

Living under Austerity

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Living under Austerity

Greek Society in Crisis

Edited by

Evdoxios Doxiadis and Aimee Placas

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Note on Transliteration

One of the difficult decisions we faced in this volume was to decide how to render Greek words and terms in English. These are several transliteration techniques that we could have used but each presented its own set of problems. After much deliberation, we decided to apply the rules suggested by the *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* and used by the Library of Congress (see <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsol/romanization/greek.pdf>), with some modifications.

We rendered place names in the customary English or foreign form whenever possible (e.g., Athens, not Athena). We retained established anglicizations, and we tried to honor the way the person being cited normally renders his or her name, even if it does not fully match our transliteration system. When this rendering was unknown we opted for a phonetic transliteration (as is commonly used by most Greeks) unless the person in question is known to have used a different form (thus we use Karamanlis rather than Karamanles).

In the case of newspapers and periodicals that already use a transliterated form of their name we selected to follow the form each has chosen (thus *To Vima* and not *To Vema*, and *E Kathimerini* and not *E Kathemerine*).

Proper names in non-English alphabets other than Greek employ the transliteration scheme most common in English.

For simplicity's sake and to avoid confusing readers who do not read Greek we decided against the use of Greek characters and rendered all Greek words in transliteration including in the bibliographies of each chapter. We also avoided the use of accents.

All transliterated Greek words or short phrases in the following chapters follow these rules and appear in italics.

Abbreviations

ADEDY	Civil Servants' Confederation
ANEL	Independent Greeks
ANTARSYA	Front of the Greek Anticapitalist Left
COSCO	China Ocean Shipping Company
CSDH	Commission on Social Determinants of Health
DIMAR	Democratic Left
DT	Public Television (Greek broadcaster)
EBU	European Broadcasting Union
ECB	European Central Bank
EEC	European Economic Community
EIR	National Institute of Radio
EK	Union of Centrists
ELSTAT	Hellenic Statistical Authority
ENEK	United Nationalist Movement
EOPYY	National Organization for Provision of Health Care Services
ERT	Hellenic Broadcasting Company
ESM	European Stability Mechanism
ESY	National Health System
EU	European Union
EU ICS	European Crime and Safety Survey
Frontex	European Border and Coast Guard Agency
GD	Golden Dawn
GDP	gross domestic product
GMI	guaranteed minimum income
GSEE	General Confederation of Greek Workers
IFC	International Financial Commission

IKA	Social Insurance Institute
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IU	United Left
KEA	Social Solidarity Grant
KKE	Communist Party of Greece
KOINSEP	Social Cooperative Enterprise
LAE	Popular Unity
LAOS	Popular Orthodox Rally
LETS	local exchange trading systems
LMU	Latin Monetary Union
LPEs	large protest events
MCCH	Metropolitan Community Clinic of Hellenikon
MoU	memorandum of understanding
MPs	members of parliament
NBG	National Bank of Greece
NCHR	National Commission for Human Rights
NCRT	National Council of Radio-Television
ND	New Democracy
NERIT	New Hellenic Radio, Internet, and Television
NGO	nongovernmental organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAME	All-Workers Militant Front
PASOK	Panhellenic Socialist Movement
PEDY	National Primary Healthcare Network
PHC	primary health care
PP	People's Party
PSOE	Spanish Socialist Workers' Party
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programmes
SYRIZA	Coalition of the Radical Left
TED	Television of the Armed Forces
ToMYs	local health units
Troika	International Monetary Fund, European Central Bank, and European Union
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VAT	value added tax
WHO	World Health Organization
YENED	Information Service of the Armed Forces

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Protest, Elections, and Austerity Politics in Greece

Kostas Kanellopoulos and Maria Kousis

Introduction

One year after the collapse of Lehman Brothers the aftermaths of the capitalist crisis reached the eurozone countries. In the winter of 2009–10 Greece, a founding member of the eurozone, faced bankruptcy. The cost of lending money in the international capital markets was on the rise and Greece, due to its big budget deficit and its enormous public debt, could no longer borrow money to refinance its debt. Greek bonds were soon characterized by the international rating agencies as junk, and the Greek government, due to the country's membership in the eurozone, was without the monetary and financial means to deal with the crisis. The eurozone was also lacking a bailout mechanism for member-states and a potential Greek default would have threatened the existence of the whole monetary union, since most of the Greek bonds were in the hands of German and French banks. Therefore, under these stressful conditions a solution was invented. Going beyond the official European Union (EU) treaties and institutions, the European Commission, the European Central Bank (ECB; the ECB issues the euro) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) formed a Troika that lent an enormous amount of money to Greece. In return the Greek government had to implement harsh budget cuts in public expenditure and guide a rapid and deep transformation of the Greek economy through extensive privatizations and lowering of wages.

The effects of this memorandum of understanding (MoU), as it was called, between the Troika and the Greek government were devastating for the Greek economy. In the 2009–13 period Greece lost 25 percent of its GDP, unemployment rose to over 25 percent, and the public debt as a percentage of the GDP increased to over 175 percent. In contrast to the initial aim of the first MoU, Greece could not return to international capital markets for refinancing its debt. Thus, a second MoU followed in 2012 with the same economic policies as conditions for the bailout. Then a third MoU with again the same austerity and countercyclical policies was signed in 2015. In the summer of 2017 Greece was still excluded from the international markets and the Greek government agreed to continue austerity and budget cuts until at least 2020.

The main figures of the Greek economy resemble those of the Great Depression of the 1930s or those of a country in wartime. Consequently, the effects in the Greek society were also devastating, at least for a considerable part of it. The rates of relative and extreme poverty skyrocketed. In 2012 there were over 1 million households where none of the members of the household was employed. Many more households face difficulties in paying their bank loans and/or their mortgages, their taxes, and even their electricity and water bills (Sakellaropoulos 2014).

It is only because of philanthropic organizations, solidarity organizations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), public charities organized by the Greek Orthodox Church, and the municipal authorities that phenomena of famine are not apparent in the streets of the Greek cities. Unlike the 1930s, contemporary states are in a better position to deal with the extreme consequences of economic crises. We also have to bear in mind that Greece belonged to—and still belongs to—the cohort of the most advanced economies in the world. The economic crisis has certainly had negative effects, but it neither has equally affected everybody nor has it turned Greece into a failed state.

Many Greek business managed to survive the crisis. The Greek middle class was weakened, but it still represents a sizeable segment of the population. In contrast, those in the lower social strata and the working class endured the most severe losses; they face a continuous threat to their lifestyles and their standards of living. It is these economic and social transformations that have triggered the realignment of the political system we will examine in this chapter.

However, our central argument is that the economic crisis only triggered the changes in the Greek political system, but did not cause them. In our understanding the Greek political system changed drastically because of the massive political and social anti-memorandum protests of the period after 2009. Against the backdrop of a series of mass protest events,

and through the conflicts and the coalitions that occurred inside the protest camp, the contemporary alignment of the Greek political forces has formed.

Protest and Politics

The severe economic crisis of the Greek state and the spiral of anti-austerity mobilizations that followed have deeply affected the political regime of the country. Within just a few years, the basic features of the Greek political arena that had been stable for over three decades have changed drastically, altering both voting patterns and the status quo of political actors and their challengers, both inside and outside of parliament.

Although economic factors had been neglected in the contentious politics literature of the past two decades, economic and political contention has more recently returned in social movement discussions, initially in regard to defensive protests against neoliberal policies in Latin America (Almeida 2007, 2010). Economic change and variation affect collective action in one of two ways: either by shaping responses to political threats and opportunities, or by constituting themselves as significant threats and opportunities (Kousis and Tilly 2005: 7).

Most scholars of social movements define opportunities either as signals to social or political actors to mobilize (Tarrow 1996: 54) or as the probability that social protest actions will lead to success in achieving the desired outcome (Goldstone and Tilly 2001: 182). In Goldstone and Tilly's conceptualization, threats are not the exact opposite of opportunities but they are divided into two components: (1) a general threat, or exposure to a set of harms, and (2) a collective action threat, or the cost a social group must incur if it gets active or that it expects to suffer if it remains inactive (Goldstone and Tilly 2001: 183; Kousis and Tilly 2005: 3).

The Greek case is arguably a case witnessing transformation in both contentious and conventional politics. Transnational economic change, a deep global recession, and a deep national economic crisis have destabilized the political regime of the country, and they have created opportunities and especially threats that have mobilized various social and political actors more frequently during the past years. These actors aim either to ameliorate the impacts of the austerity measures and delay the structural reforms, or to protect themselves from the burdens of the crisis.

The contention in Greece does not only involve demonstrations, strikes, and riots but also conventional politics in the form of polarized electoral campaigns, party splits, and political realignments. Elections and social movements are the two major forms of political conflict and political par-

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ticipation in democratic systems (Goldstone 2003; Meyer and Tarrow 1998) but their interactions have seldom been specified in a systematic way (McAdam and Tarrow 2010, 2013). Most relevant studies either give the party system a key role in determining whether and how social movements mobilize (e.g., Kriesi et al. 1995) or do not mention elections as an important factor of movement activity (e.g., McAdam [1982] 1999; Tilly 1978). However, as McAdam and Tarrow have recently argued, “Few citizens are deeply engaged in the party system as such. For most people, it is the proximate influence of the electoral *campaign*—and not the party system—that provides signals that guide them on public policy issues, that tells them how to judge the political elite, and that identifies potential coalition partners. Conversely, elections are the occasions on which parties are made aware of the presence and strength of social movements and can change course in order to appeal to these constituencies” (emphasis as in original; McAdam and Tarrow 2010: 533).

In short, on the one hand elections could be used as a protest tactic when protest groups engage in proactive and reactive electoral mobilization, and on the other hand, longer-term changes in electoral regimes affect the patterns of protest mobilization and demobilization (McAdam and Tarrow 2013: 328). Kriesi (2014) also links contentious reactions in the direct-democratic and protest arena and the public’s electoral reaction, and emphasizes the need to pay equal attention to both.

Especially in times of economic recession when the economy is more likely to dominate other issue concerns (Singer 2011) one of the first signs of popular discontent is drastic shifts in voting patterns (Beissinger and Sasse 2014; Bermeo and Bartels 2014a; Kriesi 2014). Economic voting is more easily traced when the political conjuncture allows voters to clearly attribute responsibility for economic performance to the government and to specific governmental political parties (Duch and Stevenson 2008; Powell and Whitten 1993). In such cases, Kriesi (2014) argues that, depending on the party system, disaffected voters might turn to established opposition parties or opt for new challengers in the party system, who typically adopt populist appeals—in other words, the new populist right in Western Europe. However, in the face of deep recession, austerity cuts, and severe job losses, discontent voters could reinforce the exit hypotheses by (1) rejecting all mainstream parties, the established political elites, or the political class, or (2) turning against all political parties—in other words, abstaining from voting (Kriesi 2014: 300)

A significant point we want to make here is that it is analytically preferable to distinguish between political and social protests on the one side and social movements on the other. Protest is defined by Karl Dieter Opp “as joint (i.e., collective) action of individuals aimed at achieving their

goals by influencing decisions of a target” (2009: 38) whereas a protest group is a collectivity of actors who want to achieve their shared goals by influencing decisions of a target (Opp 2009: 41). These definitions are obviously referring to political protests and political protest groups. That means there are several protests—joint action of individuals aimed at achieving their goals—that are not inherently political. They are apolitical not because their claims do not have political implications, but, on the contrary, simply because some protestors do not aim at influencing the decisions of a specific target, either because this is their will or because the target in question is not that specific and personalized. We could label these protests as social protests. It is obvious that every political protest is social too, but every social protest is not necessarily political in the narrow use of the term.

In addition, both political and social protests can lead to or be amplifications of a social movement, but they do not themselves constitute a social movement. According to Tilly (1994) and Diani (1992), a social movement requires some time to grow and develop, some collective identity making, a lot of collective action framing, and a growing sense of solidarity among its adherents. A political or a social protest might possess these qualities but certainly also might not; that is why it is better to distinguish between protests and social movements.

It seems to us that in Greece during the 2010–17 period there were plenty of anti-austerity and anti-memorandum social and political protests, but it is harder to claim that an anti-memorandum social movement as such developed. Rather, especially for the period prior to the January 2015 elections, there was an impressive series of large anti-austerity and anti-memorandum protests that constitute an anti-austerity campaign (Diani and Kousis 2014; Kousis 2016).

Thus, this chapter aims to (1) analyze and discuss large protest events (LPEs) related to the Greek financial crisis and their impact on the political system, and (2) understand and illustrate the diversity of actors and goals inside the Greek anti-austerity campaign. In the following sections we will present our research approach, based mainly on LPE and claim analysis, and then we will analyze the main features and patterns that characterize the Greek anti-austerity campaign.

Research Approach: Large Protest Events and Claims, a National Campaign

This section will analyze and discuss LPEs related to the Greek financial crisis and their impact on the political regime. While protest events depict

one level of contention, the data set of forty-nine LPEs found in the 2010–16 period in Greece comprises an anti-austerity campaign. A campaign consists of a higher level of contention involving whole populations engaged in wider struggles; a campaign is defined as “sustained, organized public efforts making collective claims on target authorities,” constituting one element (of three) of a social movement (Tarrow 2008: 229; Tilly 2004: 3). As Tilly noted, “Unlike a one-time petition, declaration, or mass meeting, a campaign extends beyond any single event—although social movements often include petitions, declarations, and mass meetings. A campaign always links at least three parties: a group of self-designated claimants, some object(s) of claims, and a public of some kind. The claims may target governmental officials, but the “authorities” in question can also include owners of property, religious functionaries, and others whose actions (or failures to act) significantly affect the welfare of many people” (Tilly 2004: 4).

The study of LPEs is especially significant for periods of “*thickened history* [when] the pace of challenging events quickens to the point that it becomes practically impossible to comprehend them and they come to constitute an increasingly significant part of their own causal structure” (emphasis in original; Beissinger 2002: 27).

Given the focus on the national campaign as well as the high frequency of contentious events during this thickened period, choosing the LPEs as the unit of analysis facilitates the systematic tracing of all key events and synchronized actions at the national level; these events and actions constitute a national anti-memorandum and anti-austerity campaign sparked by neoliberal adjustment and austerity policies in Southern European countries. The campaign mainly involved demonstration marches and national general strikes with claims against the Troika’s MoU and state-imposed austerity measures. From February 2010 to February 2016 it encompassed forty-nine LPEs sharing the following features:¹

1. High numbers of participants (minimum 5,000—maximum 500,000)
2. High number of parallel and synchronized actions
3. Focus on national level claims challenging the Troika MoU and government austerity policies
4. Broad, cross-class coalitions involving a large number of groups and the general public
5. Based in Athens’s Constitution Square, addressing the Parliament
6. Paralleled by smaller protests in cities and towns across the country with the same claims

These LPEs were widely covered by national and transnational media, depicting the discursive content of claims-making, the repertoire of related

actions, the embeddedness of movement groups in multi-organizational fields, the relations between opportunities and mobilization, as well as other dimensions of public sphere issues (Koopmans 2007; Kousis 1999). The LPE-claims approach created for this analysis draws from protest event, protest-case, as well as political claims analysis and uses national newspaper and alternative electronic media reports to code information on economic and political claims (Koopmans and Statham 1999; Kousis 1998; Rucht et al. 1998; Tilly 1978).

Thus, as in previous periods of thickened history, the best strategy is a blanketing strategy (Beissinger 1998: 290–300) using multiple available sources in order to enrich the data set. Therefore, five major sources were selected: *Eleutherotypia* (quality paper of the center-left), leftist *Rizospastis* (paper of the Communist Party of Greece, or KKE), and *Augi* (paper of the Coalition of the Radical Left, or SYRIZA) as well as the alternative e-media sites Indymedia and realdemocracy.gr (which included minutes of meetings and referenda). They were supplemented by other Greek national news sources, including *To Vima*, *Ta Nea*, *E Kathimerini*, *Epochi*, *tvxs.gr*, international news sources (the *Guardian*, Reuters, BBC, and blogs such as *iskra.gr*, as well as the official sites of the unions).

Main Features of the Campaign

Based on the mentions drawn from 520 articles, these are the main features:

- Thirty-two of the forty-nine LPEs were mainly called and organized by the two big confederations of trade unions in Greece (the General Confederation of Greek Workers, or GSEE and the Civil Servants' Confederation, or ADEDY). Most of the times these LPEs were general strikes accompanied by big marches in Athens and other major Greek cities.
- Nine were carried out on dates commemorating the following: (1) Greece's refusal to allow Axis forces to enter Greece on 28 October 1940, beginning the country's participation in World War II; (2) the Polytechnic student uprising against the military dictatorship on 17 November 1973; (3) the unprovoked fatal shooting of fifteen-year-old Alexis Grigoropoulos by a police officer in the center of Athens on 6 December 2008.
- Two were part of transnational action days: one following the Occupy movement on October 15, 2011, and a second on the first anti-austerity strike by European unions across member-states on 14 November 2012.²

- Eight were associated with the Greek Indignados (also called the *Aganaktismenoi*) Constitution Square occupations in the summer of 2011. Two of the Indignados LPEs overlap with general strikes and trade union's demonstrations in the square, which was also the main site of Indignados protest.
- Finally, two were called and organized in early 2016 by groups and associations of lawyers, doctors, other freelance professionals, and farmers.

The above analysis of LPEs clearly demonstrates the crucial role of big trade unions in calling numerous general strikes, and thus providing the space for a sustained anti-austerity mobilization. GSEE and ADEDY are officially recognized social partners that participate in the national dialogue on industrial relations. Since wage-cuts, diminishing labor rights, and privatizations were among the main prerequisites of all bailout packages and the subsequent MoUs between the Troika and all Greek governments (with their effect of worsening working conditions), it was public and private sector labor unions that were among the major organizers of resistance. Besides labor mobilization, our data shows that only the Greek Indignados were capable of calling and coordinating LPEs by themselves. But Indignados mobilization was a short-lived phenomenon in Greece.

A closer look at the data also reveals the importance of the political parties of the Greek left in the mounting of the LPEs. Most of the LPEs were called by GSEE and ADEDY, but numerous other organizations and groups participated, and some of them were actually among the main organizers. These other organizations and groups were mainly the political parties of the left (KKE, SYRIZA, ANTARSYA [Front of the Greek Anticapitalist Left], and later LAE [the Popular Unity party that split from SYRIZA]), groups that were formed during and for the Indignados protest, a coordination of independent primary unions, and a constellation of anarchist groups. In table 4.1 we can see the times and the percentage of appearances of each main organization/group in the forty-nine LPEs.

The presence of the political parties and organizations of the left in the anti-austerity campaign is constant. These parties either coorganized many of the LPEs or actively supported them by mobilizing their members throughout the campaign. The KKE, which enjoys the highest mobilization capacity, was present in all the events except for those initiated by the Indignados in 2011, because the party disagreed ideologically and politically with the Indignados master frame. ANTARSYA was even more present in the LPEs since its members supported and participated in the Indignados events, and it was absent—or, more accurately, it was not recorded as a primary actor—only from a few general strikes in 2013–14.

Table 4.1. Participation of Organizations and Groups in 49 Large Protest Events, 2010–15

Group	Participation in Number of LPEs	Percent Participation in the Total 49 LPEs
GSEE	30	61.2
ADEDY	32	65.3
PAME ^a	31	63.2
Coordination of Primary Unions ^b	16	32.6
KKE	37	75.5
ANTARSYA	38	77.5
SYRIZA	31	63.2
LAE	7	14.2
Indignados	9	18.3
Anarchist groups	18	36.7

a. All-Workers Militant Front (PAME) is KKE's fraction in trade unionism.

b. The Coordination of Primary Unions is an initiative of several sectoral and company unions that mobilize independently from GSEE. They accuse GSEE of governmental unionism, and they are more prone to radical unionism and anticapitalist goals.

SYRIZA was actually the main champion of all protests in Greece and not only of those associated with the LPEs, until the summer of 2015 when SYRIZA's government (which came into power in January 2015) made a compromise with the Troika and eventually became itself the target of anti-austerity protests. After this point in 2015, the newly formed party LAE took SYRIZA's place and continued the mobilization against austerity cuts and neoliberal reforms associated with the new bailout package. Finally, throughout the 2010–16 period the presence of radical unions and anarchist groups was also visible, at least in some LPEs.

In short, private and public sector union confederations (GSEE and ADEDY) called the general strikes, but because of Greek workers' widespread distrust of GSEE and ADEDY, and the accusations toward them for governmental unionism (Vogiatzoglou 2014), it was the active support political parties and groups of the left that helped the campaign to grow in numbers (Kanellopoulos and Kostopoulos 2013) to diffuse across the country (Kousis 2016) and to hold on for a long time (Kousis and Kanellopoulos 2014). Even at the Indignados' protests a closer look reveals the same trend—most of the Indignados organizers due to dual membership belonged at the same time to left-wing political parties and groups, and this dual involvement helped the spreading of protest (Kanellopoulos et al. 2017; Stavrou 2011).

Turning to the political claims of the LPEs, the contenders demanded that the wealthy be taxed, jobs created, and social welfare (health and education) provided. They also demanded the resignation of those politicians responsible for the crisis, the end of privatizations, and the annulment of the externally imposed austerity policies. The major claims of the protesting groups were against the unprecedented austerity laws and measures, which included dramatic wage and pension decreases, tax increases, privatization of public enterprises, and changes in public education, in addition to other neoliberal structural reforms. The protests' demands stress serious concerns about the impacts of these austerity measures, especially those regarding the economy, society, sovereignty, and democracy (Diani and Kousis 2014; Kanellopoulos and Kostopoulos 2014; Kousis 2015).

Protesters viewed the consecutive Greek governments of the 2010–16 period (including the parliament and the police force) as their primary target, followed by the European Commission. The second targeted group in importance included the international organizations—in other words, the Troika, IMF, the European Central Bank, and foreign banks. The third challenged group included financial institutions and credit agencies, the Greek elite, and local government agencies. Less frequently mentioned were capital markets and the G-20/G-8. Finally, in one-fifth of the events Germany was targeted, especially in the second year after June 2011 (Kousis 2014).

Out of this multitude of political and economic claims and demands, the single most common and enduring feature was the continuous and persistent resistance against the austerity cuts and the neoliberal reforms contained in the bailout packages and in the MoUs of consecutive Greek governments with the Troika.

As we can see in figure 4.1 this resistance movement up to the present can be broken into three distinct phases:

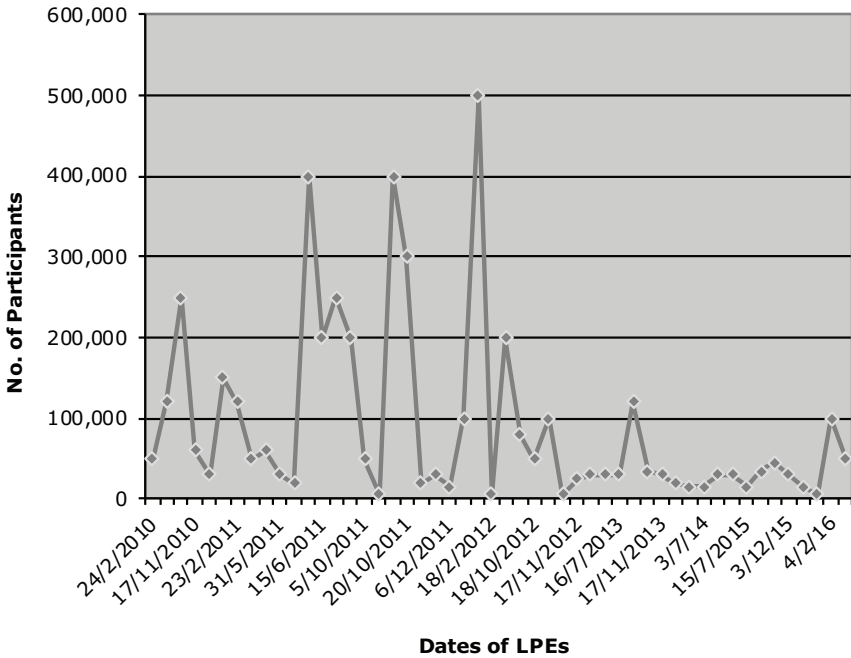
1. The first and most spectacular in terms of numbers and outcomes was the period February 2010–February 2012. During this period we observe the most LPEs (twenty-four) and especially the most massive and contentious LPEs. The protest campaign came to a temporary halt at its peak, following the huge demonstration of more than half a million people on 12 February 2012, after which both parliamentary parties of the left (KKE and SYRIZA) prioritized their electoral campaigns for the May 2012 general elections over their participation in street politics.
2. The second phase started in September 2012 after the formation of a coalition government between New Democracy (ND), Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), and Democratic Left, a split toward

the center from SYRIZA in 2010 (DIMAR), where SYRIZA, after its spectacular electoral growth, became the second-largest party in Greek parliament. LPEs evolved again around GSEE and ADEDY general strikes, but they never reached the numbers and the climax of the first phase. Many activists describe this phase as a period of assignment. The Greek political system had been based on the alternation in power between the two biggest political parties in parliament (consistently ND and PASOK in the past). SYRIZA had become the second-strongest party and had the obvious potential to become the first (Mavris 2012). Thus, a large part of the anti-austerity movement had assigned SYRIZA, the main political champion of the anti-memorandum campaign, the mission of reversing austerity and neoliberal reforms on its expected rise to power (Kouvelakis 2016). The last LPE of this phase occurred in December 2014, just before the early general elections of January 2015 that marked the end of ND and PASOK rule.

3. When SYRIZA along with Independent Greeks (ANEL; an anti-memorandum far-right party that split from ND in 2012) formed a coalition government in January 2015, the anti-austerity LPEs ceased to exist since the government was trying to negotiate with the Troika. But as soon as the SYRIZA government receded from its promises and agreed on a bailout package with new austerity cuts and neoliberal reforms in the summer of 2015, the anti-austerity campaign started again. After the early elections of September 2015, from November 2015 until February 2016 five LPEs were mounted, organized by GSEE and ADEDY, and supported by the KKE and the extra-parliamentary left, with the additional participation of new social groups like middle-class freelance professionals and farmers. This third phase of the campaign could be characterized as the phase of demobilization and frustration. The LPEs were not as massive as those of the first phase and far less diffused geographically. Even when in early summer 2017 the SYRIZA and ANEL government imposed via the parliament new cuts in pensions and new heavy taxation that prolonged the austerity policies until at least 2020, the protests were very weak and the anti-austerity campaign seemed to be fading away.

SYRIZA had advanced throughout the 2010–15 period an easy anti-austerity rhetoric that allowed the party to dominate in the protest campaign. This rhetoric also allowed for coalition building with broad segments of the population across the political spectrum (Kanellopoulos et al. 2017). As a result, the radical-left SYRIZA was able to rise to power and formed a coalitional government with the far-right ANEL. The anti-

Figure 4.1. Number of Participants in Large Protest Events, 2010–16



austerity campaign was largely based on the—what proved to be—illusionary rhetoric that SYRIZA’s government could tear apart the MoUs and Greece could remain a member of the eurozone, or that SYRIZA’s government could unilaterally erase the public debt. Once in power, SYRIZA’s political and ideological current inside the anti-austerity campaign remained without proponents and without a central narrative.

The politics of austerity are ineradicably blurred with the politics of protest in all three phases of the campaign, creating a similar pattern that causes and contributes to the inconstancy of the Greek political system. Massive protests had occurred many times in Greece after the transition to democracy in 1974. These protests had caused some minor changes, but they had never destabilized the political system. The combination of the economic crisis, the policies selected to overcome the crisis, and the opposition to this policy selection is what destabilized the Greek political system.

In table 4.2 we try to depict this pattern in numbers. We present the austerity policies and neoliberal reforms imposed by the Troika and consecutive Greek governments year by year 2010–16. In columns 3 and 4 we

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Table 4.2. Economic, Political, and Social Aspects of the Greek Crisis

Year	Austerity Policies and Measures	Percent Change of GDP ^a	Percent Unemployed	Percent Trust in Greek Government ^b	Number of MPs Dismissed	Number of LPEs
2010	First and second stability packages, first MoU	-5.5	12.7	25	3	3
	Multipurpose Act			21	1	2 (DIMAR (DESY))
2011	Intermediate program	-9.1	17.9	16	1	1 (Arma Politon)
	Multipurpose Act			8	1	1 (Eleutheroi Politis)
2012	Multipurpose Act, PSI (Private Sector Involvement), second MoU	-7.3	24.4	6	45	2 (ANEL, Demitourgia Xana)
	Intermediate program			7	8	6
2013	Multipurpose Act	-3.2	27.5	9	17	2
	Multipurpose Act			10		4
2014		0.7	26.5	16		1 (Potami)
				11		3
2015		-0.3	25.0	37	1	1 (KIDESO)
	Third MoU Multipurpose Act			16	44	1 (LAE)
2016	Multipurpose Act				2	4

a. Data for changes in the Greek GDP and the rate of unemployment in Greece stems from www.statistics.gr/documents/20181/1518565/greek_economy_19_02_2016.pdf (accessed 26 February 2016) and from www.ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/eu/countries/greece_en.htm (accessed 26 February 2016).

b. Date for the trust in the Greek government stems from the Eurobarometer reports http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb_arch_en.htm (accessed 24 June 2016).

c. DIMAR is a split of SYRIZA in 2010; Democratic Coalition (DESY) is a split of ND in 2010; Citizen's Chariot (Arma Politon) is a split of PASOK in 2011; Free Citizens (Eleutheroi Politis) is a split of PASOK in 2011; ANEL is a split of ND in 2012; Creation Again (Demitourgia Xana) and River (Potami) are newly found liberal parties; Democratic Socialists (KIDESO) is a split of PASOK in 2014; LAE is a split of SYRIZA in 2015.

observe the evolution of the Greek GDP and the Greek unemployment rate, respectively. The Greek economy was already in deep recession from 2008, which contributed to the de facto bankruptcy in 2010, but the rescue packages that have been implemented since then obviously did not manage to put it back on track. In fact, one could plausibly argue that these exact measures and conditions contained in the rescue packages caused the further deterioration of virtually all the figures of Greek economy (Featherstone 2011; Flassbeck and Lapavitsas 2015; Lapavitsas 2012; Matsaganis 2011; Varoufakis 2015). Although proponents of economic austerity might disagree with the certainty of that assessment, certainly the lived experience of these measures for the average person directly links the MoU passed with the continuing decline of the economy, and this experiential connection was part of the discourse of the protests.

The legislative passage of every austerity package was fiercely opposed in the streets through the LPEs (see column 7). In parallel, opposition was also occurring inside the national parliament where MPs belonging to all governing parties in all three phases broke ranks with their leadership and voted against the austerity measures their parties were supporting (see column 6). Eventually the crisis of political representation led to an overwhelming mistrust in Greek government, and the continuous formation of new political parties (see column 7). The findings of the regular Eurobarometer are devastating (see column 5): trust in the PASOK government fell from 25 percent to 8 percent when it imposed the first MoU, the caretaker Papademos government in early 2011 (PASOK with ND and LAOS) was mistrusted from the beginning, and the coalitional Samaras government (ND, PASOK, and DIMAR) was never trusted by more than 16 percent of Greek citizens. In striking contrast, the trust figures were high for the first Tsipras coalition government (SYRIZA and ANEL) in the first semester of 2015 (37 percent when this government was elected with the promise to stop austerity). These figures dropped sharply when the SYRIZA and ANEL government finally compromised with the Troika and imposed a new austerity and neoliberal reforms package (from 37% to 16 percent) in the autumn of 2015.

The Greek debt crisis drastically changed the political system. However, as this research shows, this was possible only through the active intervention of an impressive series of mass social and political protests. The tense interaction between challenger and challenged groups caused major realignments in the Greek political system, and the successive mobilizations against the austerity packages internally polarized the Greek political parties. As is shown in table 4.2, the pattern of the Greek political crisis is as follows: the government passes a package of austerity measures, strikes and demonstrations occur (often led by the political parties of the left opposing the measures), some governmental MPs do not back

the measures, recession ensues, unemployment rates rise, distrust of the wider public toward the political system grows, new austerity measures are proposed, new demonstrations occur, new MP losses result, and so on.

The Greek political system was a predominantly two-party system (when PASOK and ND jointly claimed around 80 percent of the votes in the national elections) with few other parties represented in the parliament until 2009. After the earthquake elections of May 2012, the Greek political system was transformed into an inconstant system with fragile governmental coalitions and many political parties gaining (and losing) parliamentary representation (Mavris 2012; Teperoglou and Tsatsanis 2014; Mylonas this volume). Table 4.3 shows the changes in participation for the national elections before and after the crisis.

The three phases of the Greek anti-austerity campaign analyzed above coincide to a large extent with the electoral cycles of the same period, testifying both for the interaction between protest and elections and for the economic voting hypothesis. A closer look at figure 4.1 reveals the role of elections as crucial intervening factors in the anti-austerity campaign. At the peaks of the campaign (high number of LPEs in continuous months with massive participation) there were no elections (figure 4.2).

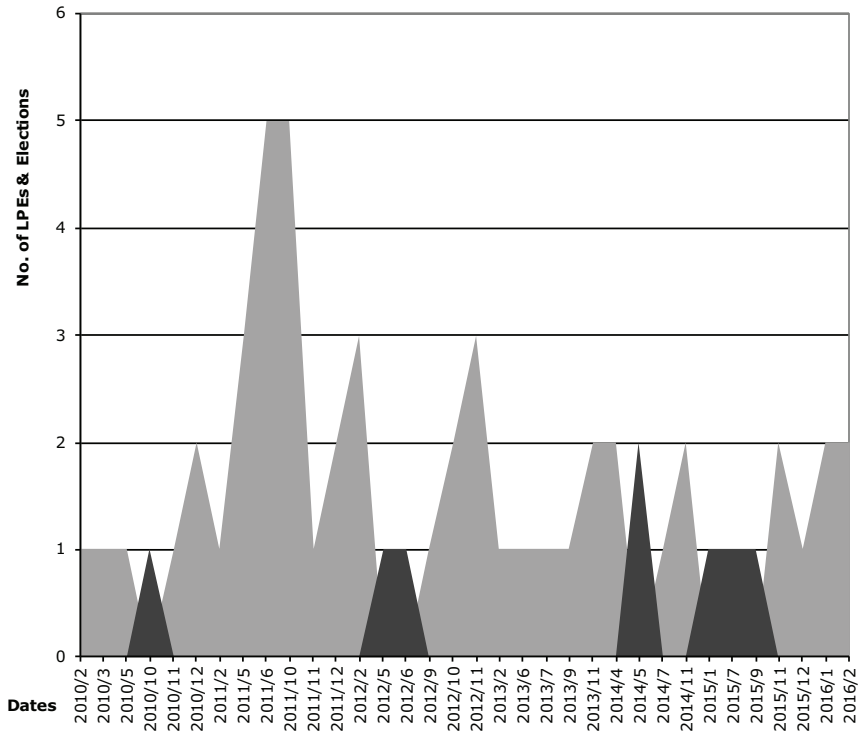
To the contrary, the valleys of the campaign coincide perfectly with election periods. As a matter of fact, eight elections have been held in Greece since 2010, with austerity and the positioning toward the MoUs as the main issues in all of them (four national elections, one election for the European parliament, two regional and municipal elections, and one referendum).

Table 4.3. Participation in the Greek National Elections, 2004–15

National Election Years (participation percent)	Percent Change
2004–7 (76.50–74.15%)	–3.00
2007–09 (74.15–70.95 percent)	–4.31
2009–12 May (70.95–65.10 percent)	–8.25
2012 May–2012 June (65.10–62.47 percent)	–4.04
2012–15 January (62.10–63.94 percent)	+1.84
2015 January–2015 September (63.94–56.16 percent)	–7.78

Source: “Results of National Elections,” Hellenic Republic Ministry of Interior, <http://www.yypes.gr/el/Elections/NationalElections/Results/>.

Figure 4.2. Number of Large Protest Events and Elections per Month



The first phase of the campaign (2010–12) was temporarily interrupted by the regional and municipal elections of October 2010, which were mainly won by the governing PASOK forces (Verney 2012).³ One year later, in the autumn of 2011 and at the peak of the anti-austerity campaign, George Papandreou attempted to regain legitimacy by calling a referendum. However, many of his party leaders disagreed and Papandreou's government was overthrown, creating a broad crisis of political legitimacy and a new peak of the insurgency in the streets. A caretaker government was formed by PASOK and ND that agreed on a second MoU with the Troika. But this agreement led to the parliamentary disintegration of both PASOK and ND and the eventual call for elections. In effect it took two national elections in a span of forty days in May and June 2012 for the political system to stabilize and the protest movement to demobilize. The old political forces (ND and PASOK) managed to form a coalitional government (along with DIMAR), while at the same time SYRIZA moved to the position of the main oppositional party. LPEs started over again in

the autumn of 2012, but with a lower level of tension and less participation, and were again effectively interrupted by the dual elections of May 2014 (regional and municipal as well as European elections). In 2015 the period between the national elections of January and the referendum⁴ of July was without anti-austerity LPEs because an anti-memorandum coalition was in office. When this same coalition turned pro-memorandum, protest resumed and it took another early national election in September to tame it.

The new period is characterized by (1) the tremendous rise of SYRIZA from a small left party struggling to retain its parliamentary representation to the biggest oppositional party in 2012 and the biggest Greek party in 2015, though not as big and hegemonic as PASOK used to be (Kouvelakis 2016); (2) the electoral advance of far-right parties, from the overtly neo-Nazi Golden Dawn to the nationalist ANEL;⁵ (3) the formation of fragile coalition governments, and (4) the significant drop in the participation rate in elections (see table 4.3).

Conclusion

Based on the analysis above and following Kriesi (2014), the Greek case stands somewhere between the cases of Western European and Central and Eastern European countries. Both the center-left government that attempted to impose austerity measures in 2009 and the center-right government that imposed austerity in 2010–12 faced a severe electoral punishment, as in most Western European cases; unlike in Western Europe, though, the political system changed radically. New political parties—and especially far-right parties—appeared and had an immediate success in the ballots, as in many Central and Eastern European cases. But at the same time, unlike both sets of European cases, the political parties of the left in Greece were significantly empowered. The Greek parliamentary left took advantage of its already established institutional position and, along with the Greek trade unions and many small political organizations of the extra-parliamentary left, played an important role in the mounting of the LPEs against austerity and structural adjustment policies.

Faced with the threat of bankruptcy in early 2010, the country entered the era of the MoUs and the loss of sovereignty under the Troika in a contentious manner. The Troika institutions on the one hand financed the Greek sovereign debt, but on the other dictated a series of deep reforms and rapid structural adjustments in a wide variety of policy areas (Lapavitsas et al. 2010). All the main pillars of the democratic regime were weakened: economic growth was halted, democratic deliberation was largely ignored,

and even national sovereignty was called into question. And an unwilling and unprepared party system was left to rapidly reform the state and boost the economy (Kouvelakis 2011). Meanwhile Greece lost one-fifth of its GDP in less than five years, unemployment rose to an EU record of 27.5 percent, and poverty and social exclusion rates also hit record numbers (Sakellaropoulos 2014). Many Greeks started moving abroad in search for employment opportunities and the trust in national and EU political institutions hit zero numbers (Zambarloukou and Kousis 2014).

In an environment where even national independence and popular sovereignty were jeopardized, the massive anti-austerity mobilizations acted as the spark that set in motion the processes of deep transformation of the political system. SYRIZA, a party of Eurocommunist origins, managed in the 2012 general election to become the main oppositional party, boosting the hopes of many protesters that as a future government it would stop austerity. The electoral path was seemingly prioritized and the anti-austerity protest campaign was slowed down. Eventually in January 2015 SYRIZA rose to power but proved incapable to alter austerity policies and soon agreed on a new MoU with the Troika institutions containing a new round of austerity cuts, privatizations, and neoliberal reforms. As an indirect result of SYRIZA's compromise, the anti-austerity campaign was revitalized in the winter of 2015–16, but to a much lesser degree.

Through the consecutive LPEs, responsibility was clearly attributed by the protesters to the ruling political parties that imposed austerity measures and as a result the economic voting hypothesis was confirmed: mainstream parties were punished in elections and parties with populist appeals came to the fore (see also Stavrakakis and Katsambekis 2014). At the same time, Kriesi's (2014) exit hypothesis seems also to be confirmed. The participation rate to elections dropped significantly while many disillusioned citizens turn to new independents or anti-parties.

In times of crisis social movement campaigns and electoral campaigns are in close connection. In Greece, LPEs resisting austerity and neoliberal policies destabilized an already inconstant political system and brought to the fore political forces like SYRIZA. But in the meantime, through the consecutive elections the anti-austerity campaign was gradually demobilized. SYRIZA rose to power due in part to the mass anti-austerity protests of 2010–12, but in the absence of tense protest it soon resumed its institutional role as a parliamentary and governing party. At the same time, the endless electoral rounds eventually increased political apathy.

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Notes

1. It is important to note here that throughout the 2010–16 period countless protest events took place (see Rudig and Kariotis 2013; Serdedakis and Koufidi 2018) and probably some of them were indeed large (more than five thousand participants). But in our data set we include only LPEs that specifically oppose austerity policies and the MoU. These events address the Greek parliament and its members of parliament (MPs) or issues that concern the whole nation-state. Thus, the sitting in the Constitution Square, addressing the authorities at the highest national level, is crucial (Kousis 2016).
2. There were also many transnational solidarity protest events in support of the Greek anti-austerity campaign in various places in Europe and North America, but we have chosen not to include them in our sample because they were not directly addressing the Greek government, they were rather small in number of participants, and they did not coincide with the LPEs in Greece. In many countries the Occupy protests were seen as the continuation of the Indignados protests. In Greece it is difficult to support such an affinity since the Indignados protests in the summer of 2011 involved millions of people across Greece while the Occupy protests in October 2011 involved only five thousand people.
3. The pace of insurgency was also slowed down by the escalation of violence that occurred in the massive LPE of 5 May 2010, at the same day of the voting in parliament of the first MoU, when three people were killed by a Molotov bomb.

4. This constitutionally debatable referendum was called by SYRIZA's leaders in just a week's notice over the agreement of Greek citizens on the bailout package proposed by the European Commission's president Mr. Juncker. Mr. Juncker withdrew his proposal few days before the referendum but this did not prevent SYRIZA's government from holding the referendum and then interpreting its result.
5. Golden Dawn never called or openly participated in any LPE against austerity. Its electoral rise could be associated with the rise of criminality in big cities and the subsequent evolution of a racist frame (Kandylis and Kavoulakos 2011). However, many people with far-right ideas were present in anti-austerity protests, especially those associated with the Greek Indignados (Petropoulos 2014).

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