Political parties and democratic representation in the era of crisis: mapping changes and functions in the composition of the Greek political elites

Gerasimos Karoulas PhD, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

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Political elites under crisis periods

Democratic and elite theories estimate among others, the impact that rapid social changes and crises have on the function of the political system. Although theoretical approaches are not common, main topics and parameters of research are the following:

• **marginalization of democratic debating and decision making processes**, while a further enhancement of democratic deficit is more than evident

• **cooperation between the traditional political elites** in order to retain their status and reproduce

• **increase of power of party leaders and leading political groups** at the expense of the role of the rest political personnel, party organs and members

• **degradation of the role of society’s representatives** (i.e. social partners, civil society, NGOs), in the adoption and influence of specific policies

• **break of bonds between the electorate and the traditional political parties and elites**
Crisis, elections and political personnel

The aforementioned evolutions have a considerable impact in the composition and emergence of political elites and more precise the following:

• **emerging of new political powers** and fragmentation of the traditional party system,
• **high turnover of the elected political personnel**
• **new recruitment channels for the elected political personnel**, as a result of changes taking place within society
• **new social groups in the composition of political elites**
• **increase of anti-systemic and antidemocratic parties** and tendencies
• **rejection of political system on behalf of a significant part of society**
• **considerable differences between old and new political powers** in terms of recruitment channels and profile of political personnel
Main evolutions of Greek crisis elections

• Considerable increase in the number of parliament parties (from maximum 5 parties before crises to 7 or 8 after crises)
• Single party governments seems to “belong to the past”. From 2011 till today only coalition governments have undertaken power
• During the elections of 2015 the far right, neo-nazist party of Golden Dawn has gained the third higher electoral percentage
• The number of first elected MPs’ has grown considerably as a result of crisis elections

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<tr>
<td>Newcomers</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>25,66%</td>
<td>30,66%</td>
<td>30,33%</td>
<td>30,66%</td>
<td>26,66%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>49,33%</td>
<td>11,66%</td>
<td>40%</td>
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• The participation percentage in parliamentary elections has been substantially decreased

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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>76,5%</td>
<td>74,2%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>65,1%</td>
<td>62,5%</td>
<td>63,6%</td>
<td>56,6%</td>
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Research outline

- Research Population: total number of Greek and European (Greek representatives) parliament members as well as members of the government (1,500 cases).
- Data collection: analysis of curricula vitae and composition of political elites collected from current bibliography, newspapers, official websites (i.e. Greek and European parliament, political parties, personal pages of political elites)
- Conduction of research: Coding Protocol tested in 10% of the sample. The data analysis was conducted through SPSS 22
- Incomplete data gathered for 6% of the population
To what extent and in which ways has the composition and emerging of Greek political personnel changed during the crises period?

• We expect important differentiations to be evident in the demographic profile of political personnel, as a result of the high turnover of political elites and the need for representation of specific social groups influenced by crisis effects.

• Given that electorate has rejected -to a large extent- the traditional political parties and personnel, we expect that new recruitment channels will have emerged.

• We expect that a considerable number of changes will also be reflected between pro- and anti-memorandum parties.

• We expect that nepotism will have been marginalized to a large extent, as a form of reproduction of traditional political parties.
Gender per period

SYRIZA (28%) and Democratic Left (45%) were the only parties that had elected a considerable number of women. PASOK didn't elect any woman in the specific period.
In contrast to what is believed SYRIZA has a very aged political personnel (Av. Of period 52 years) comparing to the general average (47,5 years)
No specific differentiation can be detected
The presence of salaried professions has grown considerably during the last period (civil servants are mainly represented through SYRIZA and AN.ELL). For the first time pensioners are an important group.
Recruitment channels per period

The emergence of political personnel coming from Interest Groups as well as from professional recognition has been increased.
The emergence from State positions remains a privilege of the traditional governmental political parties. Political personnel of left wing parties is strongly connected with interest groups.
SYRIZA (4,1%) and AN.ELL. (3,2%) have the smallest presence of personnel coming from political families comparing to ND (18,8%) and TO POTAMI which have the higher (26,7%)
Origin of elite members per party organ

The role of party leaders or ministers consultants’ have been very marginalized. Strong presence of District Committees.
Conclusions

• Changes in demographic profile are evident with the exception of the presence of women which has remained stable.

• Employees and pensioners, having “suffered” most by the crisis, have a much stronger presence in political elites’ positions.

• The hypotheses of emerging of new recruitment channels can be partially accepted since differentiations are evident in several parameters, like interest groups, professional recognition or state officials.

• Nepotism has been marginalized as a recruitment channel especially between the anti-memorandum parties

• Political leaders’ consultants have been diminished as a category of political personnel holding official positions

• Changes are in most cases evident between pro and anti memorandum political parties