convenient starting point for analysis, let us see what the chief political forces in Greece have been since the early 1950s until today. For convenience, the various parties that have appeared in post-war Greek politics can be grouped into three political families (or camps), the right, the left, and the centre. In the necessarily sketchy overview that follows, the emphasis is above all on the systemic role those parties have played in the polity, both as autonomous political actors and as party-system components. The main focus, in other words, will be on how the presence or removal, strength or weakness, protagonistic or secondary role of those political parties have altered the direction of party competition, thus also affecting the entire party system. The half-century period is divided into two sub-periods, from 1951 until 1981, and from 1981 to the present. As will be shown below, each of those periods had its own distinct class of party system.

The Political Parties between 1951 and 1981

The Right. As can be seen from Table 1, perhaps the most notable characteristic of the Greek party system during the 30-year period from 1951 to the eve of the 1981 election is the presence of a major right-wing party able to contest each and all of that period’s elections single-handedly and, most often, able to win strong majorities.

The story of the political right in post-war Greece essentially begins when Field Marshal Alexandros Papagos, the military victor of the civil war against the communist guerilla army, in a highly symbolic concurrence of roles, decided in 1951 to create the Greek Rally, a strongly conservative and anti-communist political party. The following year, the Greek Rally was able to win a comfortable victory at the national polls and, by then the standard-bearer of the political right, was firmly established in power. Papagos’ death in 1955 did nothing to interrupt the right-wing dominance. His successor, Constantine Karamanlis, promptly renamed the party the
National Radical Union (ERE) and went on to win three consecutive elections (in 1956, 1958, and 1961), thus institutionally confirming the renewed unity, endurance, and continuity of the political right.

The post-war conservative supremacy came to a halt with the victory of the centre party in the elections of 1963, after which Karamanlis decided to abandon politics and to go into exile abroad. Not long thereafter the country entered a phase of intense political turmoil and instability, which concluded with the establishment in 1967 of a military dictatorship. The authoritarian regime lasted for seven years. When it finally collapsed, Karamanlis was hastily recalled from exile to resolve the manifold crisis that was under way and to establish a new democratic order.\textsuperscript{10} Among Karamanlis’ earliest concerns was to found a new conservative party, New Democracy (ND), instead of merely trying to revamp the old ERE; this then became the third manifestation of the political right since the end of the civil war. As the undisputed leader of ND, Karamanlis was to win two consecutive elections before he withdrew from the premiership in 1980 to become President of the Greek Republic. Suddenly deprived of able leadership, but also under heavy pressure from the ascending socialists, ND was defeated in the 1981 elections. Without of course being aware of it at the time, the political right had also lost, then and there, its long predominance in Greek politics.

How thorough that predominance had been during the three decades it lasted (albeit intermittently) becomes evident by looking again at Table 1. In the nine general elections that took place between 1951 and 1977, the major right-wing party’s share of the vote ranged between 35.3 per cent (in 1964) and 54.4 per cent (in 1974). Looked at differently, during that period the main right-wing parties averaged an impressive 44 per cent of the national vote.

The predominance of the chief right-wing party for most of the 1951–81 period in Greece is itself sufficient to explain three crucial characteristics of the contemporary party system. The first of these is the longevity of the political right in government, with the successive right-wing parties enjoying power for a total of 18 years (1952–63 and 1974–81).\textsuperscript{11} Second, for as long as it remained in power the political right was able to produce strong majority governments. Especially after 1952, its parties were invariably in a position to form majority governments without having to seek coalition partners. Third, and largely as a consequence of the foregoing characteristics, none of the minor right-wing parties could acquire much strength or indeed survive at all in the long run. Quite naturally, the towering existence of a strong right-wing party either discouraged minor parties from emerging in the same area of political competition, or, if they did emerge, prevented them from becoming permanent. The only instance of a successful and significant minor party on the right was that of the
National Front (EP), a breakaway party of the extreme right which in the 1977 contest received nearly seven per cent of the national vote. More about this party and its significance will be said later.

The Left. Moving from the right of the political spectrum to its opposite, the broader left presents a completely different picture. Despite the apparent unity of the political forces occupying this space, here we find disunity and intense internal strife. From a systemic point of view, what best characterises the broader left during the 1951–81 period is a continuous war of attrition initially conducted silently, but after the transition to democracy in 1974, quite openly, between a major party representing orthodox communism and a minor party representing the revisionist left.12

After their defeat in the civil war, the leaders as well as the remnants of the communist guerilla army took refuge in the Soviet Union and its satellite countries. In the very charged political climate of the post-war years, and with the Communist Party (KKE) already outlawed, the left in Greece remained for a short period without official representation. However in 1951, the year in which Papagos founded the Greek Rally on the right of the political spectrum, a new party formation, the United Democratic Left (EDA), was created on the left. EDA was initially conceived as a front organisation for participating in national elections and rallying the dispersed left vote. Before long, however, the communist element within it became dominant, and EDA became captive to the exiled KKE leadership. From their Moscow ideological citadel, the latter never ceased to pursue polarising tactics, and frequently accused the domestic leaders of political moderation and ‘parliamentarism’, meaning a preference for Togliatti’s parliamentary – Italian – road to socialism. The seeds of an intra-left schism were already firmly planted.

In the period preceding the military dictatorship, EDA’s electoral returns – but for a single significant exception – ranged between roughly ten and 14 per cent of the national vote (Table 1). The exception was the 1958 elections when, with the centrist parties more divided than ever, EDA won almost a quarter of the total vote and, however briefly, became the main opposition party. This lasted only until the next elections of 1961, when a new centre party had become strong enough to reclaim the majority of the voters who had temporarily drifted away towards the left. The ensuing dictatorship (1967) completely destroyed, among other things, the left’s frail unity. The long-anticipated schism finally occurred during the 12th plenary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, convened abroad in February 1968, and produced two separate party organisations, the orthodox (staunchly pro-Soviet) KKE, and the more moderate and revisionist (eurocommunist) KKE-Interior.
### TABLE 1
ELECTORAL OUTCOMES (PERCENTAGE OF VOTES AND PARLIAMENTARY SEATS) IN POLY-PARTY POLITICS, 1951–77

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<td>41.9</td>
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<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>1.1g</td>
<td>6.8</td>
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<td>Major center</td>
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<td>34.2</td>
<td>48.2</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>25.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Major left-wing</td>
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<td>9.6a</td>
<td></td>
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<td>14.6</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>9.4</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>2.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
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Notes: a Greek Rally (Hellenikos Synagermos); b National Radical Union (Ethnike Rizospastike Enossis, ERE); c New Democracy (Nea Demokratia, ND); d People's Party (Laikon Komma, PP); e Progressives' Party (Komma Proodeftikon, KP); f Union of People's Parties (alliance of PP with smaller right-wing parties); g National Democratic Union (Ethnike Demokratike Enossis, EDE); h National Front (Ethnike Parataxis, EP); i National Progressive Centre Union (Ethnike Proodeftike Enossis Kentrou, EPEK); j Centre alliance of EPEK, KF, and PP; k Democratic Union (Demokratike Enosis; centre-left alliance of PP, EPEK, KF, KP, EDA); l Liberal Party (Komma Fileleftheron, KF); m Centre alliance of Ek and KP; n Centre Union (Enossis Kentrou, EK); o Centre alliance of EK and New Forces; p Union of the Democratic Centre (Enosis Demokratikou Kentrou, EDIK); q Progressive Agricultural Democratic Union (Proodeftike Agrotike Democratike Enossis, PADE); r Panhellenic Socialist Movement (Panellenio Sosialistiko Kinema, PASOK); s United Democratic Left (Eniaia Demokratike Aristera, EDA); t Greek Pan-democratic Agrarian Front (alliance of EDA and National Agrarian Party); u United Left (electoral alliance of KKE, KKE-Interior, and EDA); v Communist Party of Greece (Kommounistiko Komma Elladas, KKE); w Alliance of progressive and left-wing forces (KKE-Interior, EDA, and small socialist groups).
Shortly after the return of the country to democratic normalcy, those two parties, now fully legalised but faced with a rushed general election, decided to form an alliance labelled, rather euphemistically, the ‘United Left’. It was unable to poll more than ten per cent of the national vote, which was low even compared to the exclusionary post-war politics. After that election, the time had come for settling accounts between the two communist parties. The United Left alliance broke down in 1975, and its constituent elements began a series of bitter wars for predominance on the political left and over its electorate.

Meanwhile, a new and potent competitor had appeared on the left. A few weeks after the transition to democracy, Andreas Papandreou returned to Greece and founded the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK). His party, which in those early years of its political career distinguished itself by intense organisational activism and incessant socialist rhetoric, was able to take over most of the trappings of the traditional left, as well as its votes. It is no exaggeration to say that, in post-authoritarian Greece, it was PASOK’s meteoric rise that contributed more than anything to the further fragmentation and progressive political marginalisation of the communist left.

The Centre. Immediately after the end of the civil war, and amidst acute political instability, Greece underwent a brief period characterised by a succession of centrist governments; they were not able, however, to lead the country out of its blind alley. In the general elections of 1950, and again in 1951, the multitude of centrist forces failed to unite into a single political formation, or to propose credible solutions to the growing national problems. The disarray in the centrist bloc is best explained by the fact that its leaders were unable to resolve the strategic dilemma of that time, namely ‘whether to form a common bourgeois front [with the right] around the Crown and against the Left, or to form a common Republican front with the Left against the monarchy and its [right-wing] supporters’.

In the circumstances, as Mavrogordatos added, ‘either choice would spell the end of the [centrist dreams] for bourgeois hegemony’. It was for this reason that, during the 1950s, with political power almost monopolised by the right and polarisation between right and left steadily increasing, the centre parties remained bitterly fragmented and without any obvious political role.

Things changed unexpectedly in 1961. With only a few weeks to go before general elections, a new centrist party, the Centre Union (EK), emerged and claimed to be ‘a merger of [political forces] ranging from moderate right to noncommunist left [and aiming at] the electoral defeat of the right-wing party … which had been in power since 1952’. After the votes were counted, the right-wing party had won yet another victory; the EK (in alliance with the smaller Progressive Party), however, had also
managed to present itself as a new political force to be reckoned with (see Table 1). At this point, George Papandreou, the elderly co-leader of the EK, decided to challenge the validity of this election, which he denounced for ‘violence and fraud’, while at the same time launching a campaign of disparagement against the political right that became known as his ‘unrelenting struggle’. These tactics did accomplish, albeit temporarily, the unification of the disparate centrist forces into a single party which, after a decade of right-wing predominance, had now a new political role to play. On the other hand, they also burdened politics with more intense polarisation and growing instability.

To be sure, the ‘unrelenting struggle’ was a great success. As the next elections approached, with the government constantly under fire and the EK now appearing as a serious competitor for power, large sections of the public began to shift allegiance to the latter. In 1963, George Papandreou emerged the victor, and the defeated Karamanlis went into self-imposed exile. As was to be expected, however, the tactics of open confrontation chosen by the EK leader soon backfired on the party’s effectiveness and performance in government: as Sartori has noted, any centre party is condemned to ‘a policy of mediation, in the sense that … [when it] attempts to outdo the parties located on its left or right [it] will contribute, more than anything else, to a crescendo of escalation and extremization’.

The rest, until the breakdown of democracy and the establishment of military dictatorship, is well-known history.

When the 1967 dictatorship fell again in 1974, Karamanlis was invited back and given a mandate to re-establish democracy. In the fervour of political activity that followed the regime change, a group of former centrist leaders (George Papandreou having died meanwhile) managed to assemble a new centre party, the Centre Union-New Forces (EK-ND) for contesting the forthcoming elections. However, the party failed to go beyond the already outmoded symbols of the past, such as the anti-monarchy stand that had given it a solid raison d’être in the years preceding the dictatorship. This was the reason why, in the first democratic elections of 1974, the new centre party obtained only a moderate 20.4 per cent of the national vote, and 61 seats in parliament (see Table 1).

Soon after those elections, the Greek monarchy was abolished in December 1974 by referendum. The new dilemma that emerged for the centre party and its future was, therefore, to either suggest a political programme significantly different from that of the right, or to disappear from the country’s political horizon altogether. Unable to offer the former, EK-ND (meanwhile renamed EDIK) suffered the latter. In the newly polarised politics of the 1970s, it was evident that a centre party was not in great demand.
Right, Centre, and Left since 1981

For the Greek party system, the 1981 contest represents an electoral earthquake. Simply the fact that total vote volatility amounted to 26.7 per cent – most of which (23.5 per cent) was due to inter-bloc switching – places that election in the category of typically ‘critical’ in V.O. Key’s sense. Above all, the 1981 general election signifies the passage from party fragmentation to the high concentration of political forces, which brought the breakdown of established political arrangements and led to yet another change in the country’s party system.

To begin with the defeated party, the right-wing ND, the electoral rout it suffered in 1981 cost it more than the loss of government power. As we now know with the benefit of hindsight, it also meant the end of the long conservative predominance in Greek politics. However, ND was to prove a remarkably resilient party. First of all, it managed to regain its former supremacy on the right by reabsorbing, in 1981, the extreme-right defectors. Shortly before polling day, and with the prospect of a socialist victory already looming large, the EP party agreed to withdraw from the contest in favour of ND and to prevent PASOK coming to power. Re-establishing full monopoly of representation in the right-of-centre space was not, however, enough to return ND to office. For that, ND also needed to capture a good part of the centrist vote – something that was not likely as long as the far-right elements within ND played tug-of-war with the party moderates, thus frustrating the attempted centripetal drives and also tarnishing the party image. Since 1981, and except for a short interval in 1990–93 when it held power again, ND has been the main opposition party. Nonetheless, as the figures in Table 2 show, it has remained a party strong enough to govern: apart from its relatively poor performance in 1981, its following has never fallen below the 38 per cent of the total vote of the 1996 elections.

Moving from defeated to victor, PASOK’s 1981 electoral landslide was unprecedented by all standards: almost doubling its strength within only four years (see Tables 1 and 2), that party was able to put an end to conservative dominance, and form ‘the most radical government the country [had] seen … since its independence in 1830’. In the two decades of almost uninterrupted socialist rule since then, PASOK has undergone major ideological metamorphosis from a socially radical to a moderate social-democratic and, more recently, to a ‘functionally conservative party’. It has also survived, so far with notable success, the change in party leadership from the immensely charismatic and populist Andreas Papandreou to the moderate and pragmatic, if uninspiring, Costas Simitis. Despite the changes in its ideology and leadership, however, PASOK has managed over the last two decades to occupy a very broad space in the spectrum of political competition extending from the left to the centre-right.
It is its attractiveness for broad segments of the electorate that has made PASOK such a success story.

A third important outcome of the 1981 elections was the disintegration and final elimination of the post-war political centre, which in the past (whether as an alliance of parties or, after 1961, as a single party) had played a pivotal role in the party system. Occupying the middle ground of the system, the centre party had to oscillate between right and left while at the same time contesting both. Successful in the tumultuous 1960s, such a strategy appeared pointless in post-authoritarian Greece, where the right had shaken off the monarchy and reasserted itself, and the ascending PASOK had succeeded in giving the impression of a ‘safe’ left. After the elimination of the centre party, ND and PASOK both moved to appropriate the vacant space, and to lay claim to the politically homeless centrist votes. Of the two parties, ND proved less successful in this, since its attempts were largely frustrated by the far-right elements sheltered within the party. On the opposite side, as long as ND’s public image remained tainted with ultra-conservatism, PASOK was able to advance into and eventually capture most of the centre space. It was certainly helped in this by the fact that, especially after 1981, the communist left had become so enfeebled that it could hardly exercise any effective ‘pulls’ to prevent PASOK from moving to the middle.

The political liberalisation that followed the collapse of the military dictatorship in 1974 and, subsequently, the spectacular rise of PASOK were the main factors responsible for reducing the traditional left to a secondary force in new democratic politics. In their internal struggle for hegemony on the left, it was the orthodox Communists (the KKE) who emerged triumphant over their more moderate rivals (the KKE-Interior). Yet there was nothing in post-authoritarian politics to resemble the post-war EDA – an alliance of the entire left which, thanks to both its broad electoral appeal and considerable intimidating potential, was able to determine the direction of political competition. In the last two decades, the election returns for the communist left have decreased from nearly 11 per cent in 1981 to a meagre 5.5 per cent in the elections of 2000 (Table 2). Most important of all: except for once during those two decades, the influence of the KKE upon the party system has ranged from negligible to non-existent.

**PARTY-SYSTEM CHANGE**

The movement over the last half century from the segmented politics of the early post-war decades to the concentration of political forces of more recent years corresponds to the development over the same period of two different classes of party system: a polyparty system, generally coinciding with the fragmentation of political parties from the early 1950s until 1981,
## TABLE 2

**ELECTORAL OUTCOMES (PERCENTAGE OF VOTES AND PARLIAMENTARY SEATS) IN TWO-PARTY POLITICS, 1981–2000**

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<tr>
<td>PASOK</td>
<td>48.1 (172)</td>
<td>45.8 (161)</td>
<td>39.1 (125)</td>
<td>40.7 (128)</td>
<td>38.6 (123)</td>
<td>46.9 (170)</td>
<td>41.5 (162)</td>
<td>43.8 (158)</td>
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<td>New Democracy (ND)</td>
<td>35.9 (115)</td>
<td>40.9 (126)</td>
<td>44.3 (145)</td>
<td>46.2 (148)</td>
<td>46.9 (150)</td>
<td>39.3 (111)</td>
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<td>Greek Communist Party (KKE)</td>
<td>10.9 (13)</td>
<td>9.9 (12)</td>
<td>13.1 (28)(^a)</td>
<td>10.9 (21)(^a)</td>
<td>10.3 (19)(^a)</td>
<td>4.5 (9)</td>
<td>5.6 (11)</td>
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<td>KKE Interior (SYN since 1992)</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.8 (1)</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>5.1 (10)</td>
<td>3.2 (6)</td>
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<td>Political Spring (POLAN)</td>
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<td>4.4 (9)</td>
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<td>Democratic Movement (DIKKI)</td>
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<td>Democratic Renewal (DIANA)</td>
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<td>3.5 (7)(^d)</td>
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Notes:
- \(^a\) Coalition of Left and Progress (Synaspismos tes Aristeras kai tes Proödou); alliance of KKE, KKE-Interior, and other leftist forces
- \(^b\) Muslim ticket (Empistosyne)
- \(^c\) Empistosyne (1 seat), Ecologists (1 seat), independent candidate Apostolos Lazares (1 seat)
- \(^d\) Muslim tickets Empistosyne and Pepromeno (1 seat each), Ecologists (1 seat), local tickets in single-seat constituencies (4 seats)
and a two-party system, which was established soon after the 1981 elections and continues to be in effect.\textsuperscript{23} Assuming that classifications ‘are not merely mapping devices but also seize, when felicitous, systemic properties’,\textsuperscript{24} the analytical scheme used here presents three innovations with regard to the existing literature about Greek party-system politics. First, it considers 1981 rather than 1974 the main divide in the development of the post-war Greek party system. Second, instead of seeing the 1951–81 period of poly-partyism as a single package,\textsuperscript{25} it divides it into two distinct types – of the predominant-party system, and of polarised pluralism. Third, it proposes that the Greek party system which emerged after the 1981 elections and now has become consolidated is a classic two-partyism.\textsuperscript{26}

Before proceeding with a more detailed analysis, the article presents a taxonomic scheme of party system change in Greece during the last half of the twentieth century. As should be obvious, the capitals denote party-system classes, and the lower-case letters party-system types.

1. POLY-PARTYISM, 1951–81
   - Predominant-party system (1952–63)\textsuperscript{27}
   - Polarised pluralism (1963–81)


At least theoretically, two-partyism is a fairly simple class which poses no problem of identifying what cases belong to it. Two is just two, provided of course that each party can compete for an absolute majority of seats, and alternation in office is not prevented. Poly-partyism on the other hand (which may denote any number of parties above three) is a confusing category due to its great variety of types. Beyond the initial classification, therefore, a typology is needed to make better sense of poly-partyism. This is done best by providing qualitative criteria (what kind of systemic competition) rather than relying solely on quantitative data (how many parties in the party system). To get straight to the point, measurement alone can be no substitute for classification, and mere quantification may prove a wasteful exercise if it proceeds independently from qualitative, or nominal, science.

\textit{On Counting the Number of Parties: A Short Excursus}

Before proceeding with a more analytical discussion of the successive party-system types in Greece in the second half of the twentieth century, a brief note of on counting political parties seems at this point warranted. Ever since Duverger’s pioneering study,\textsuperscript{28} the number of parties has been used as the chief criterion for making sense of and classifying party systems. With Rae more specifically, there appeared in the relevant literature a proliferation of indices for measuring the number of parties.\textsuperscript{29}
Whatever their other merits and shortcomings, all quantitative indices remain insensitive to key qualitative characteristics (or attributes) of political parties within a certain party system. As Sartori puts it, ‘quantitative determinations are easy to obtain, since they are machine-made. Unfortunately, they miss relevance ... since they tell us just about nothing as to whether, and in what manner, a party affects the party system as a whole’.

These problems are exemplified in Table 3, which presents three ways of counting the number of parties in modern Greece; two of them rely on purely quantitative data, the third is qualitative. Laasko and Taagepera’s counting of ‘effective parties’ is based on the following formula:

$$Ns = \frac{1}{\sum_{i=1}^{n} p_i^2}$$

where $n$ is the number of parties, and $p_i$ denotes the share of seats held by the $i^{th}$ party. Molinar’s formula for obtaining his ‘number of parties’ is:

$$NP = 1 + N \left( \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} p_i^2}{\sum_{i=1}^{n} p_i^2} \right) - p_i^2$$
where \( p_1^2 \) is the proportion of seats of the winning party, squared.\(^{33}\) Finally, Sartori’s rules of counting are based on qualitative criteria, namely, whether a party has a coalition potential and/or a blackmail potential.

Two major problems emerge from quantitative measures alone. First, they confuse size with relevance, since they attribute large value to very big parties, while remaining insensitive to the political relevance of numerically weak ones. Consider, for instance, the distribution of seats (in percentage, as computed from Table 1) in the following two Greek elections:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>82—17—1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>72—20—5—3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Laasko and Taagepera’s index for these two elections yields values between 1.4 and 1.8, thus suggesting the existence of a one-and-a-half-party system for both cases. When using Molinar’s index, it appears as if there was in Greece in the same electoral years only one party, which is to say that the country had a non-competitive party system. The absurdity of both findings is due to the fact that such indices fail to take into account parties that either receive small electoral returns (as with the cases of both PASOK and the KKE in the 1974 contest), or fail to win seats altogether, usually as a result of electoral trickery (as employed against EDA in the 1952 elections). There can be no denying, however, that all the foregoing parties played important roles in the political competition, and remained significant for the overall working of the party system. To put it differently, even low numbers may contain parties whose ‘mechanical predispositions’ make them capable of affecting the overall performance of the party system. Such capacities all too easily escape the discrimination of quantitative measuring.

The second major problem with quantitative measures is that they are often devoid of explanatory value. Take as an example the distribution of seats (again in percentages, as computed from Tables 1 and 2) in the following sequence of elections:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>55—44—1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>57—31—5—4—1—1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>57—37—3—3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here we have three elections (held in different decades and in quite dissimilar political environments) that produced different distributions, or fragmentations, of seats. And yet, according to quantitative measurement, those elections are considered to have produced similar party systems (containing between 2.0 and 2.4 parties in Laasko and Taagepera; and between 1.5 and 1.7 parties in Molinar). What do those measurements tell us in terms of systemic properties? What do we learn about the party system in each of the foregoing elections? Clearly, mere quantification cannot
discriminate between different types of party systems over a long time, nor can it account for the overall systemic performance at a specific time.

Indiscriminate use of quantitative measuring is to be avoided, therefore, and more qualitative criteria for assessing party relevance must be introduced. With this in mind, we can now examine the different types of party system that developed in post-war Greece – a predominant-party system, polarised pluralism, and a two-party system.

Predominant-Party System, 1952–63

Predominant-party systems are those in which one party is able to command, alone and over time, the absolute majority of seats in parliament. In Sartori’s definition, a predominant-party system ‘is such to the extent that, and as long as, its major party is consistently supported by a winning majority of the voters’. This type of party system (not to be confused with uni-partyism) clearly belongs to the poly-party class, as it allows for an open party market with ample opportunities for dissent, as well as the option of rejecting the predominant party (which naturally leads to alternation in office).

The applicability of the foregoing theoretical suppositions to the record of early post-war party politics in Greece is plain enough and leaves no room for ambiguity. As was explained in the previous section, during the 1950s and early 1960s, all the major right-wing parties of the day (initially the Greek Rally, then ERE, its successor) were strong and unified, and enjoyed a combination of advantages such as a coherent programme, capable leadership, and powerful foreign patrons. As a result, they were able to win all the elections held between 1952 and 1963, and, with an absolute majority of seats in parliament, produce strong governments. Hence, for nearly a dozen years, the right became able to govern alone and without interruption, to the detriment of its political opponents.

But, it may be objected, was it not due to ‘violence and fraud’, as George Papandreou charged at the time, that the right-wing party had emerged the winner from the 1961 elections? If this is true, how much does electoral manipulation affect our argument for right-wing party predominance? The matter can be resolved by again referring to Sartori, who advocates ignoring electoral irregularities and alleged unfair play, ‘as long as it can be reasonably assumed that in a situation of fair competition the predominant party would still attain the absolute majority of seats’. That was indeed the case of the elections in 1961 when the ERE party would most likely have won an absolute majority of seats even if no electoral manipulations had occurred.

Be that as it may, after the 1961 elections and under the corrosive pressure of George Papandreou’s ‘unrelenting struggle’, the predominance
of the ERE party became seriously undermined. In 1963 it eventually lost the national elections and was deposed, a fact that put an end to its long party-system predominance.

**Polarised Pluralism, 1963–81**

The end of right-wing party predominance opened the way to the intensification of ideological polarisation and political instability. In the adverse circumstances of that period, the centrist EK proved unable to either hold together (and so missed the chance of establishing a political hegemony of its own), or to maintain political order. For our purposes, the point that needs explaining is how, after 1963, the type of party system in Greece changed to polarised pluralism. Sartori’s standard description presents polarised pluralism as a ‘syndrome’ with specific features, chief among which are the presence of relevant anti-system parties, the existence of bilateral oppositions, and the centre placement of a party. All three features were highly prominent in the party system that developed in Greece in the 1963–81 period.

First, with regard to anti-system parties, these not only existed in Greek politics, but even proliferated. Their number went up from just one anti-system party in 1963 (EDA), to two in 1974 (the United Left as an electoral alliance of the communist parties, and socialist PASOK), and three in 1977 (KKE, PASOK, and the far-right EP). The presence of so many anti-system parties during that period is quite telling, especially when considering that, by the 1981 elections, the EK had practically disappeared and PASOK had already turned into a fully systemic party.

Second, in contrast to the earlier, predominant-party system, where opposition to the right-wing governments was unilateral, there was now bilateral opposition vis-à-vis not only the ruling party but also other major parties in the system. In the two elections preceding the dictatorship, such bilateral opposition developed against the EK government; after the return to democracy it developed against all relevant parties in the system – save, of course, the extremist ones. In the 1977 general election, for instance, ND, EDIK, and PASOK, all of them relevant parties, were each faced with oppositions that were located on both their sides, and were mutually exclusive.

The third key feature of polarised pluralism is the centre positioning of a party, that is to say, the existence of a party occupying the middle ground of the system. When the metrical centre is occupied and therefore out of the competition, strong centrifugal drives develop in the system and politics often become immoderate if not altogether extreme. Such a central party before the 1967 military dictatorship was George Papandreou’s EK, and so were, after the return to democratic politics, its successors, the EK-ND and
EDIK. As already mentioned, after the elimination of the centre parties, both PASOK and ND tried hard to capture the centrist voters, each claiming for itself the centre legacy, opinions, and image. If neither was able to take over the political middle ground, it was because, already by 1981, the Greek party system had changed to typical two-partyism.

From what has been said so far it is clear that, between 1963 and 1981, the Greek party system displayed the features and the properties of polarised pluralism. But now a paradox needs to be addressed if numerical discrepancies are not to upset our taxonomic scheme. This paradox concerns the discord between the extreme ideological polarisation in the party system (the system mechanics) with the rather limited number of the parties available in it (the system format). Indeed, after discounting the run-off elections of 1964 that were held only four months after the 1963 contest, Greece during 1963–81 emerges as a moderately fragmented country (with 4–5 significant parties; see Table 3) – it appears, that is, as a borderline case between moderate and extreme pluralism.41

There seem to be three ways out of this seeming paradox. The first is to altogether disregard the matter, and accept that a party system may be extreme in terms of ideological polarisation and yet remain only moderately fragmented. The second is to consider that the number of available parties justifies (though barely) classifying the Greek party system as a fragmented system. True enough, Sartori drew the line separating extreme from moderate pluralism between five and six (relevant) parties. But, as he himself admits, ‘there is no magic in the numbers five and six’, it is better to consider that ‘the border line is not at five (or six), but around five (or six)’.42 The third way uses qualification rather than quantification. So, of the two variables characteristic of polarised pluralism, that is, polarisation and fragmentation, the first is the more decisive.43 This is so because, when accounting for democratic workability, the party mechanics (that is, polarisation) rather than the party format (that is, fragmentation) is ‘the best single explanatory variable for stable versus unstable, functioning versus non-functioning, successful versus immobile, and easy versus difficult democracy’.44

Two-Party System, 1981–Present

A two-party system obtains ‘whenever the existence of third parties [in it] does not prevent the two major parties from governing alone, i.e., whenever coalitions are unnecessary’.45 The inference is that, in two-party systems, third parties, even when they exist, should be discounted as superfluous and irrelevant. We must, therefore, immediately address the problem of the parties’ relevance. In a nutshell, the question is: how many parties are there in the party system that developed in Greece after the 1981 elections? It bears repetition, we want to know the number of the relevant parties, not the
grand total of all of them. If one counts all the parties that gained at least one parliamentary seat between 1981 and 2000, it looks as if the contemporary party system in Greece has contained from three parties (in 1981) to seven (in 1990), that it is of a poly-party format (see Table 2). However, some of those parties should be discounted for irrelevance, since their existence and role were superfluous vis-à-vis the overall working of the party system. The original question thus becomes: which of the existing parties qualify for relevance, and which of them should be discounted?

To answer this, it appears convenient to apply Sartori’s criteria for crediting parties with relevance, and, accordingly, discount as irrelevant those parties which, irrespective of their size, lack potential for either participating in coalition governments or effectively ‘blackmailing’ their political opponents.46

Coalition potential implies that a certain party may become a partner in forming a governmental majority. Even so, the issue remains whether we should require a merely feasible coalition, as Sartori does, or rather expect that coalition to be actually functioning. It seems better to settle for the latter because, as we shall see, a coalition between ideologically discordant parties may become feasible, largely thanks to political expediency in extraordinary circumstances, and yet be hardly functioning, let alone viable. With respect to a party’s blackmail potential, this exists when the party is in a position to affect the direction of competition of a government-oriented party, and so determines the overall pattern of competition within the party system.47 In general, possible blackmail and anti-system parties, whether communist or fascist, go together. Examples from earlier stages of party-system development in Greece are the post-war EDA and, in more recent years, the extreme-right EP.

To sum up, we must discount as irrelevant, regardless of size, those parties lacking potential for participating in working coalition governments, or intimidating their opponents, thus forcing them to alter their political and strategic priorities. It remains to apply the foregoing theoretical points to the actual party system that has developed in Greece since 1981.48

The first parties to be discounted as irrelevant are those that have appeared in only one or two elections and faded out thereafter. Such flash parties proliferated particularly in the successive electoral contests of 1989 and 1990 and included the DIANA party, as well as protest groups (the Ecologists), minority tickets (Muslims in Thrace), and independent politicians. These political forces managed to win seats because of circumstantial factors, such as the disorderly political situation of that time and the introduction of proportional elections (Law 1847/89). They were all eclipsed as soon as politics went back to normal and the old electoral law was re-established.
A second group of parties that fails to qualify for relevance includes the KKE-Interior, POLAN, and DIKKI, all with small electoral returns (ranging from one to ten seats) and a discontinuous presence in the parliament (see Table 2). These parties are supernumerary to the system, in the sense that they are never needed as government coalition partners and lack all power to significantly affect the tactics of intra-party competition. This explains why, like POLAN and DIKKI, they are usually short-lived. With regard to the KKE-Interior (known as SYN after 1992), this party still maintains a small but, as its 1993 electoral failure still reminds us, precarious presence in parliament; however, it is quite incapable of exercising any influence on the tactics of the relevant parties and so on the overall dynamics of the party system.

This leaves the question of the KKE, which, since 1981, has not only enjoyed a continuous and stable presence in parliament (Table 2), but has also taken part in the two coalition governments between 1989 and 1990. Should we then consider the KKE a relevant party? The answer must be negative, for the following reasons. First, the KKE was not admitted to the coalition governments by itself, but as the chief partner in a broader left alliance that had then been assembled, the so-called Coalition of Left and Progress. Secondly, and perhaps more important, the two coalition governments proved unworkable and, ultimately, stillborn. That they could be set up at all was due to extraordinary events (such as PASOK leader Andreas Papandreou’s illness, a wave of scandals that rocked domestic politics, the opportunistic change of the electoral law in 1989) which have not been repeated since then. Finally, by joining a government coalition, the KKE lost whatever potential it may have had for intimidating PASOK. It also lost a significant number of its electorate and in the 1993 elections received less than five per cent of the national vote. In the decade since, that party’s electoral returns have tended to decline even further. All in all, over the last 20 years the KKE has not been able to undermine the essence of two-partyism, which is the formation of single-party governments regularly alternating in power.

Having eliminated the non-significant political forces, we are left with only PASOK and ND as relevant parties, which permits classification of the party system that emerged in Greece after 1981 (and to this date remains operational) as a two-party system. According to Sartori, the properties necessary for two-partyism are the following: ‘(i) two parties are in a position to compete for the absolute majority of seats; (ii) one of the two parties actually succeeds in winning a sufficient parliamentary majority; (iii) this party is willing to govern alone; (iv) alternation or rotation in power remains a credible expectation.’ As seen from Tables 4 and 5, in connection with Table 2, since 1981 PASOK and ND have consistently controlled the
The vast majority of votes cast (the two parties between them averaging 84.8 per cent of the national vote) as well as of parliamentary seats (averaging 92.8 per cent). Following each election, the winner has always been able to obtain an absolute majority of seats and form a single-party government.

Table 6 lists all the governments that have come to power since 1981, and their duration in office. It shows that, with the single exception of the two coalition governments which between them ruled the country for a period of ten brief months (June 1989 to April 1990), over the last 20 years Greece has enjoyed strong, and usually durable, single-party majority governments.

A final remark is necessary with respect to the last – and most distinguishing – of the properties of two-partyism, namely, alternation in power of the two major parties. What are we to make of the fact that, since 1981, ND has enjoyed power for only three years, while PASOK has ruled throughout the rest of this two-decade period? Should we not consider the contemporary party system in Greece as a predominant-party system? The answer must be negative for the simple reason that alternation in office is not an actual possibility in predominant-party systems. Conversely, in two-party systems, even when rotation does not actually occur, it suffices that there is ‘sufficient credibility to the expectation that the party in opposition has a chance to oust the governing party’.

Table 4

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<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>43.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>42.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>84.0</td>
<td>86.6</td>
<td>83.4</td>
<td>86.9</td>
<td>85.5</td>
<td>86.2</td>
<td>79.6</td>
<td>86.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Official statistics.

Table 5

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<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>283</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>283</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>553</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>562</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>566</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Official statistics.
such an expectation for governmental turnover becomes evident from most electoral outcomes of the period, which show nearly equal strength for the two major parties.$^{53}$

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this analysis are several and, at times, rather surprising. First of all, during the second half of the twentieth century, the Greek party system has been anything but frozen. Contrary to the established idea that party-system change is an infrequent phenomenon,$^{54}$ in post-war Greece the party system did in fact experience great and rather frequent changes. More particularly, and to a large extent following the profound political (and regime) changes that occurred in the country during the foregoing period, a continuous and almost linear transformation took place from a highly fragmented and polarised party system into a concentrated one. This study has proposed, and analysed, the consecutive development of three distinct types of party system – namely, a predominant-party system (from 1952 to 1963), polarised pluralism (between 1963 and 1981), and two-partyism (since 1981).

Two-partyism may strike some people as a quite surprising party system for a country like modern Greece. However simple, two-party systems are rare precisely because they are ‘difficult’ to achieve.$^{55}$ This is why two-partyism tends to develop in countries with long democratic traditions, stable political institutions, and a small spread of public opinion. Interestingly enough, the development of a two-party system in Greece has coincided with the consolidation of the young democratic regime, generally placed after the 1981 elections, and the consequent decline of political polarisation.$^{56}$ For more than 20 years, two-partyism has functioned well in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parties, governments, and prime ministers</th>
<th>Chronology</th>
<th>Duration (months)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ND-Synaspismos (coalition government of Tzanis Tzanetakis)</td>
<td>June 1989–Nov. 1989</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Ecumenical’ coalition government (of Xenophon Zolotas)</td>
<td>Nov. 1989–April 1990</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ND (single-party governments of Constantine Mitsotakis)</td>
<td>April 1990–Oct. 1993</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * April 2003.
Greece. It has established a stable structure of competition and is not threatened by emerging parties. Today, however, the Greek political system seems to suffer from fatigue and, perhaps, overstretching, and in this sense the possible future of two-partyism becomes an intriguing issue.

For JIL

NOTES


2. In this light, three decades ago it seemed justified to consider that ‘the first priority of social scientists concerned with the development of parties and party systems since 1945 is to explain the absence of change in a far from static period in political history’. R. Rose and D.W. Urwin, ‘Persistence and Change in Western Party Systems Since 1945’, Political Studies 18/3 (1970), p.295, emphasis added.


4. Throughout this analysis, a party system is simply defined as ‘the system of interactions resulting from inter-party competition’ in a given polity. This definition belongs to G. Sartori, Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1976), p.44. It bears stressing that each party system displays its own properties, which are not the same as the properties of its constituent parts.


6. The Greek Communist Party was proclaimed illegal with ‘Emergency Law’ 509 of 27 December 1947. It was legalised again in September 1974, following the breakdown of authoritarianism and Greece’s return to competitive politics.


9. A detailed analysis of post-war elections in Greece is to be found in R. Clogg, Parties and Elections in Greece; The Search for Legitimacy (London: C. Hurst & Company 1987), pp.17–54. The most authoritative account in Greek for the pre-authoritarian period remain E.


Of the remaining years, seven were taken up by the military dictatorship (1967–74), and the rest by the mostly centrist governments of the mid-1960s (1963–67).


In the eight elections held between 1981 and 2000, ND has averaged 41.8% of the national vote; its rival PASOK has averaged 43.1%.


The rapid decline of the once potent centre party is certainly striking: the absolute majority of votes (52.7%) the EK had won in 1964 was reduced to 20.4% in 1974 and to 12% in 1977, until its final liquidation (a mere 1.6% of the total vote) in the elections of 1981.

Note that I am saying ‘poly-party’ (or multi-party), not pluralist, in order to avoid confusion with two-partyism. Since party pluralism denotes the existence of more than one party, both poly-party and two-party systems are pluralist, yet each displays quite different characteristics.


Cf. also for the mistaken assertion that the Greek party system has ‘displayed a remarkable degree of continuity largely thanks to the shortness of the authoritarian interlude’; in K. Hamann and B. Sgouraki-Kinsey, ‘Re-entering Electoral Politics: Reputation and Party System Change in Spain and Greece’, *Party Politics* 5/1 (1999), p.57. Mavrogordatos has also pointed to the continuity and stability of the Greek party system,

26. Hitherto the contemporary Greek party system has been classified as polarized pluralism, whether of a ‘limited’ (Mavrogordatos, ‘The Greek Party System’) or an ‘extreme’ (Seferiades, ‘Polarization and Non-Proportionality’) variant.

27. Although the post-war party system in Greece became structurally consolidated with the formation of the Greek Rally and the EDA in 1951 (supra), the country’s political system took concrete form only by 1952, when the Greek Rally established itself in power and EDA became solidly entrenched in opposition.


32. Laasko and Taagepera, ‘“Effective” Number of Parties’. As often happens, the effective number of parties is different when it comes to votes as opposed to seats. The preference for counting seats rather than votes (cf., for instance, R. Taagepera, ‘How Electoral Systems Matter for Democratization’, Democratization 5/3 (1998), pp.68–9) is in a way analogous to the preference for focusing on the parliamentary aspects of a party system rather than on its elective aspects.

33. Molinar, ‘Counting the Number of Parties’.

34. Sartori, Parties and Party Systems, p.196.

35. Sartori’s theory requires that, to receive predominant-party status, a party stays in power ‘for four consecutive elections at least’ – a requirement clearly met by the post-war right in Greece.


38. Sartori, Parties and Party Systems, pp.131–45. Additional features of polarised pluralism discussed by Sartori are (i) polarisation due to ideological distance, (ii) the prevalence of centrifugal rather than centripetal drives in the polity, (iii) ideological patterning as a forma mentis, and (iv) the presence of irresponsible oppositions that leads to the politics of outbidding (or over-promising). As it will have become evident in the preceding pages, all of those features were present in the party system that existed in Greece between 1963 and 1981.
39. In Sartori’s definition (p.133), which I follow here, ‘a party can be defined as being anti-
system whenever it undermines the legitimacy of the regime it opposes. … Its opposition is
… an opposition of principle’. For an interesting and more recent analysis on party anti-
systemness, see G. Capoccia, ‘Anti-System Parties: A Conceptual Reassessment’, *Journal of
Theoretical Politics* 14/1 (2002), pp.9–36.
40. For this development, see especially M. Spourdalakis, *The Rise of the Greek Socialist Party*
41. Faced with the same paradox, Seferiades (‘Polarization and Non-Proportionality’, p.75) has
attributed it to an electoral system that ‘obtained strong reductive effects’ upon the party
system. I believe instead that, despite acute polarisation, the party system was not fragmented
because governing alone remained – in large part thanks to the electoral law – a distinctive
characteristic of the system. In this sense, polarised pluralism differs from moderate
pluralism as much as single-party governments differ from coalition governments.
43. For this point, see G. Sani and G. Sartori, ‘Polarization, Fragmentation and Competition in
Western Democracies’, in H. Daalder and P. Mair (eds.), *Western European Party Systems:
44. Ibid., p.337. Polarisation due to ideological distance is the synthetic outcome of the
foregoing characteristics of the system, namely, the existence of anti-system parties, bilateral
oppositions, and centrifugal drives. As long as the system of polarised pluralism lasted in
Greece, the spectrum of political opinion became so intensely polarised and the legitimacy
of the political system so enfeebled, that the country was led twice into undesirable
situations: a military dictatorship in 1967 and the ascendancy of almost boundless populism
in 1981.
45. Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*, p.186. Also, two-partyism is not the same as two parties,
since ‘a two-party system may well contain third parties’ (pp.345–6, emphasis in original).
46. Ibid., pp.121–5.
48. For a more detailed analysis of Greek two-partyism since 1981, see T.S. Pappas,
‘Kommatiko sistema kai politikos antagonismos sten Ellada, 1981–2001’ (Party System and
Political Competition in Greece, 1981–2001), *Greek Political Science Review* 17 (May
49. Put together, those two coalition governments were just able to stay in power for a ten-month
period (June 1989 to April 1990).
50. Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*, p.188.
51. Parliamentary majorities are usually quite ample. The only case of a government without
such a comfortable majority was that of ND between 1990 and 1993, which hinged, rather
precariously, on the one seat of independent deputy D. Katsikis.
53. The near-equality of electoral strength between the two parties became most dramatically
apparent in the elections of April 2000, in which PASOK won over ND by a margin of only
1.06%.
Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries* (New Haven and London: Yale University
56. The presence of possible interconnections between party-system change and political
consolidation in young democracies is not to be neglected. This emphasises the need to bring
closer together two important research programmes that often seem to develop past each
other, namely party-system change analysis and democratisation studies.