

## Assessing the Responsiveness Quality of Democracy in Greece—Surviving in Crisis

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Systematic, empirical, and comparative efforts to assess the quality of democracy are of relatively recent vintage, despite the diachronic and often spirited debate among social scientists to evaluate the viability, feasibility and efficacy of democratic governance. The fall of the military backed regimes in Portugal, Greece, and Spain in 1974-75, followed by a wave of democratization—dubbed as the “third wave”<sup>1</sup>—in developing countries stimulated scholarly interest in transition to civilian rule and democratic consolidation and anchoring.<sup>2</sup> The demise of Soviet bloc Marxist-Leninist regimes<sup>3</sup> gave further impetus and helped open the gates to the next stage/level in the study of democracy: quality assessment and the factors that help deepen and/or impede the quality of democracy. Larry Diamond and Leonardo Morlino’s 2004 article is one of the first and more well-grounded, comprehensive, and utilitarian blueprints. The authors see a liberal regime as a prerequisite to attaining high quality democracy. In their minds, only “a broadly legitimated [liberal democracy can] provide its citizens a high degree of freedom, political equality, and popular control over public policy and policy makers through the legitimate and lawful functioning of stable institutions.”<sup>4</sup> In a more recent work, Morlino maintains the key figurations of the definition and views good quality democracy as “presenting a stable institutional structure that realizes the liberty and equality of citizens through legitimate and correct functioning of its institutions.”<sup>5</sup>

Diamond and Morlino’s assessment framework/architecture consists of three interconnected, interdependent, and interrelated quality dimensions: procedure, substance/content, and responsiveness/result. Procedure refers to the characteristics, nature, texture, methods, and the workings of the environment in which the product (governance) takes place. This dimension is assessed through the rule of law, vertical and horizontal accountability, citizen participation, and political competition. Substance refers to the quality of the material and its durability and longevity. Freedom and equality are the two measuring agencies here. Finally, result/responsiveness is the quality of the product (governance) judged by the caliber of governance and success in meeting citizen

needs, demands, and expectations. The various aspects of the procedure and substance dimensions have been explored elsewhere.<sup>6</sup>

This article will concentrate on assessing the responsiveness dimension of the quality of democracy in Greece. In fact, the Greek case is nearly made-to-order. Poor, externally dependent, and socially fragmented, the country experienced chronic political instability since its very inception as a semi-independent entity (late 1820s-early 1830s). Greece teetered between weak and unstable parliamentary government and a variety of authoritarian or quasi-authoritarian governance. The civil fratricide (1946-49) that followed WWII led to the near demise of the left--much of which was either in exile or languished in prison--and diminished the fractured center thus enabling the victorious right to virtually monopolize power by setting up a relatively durable but guarded constitutional monarchy, often referred to as cachectic democracy. It lasted until 1967, when it was overthrown by the brutal but inept military dictatorship (1967-1974)--known as the junta or simply the colonels--dominated by the extreme right.

The praetorian regime eventually collapsed under the weight of its own incompetence, pushed over the cliff by the illegal, illogical, and ill-conceived putsch against the legitimate government of a sovereign country, Cyprus, which brought Greece to the brink of war with Turkey and resulted in the invasion and occupation by Turkey of nearly 40 percent of the island—a situation that remains unchanged to this day. Just as the civil war ostracized the left, the disastrous performance of the military regime and the threat of war against the perennial adversary to the east marginalized the authoritarian-disposed extreme right. For the first time in modern Greece's turbulent history there was enough consensus in the country to proceed toward establishing a stable, functioning, sustainable, well-consolidated, viable liberal democracy where power alternates between different political parties in an institutionalized and peaceful fashion.<sup>7</sup> The country's Westminster parliamentary republic is soon to celebrate its uninterrupted semi-centennial anniversary—the longest stretch ever in the country's checkered political history. It is also the same epoch in which the Greek state has not been embroiled in bellum: regional, national liberation, or domestic.

This article will dwell on assessing and analyzing the responsiveness dimension of the country's most successful and on-going experiment with liberal democracy and the factors that affected it, particularly in light of the recent and on-going debt crisis and the visible decline in the democratic regime's ability to satisfy the citizens expectations and needs. In addition to relevant statistics, the study will rely on qualitative perceptions, for, as David Beetham and his collaborators aver, responsiveness "assessment should be qualitative judgments of strengths and weaknesses, strengthened by quantitative

measures where appropriate.”<sup>8</sup> A cursory synopsis of the theoretical antecedents of responsiveness, however, would be appropriate.

### **Responsiveness and its Complexities**

Despite the fact that responsiveness is not particularly difficult to define, nonetheless it is absolutely essential to the study of democracy, so much so that in G. Bingham Powell’s words it “is one of the justifications for democracy itself.”<sup>9</sup> For Beetham et al, “responsiveness involves procedures for consulting public opinion and relevant interests before policy or legislation is derived (ex ante), so the content will reflect the views of those affected.”<sup>10</sup> Morlino operates in the same wave length when, taking his cues from his collaborative work with Diamond, deems responsiveness as “the capacity of government to satisfy the governed by executing its policies in a way that corresponds to their demands.”<sup>11</sup> Powell concurs and adds: “when the [democratic] process induces such policies consistently, we consider democracy to be of higher quality.”<sup>12</sup> However, it should be noted that democracies, even the most advanced and sophisticated ones, are almost never able to perform well in every dimension, and all the time. Instead, highs and lows, peaks and valleys are part of life for democratic or non-democratic governance alike.

As in other dimensions of the quality of democracy, assessing responsiveness is a systematic, diachronic, overall endeavor and should not be confused with in-depth treatment of a particular event or a specific period in the life of democracy in a given country, region, and even beyond. While interesting and highly valuable, laser-beam concentration on particular periods of low or high performance or the success or failure of individual leaders are helpful and can yield tantalizing insights, nevertheless, cannot substitute for a comprehensive, holistic, diachronic, and systematic assessment. It is important to add that at the end of the day, it is the “citizens’ perception of responsiveness, rather than the reality” that matters the most.<sup>13</sup>

At its core, responsiveness is embodied in four integral elements: government policies must be at the heart of citizen preferences and must reflect public interest; guaranteed government services to individuals and social groups; allocation of material benefits to society with the help of the country’s administrative apparatus or related agencies; and articulation and propagation “of symbolic goods that create, reinforce, or reproduce a sense of loyalty toward the government.”<sup>14</sup> It is worth noting that symbolic goods or products refer to a diverse range of psychological, self-enhancing and self-regarding benefits/utilities that satisfy one’s “pride, prestige, and self-identity.” By

contrast, substantive goods are about the quest for “pecuniary benefits,” which include wealth, comfort, food, aesthetics, medicine or leisure.<sup>15</sup>

It is also important to point out that innate tension notwithstanding, there is a very close connection between responsiveness and accountability (vertical and horizontal), and ergo participation and competition. The strain between the two is rooted in the unavoidable conflict between the performance and record of elected officials and how they measure up against citizens’ demands, expectations, and needs. As Morlino notes, “judgments on responsibility imply that there is some awareness of the actual demands, and that the evaluation of the government’s response is related to how its actions either conform to or diverge from the interests of the electors.”<sup>16</sup> At the end of the day, though, “both responsiveness and accountability are necessary for effective popular control over government.”<sup>17</sup>

Unlike defining, empirically analyzing, and assessing responsiveness is a far more involved and multifaceted process fraught with all kinds of intricacies and complexities. Powell views gauging responsiveness as an ongoing and dynamic process resembling “a chain whose links are casually connected.”<sup>18</sup> The chain of responsiveness consists of three major linkages: *structuring of choices, institutional aggregation, and policy-making*. The three-chain linkage corresponds seamlessly to a four-phase process: citizen preferences, citizens’ voting behavior, selecting policymakers, and public policies and outcomes. Of the three linkages, the first deals with citizens’ preferences and their voting behavior. In other words, this is about competing political parties identifying, distilling, and structuring voters’ wants into some sort of reasonable policy alternative(s). Andrew Roberts views this as mandated responsiveness, by which he means “politicians present clear and distinctive programs in their campaigns, which they enact when elected.” In his mind, this “gives citizens a means of ex ante rather than ex post control over policy.”<sup>19</sup> *Institutional aggregation* refers to the relationship “of election outcomes and the selection of policy makers committed to doing what the citizens want.”<sup>20</sup> The central point here is how institutions in different types of democracies—presidential, majoritarian, consensual, or hybrid—sift, aggregate, and arrange citizen preferences into a decision/policy making body/government.

Finally, the third linkage, policy making, is about how elected policy makers committed to pursue citizen preferences can convert them into realistic national policies. This can be seen as policy responsiveness, which refers to governments “whose policy choices continually follow public preferences.”<sup>21</sup> The connection between democracy and policy responsiveness is intimate to the point that policy responsiveness is in many respects a key justification of democratic governance and, at the same time, “the strongest sign of popular control.”<sup>22</sup> In Diamond and Morlino’s language, policy-making involves the

methods and means utilized by "elected officials and their appointees to translate policy stances and commitments into actual policy outcomes."<sup>23</sup> In other words, positive outcomes cannot depend on luck or the good will of office holders, instead "responsiveness implies that institutional arrangements, and above all elections, reliably connect citizens to those who make policy in their name."<sup>24</sup> Beetham and his associates concur stating responsiveness requires "accessibility of government to electors and different sections of public opinion in public policy formation and implementation, [as well as] systematic, open, and accessible procedures and channels of public consultation, effective legal redress, [and] local government close to the people."<sup>25</sup>

The three-linkage process is multifaceted, complex, and sensitive to all kinds of dependent and independent variables, unexpected developments, at home and beyond the borders of the state, as well as societal and cultural characteristics and idiosyncrasies. Powell asserts "the severing of any of the three linkages can cause failures in responsiveness,"<sup>26</sup> and maintains "high quality democracy is sustained when institutional arrangements provide incentives supporting each of the major linkages or responsiveness." In his view, this can be spurred when citizens/voters can evict from office inept or unresponsive public officials, elect people that are "promise-keeping and are publicly committed to what the citizens want" and elect "representative parties that are committed to negotiating as agents on behalf of the respective policies favored by the various subgroups of citizens who elected them."<sup>27</sup> "A political party is responsible," argues Roberts, "if it makes campaign promises and fulfills these promises once in office."<sup>28</sup>

A host of factors can subvert responsiveness in each of the three linkages. In the structuring of choices linkage inadequate information in the hands of the citizens--either due to lack of effort or difficulties in accessing it--is a key subverting factor.<sup>29</sup> Diamond and Morlino doubt that "even educated, informed, and politically engaged citizens always know their own interests and desires in relation to specific policies."<sup>30</sup> Slow or weak development of coherent national policy agendas by political parties due to party divisions, electorate volatility, and/or other factors is another impeding element. So is absence of viable alternative solutions. Institutional aggregation can be hampered by electoral systems that reward parties with only of plurality of the votes considerable majorities in the legislature, party divisions and splits, weak legislative majorities that lead to lack of consensus, and legislative-executive deadlock that open the road to executives to attempt to rule by decree and the legislature to react by initiating impeachment proceedings. Finally, the third in the chain of linkages, policy making, can be obstructed by the switching of positions by elected officials, widespread corruption and nepotism, and constraints, such as ineffective bureaucracies or security organizations, slowing economies, and outcomes in existing policies different than expected.<sup>31</sup>

But there are various conditions that can facilitate the chain of linkages as well. At the structuring of choice level, higher levels of education, an independent, pluralistic, and professional mass media, a stable party system, as well as popular involvement and national discourse can be strong facilitators. When competing parties are unable to articulate and organize policy choices, the chain of responsiveness "fails from the start."<sup>32</sup> Moreover, the institutional aggregation linkage can benefit from a parliament elected through a proportional representation (PR) system and effective and coherent political parties. Also helpful is a "parliamentary system with fairly inclusive policymaking rules (strong committees and minority rights) seem to encourage representative involvement in the policy process."<sup>33</sup> Finally, the policy-making linkage is effective when there is institutional and party horizontal and vertical accountability, and an "autonomous, well organized, and skilled corps of public servants (permanent government) able to implement policies effectively and with minimum corruption can be a powerful bureaucratic edifice of responsiveness."<sup>34</sup>

Responsiveness can either be affected and/or conditioned (positively or negatively) by societal, economic, or international considerations. The first relates to how elected leaders respond to citizen concerns. If there appears to be sufficient social consensus about a particular issue, politicians would be hard pressed to ignore it. Often times, however, the public is divided and confused between short-term and long-term goals. This may be due to lack of sufficient information and/or the composition of the electoral; older people may opt for short-term solutions at the expense of longer-term goals, whereas younger may see the situation in reverse. In such circumstances, elected leaders often opt not "to understand and respond to the perceptions and positions of the citizens, [and instead to seek] to maximize their own autonomy and influence citizens' perceptions and understandings of what the most important issues are."<sup>35</sup> Shifts in public opinion and the sheer complexity of problems also can help create an environment that allows elected leaders "to divert attention from or manipulate public sentiment about public issues."<sup>36</sup>

Availability of resources is a key factor as well. Economic upturns and/or borrowing (mostly external) can allow government to meet public demands for services and benefits. But this is a dangerous practice that can lead to high budget deficits and sovereign debts that can be deleterious to the long-term future of the country. Responsive governments are those that govern "responsibly" and not "responsively," eschew populist temptations, set priorities, and not avoid making difficult choices.<sup>37</sup> Put differently, effective and prudent governments must be able to set priorities and long-term goals, and protect citizens against their own impulses. As Diamond and Morlino forcefully assert, "one of the most important aspects of responsiveness in a democracy is to infer from the cacophony of policy commitments, election results, and interest group demands precisely what the "electorate's priorities are." And they add: "inevitably some groups will be disappointed,"

as even in the most affluent countries government cannot to meet the myriad of demands of the various "constituencies for services, benefits, and other program expenditures."<sup>38</sup> Stubborn problems as unemployment, stagnant wages, and terrorism test government abilities to find satisfactory solution giving rise to "discontent, dissatisfaction, fear of poverty, and a general democratic malaise, [which in turn] contribute to a delegitimization of democratic systems and encourage populism."<sup>39</sup>

Considerations beyond the nation-state represent another set of variables that can affect responsiveness. Membership in economic integration communities or security organizations can embolden or depress the development of democratic governance. The European Union (EU), for example, sets liberal democracy as one of the requirements for membership. The Soviet dominated eastern bloc, by contrast, used force to prevent the emergence of liberal democracy in satellite states. In addition, the increasing and deepening pace of globalization and the growing influence of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is limiting the capacity of states to control national economies, and impose constrains on the ability of government to set priorities. Under pressure to become more competitive governments are forced to cut spending on social programs and services, pass more restrictive labor laws, and even reduce wages and benefits.

Finally, responsiveness is not, and cannot be, divorced from the social and cultural milieu. A strong and vibrant civil society, for instance, can help limit the excesses of the state and the market by acting as a third sector, generate alternatives, serves economic, informational, and leadership recruitment purposes, and create linkages between society and the political system. Deficient associational life, by contrast, is characterized by: low group autonomy, weak institutionalization, dearth of internal democracy, scant levels of pluralism and feeble multivariate citizen participation. As such, feeble civil society is deprived of the wherewithal to act as a bulwark against the power of the state and the market.<sup>40</sup> Beetham et al emphasize "the vigor of associational life [as] an important condition for securing the responsiveness of government policy, and ensuring that the delivery of public services meets the needs of the population, especially at the local level."<sup>41</sup> If civil society provides the participatory ethos, the vehicle and the network, culture furnishes people the skills needed to adapt to their surroundings, provides the norms, values, expectations, attitudes, and boundaries, and affects perceptions of reality. Culture plays such a pivotal role that the Beetham group goes as far as to remark that "only those who know a country's culture, traditions and aspirations are people qualified to assess its democracy."<sup>42</sup> In a nutshell, then, assessing responsiveness is "a daunting task" due to its elusive nature, complexity, and "normative and theoretical disputes." As a result, "the [relative] dearth of large comparative studies focusing on democratic responsiveness is no accident."<sup>43</sup>

## Facts and Figures

As mentioned earlier, responsiveness is the capacity of government, in consultation with the governed, to make and implement policies and programs that are congruent with public expectations and demands. Besides pursuing policies that are anchored on citizen preferences, policies must involve services, allocation of material benefits to society, as well as symbolic goods that generate and reinforce the loyalty of the governed toward the authorities. Among others, these encompass societal security and individual protection, resolution of citizen disputes, timely and fair distribution of justice, and health benefits and retirement pensions. All of these presuppose citizens' success in communicating desires and expectations, government institutions,'—especially political parties—ability to identify and articulate appropriate choices, and government capacity to make and implement relevant policies as well as secure the financial wherewithal to support and sustain such policies and programs. Failure to provide sustained financial support for policies--particularly those already in effects--can have deleterious consequences on citizen attitudes and perceptions with respect to government responsiveness. A selective and cursory examination of the record in core areas of governance in Greece since 1974 would be essential. It should be stressed that the discussion in this section is merely designed to highlight some representative, illustrative examples of policies pursued, and not present a comprehensive examination of total government activity.

The veteran conservative leader Constantine Karamanlis was invited from a self-imposed exile in Paris to head a national unity government to succeed the discredited junta. Despite the on-going Cyprus crisis and tenuous hold on power, the new civilian government lost no time to re-establish democratic governance and moved decisively toward that goal. Shortly after assuming the reins of power, scrapped the colonels' relatively authoritarian constitution and brought back on a provisional basis the 1952 fundamental law till a new document was put in place. Along with that, the new authorities ended press censorship and other restrictions on civil liberties, released all political prisoners, and legalized the hitherto banned Greek Communist Party (KKE).<sup>44</sup>

An array of political parties representing the entire ideological gamut of the political spectrum—new and old--began operating vociferously and free and fair legislative elections were held in November 1974, giving Karamanlis and his newly-named party, New Democracy (ND), a resounding 54.39% of the vote and 220 seats in the 300-member parliament (MPs). A few weeks later a referendum was held on whether to bring back the monarchy that had been abolished by the colonels (1973) in a highly questionable referendum. Viewing King Constantine as morally responsible for the dreaded dictatorship, an overwhelming majority (69.1%) of the Greek people opted



against the monarchy. Only in two of the country's 54 prefectures the vote favored reinstatement. The divisive issue that bedeviled the country for decades was finally put to rest.

The new political framework was completed with the promulgation of a new and thoroughly democratic constitution in June 1975, which establishes a parliamentary republic. Although opposition parties boycotted the vote largely over what it considered the excessive powers accorded to the president of the republic, the draft was approved by 208 MPs. The constitution can be amended by a supermajority (3/5) in the nation's legislative chamber expressed twice in two separate votes taken at least one month apart.<sup>45</sup> It should be stated articles dealing with the form of government and protection of human rights and freedoms are "unalterable." The constitutional/legal set up was validated, and consolidated by the seamless transfer of power in 1981 to the left-of-center *Panellinio Socialistiko Kinima* (PASOK) of Andreas Papandreou, and further confirmed on numerous occasions since.

But the new regime had to balance pressing security concerns and assuage popular anger. Washington's open tolerance, if not outright support, of the military dictatorship had stimulated strong anti-American currents, especially among the urban, younger, more educated and liberal segments of the Greek society.<sup>46</sup> These attitudes were further aggravated by what was perceived as American and NATO refusal to prevent the Turkish invasion and occupation of Cyprus. Unable or unwilling to do much besides diplomatic pressure, the staunchly pro-Western Karamanlis was forced to withdraw Greece from the military command of the alliance. The largely symbolic move was designed to mollify popular unhappiness, even though it made little sense from a national security standpoint. About six years later, Greece returned to NATO, despite the fact that the situation in Cyprus remained unchanged. Papandreou severely criticized the government and sought to focus allied attention of Greece's problems vis-à-vis its fellow Turkish NATO ally. Although during the campaign he had some tough words against the US and NATO and appeared to insinuate that he would pull Greece out of the alliance, besides rhetoric and a few cosmetic changes he did little to disturb Greece's membership in the North Atlantic Community when he came power in 1981. He also signed a US bases agreement with Washington.<sup>47</sup>

Aside from the perennial Cyprus problem, relations with neighboring Turkey became more complicated as issues over the delineation of the continental shelf and territorial waters, the status of the Aegean islands, and control over air space--to mention only a few--were added to the mix. The core issue in the uneasy relations is the status of the Aegean islands. From the 1970s onward, Ankara has been disputing Greek sovereignty over several of these islands on the grounds that Turkey consented to the Treaty of

Lausanne (1923) that settled their status because it was too weak to resist. Successive Greek government took steps to fortify and nation's defense capabilities and sought dialogue and diplomatic solutions, including resort to the International Court of Justice. In order to shore-up domestic support and allay public concerns, Greek governments at times ramped up the nationalistic rhetoric, but in general acted prudently and with restraint not to provoke escalation of the conflict with the neighbor to the east.<sup>48</sup>

Furthermore, the civilian authorities sought to counterbalance dependence on the US and the North Atlantic Community, and to further anchor democracy and the country's economy, by integrating Greece into the European Economic Community (EEC), or European Union (EU) as it is known today. The Karamanlis government revived the 1961 association agreement with the then EU frozen during the dictatorship and managed to secure accession to the community as a full-fledged member in 1981, despite opposition by the up-and-coming PASOK and the doctrinaire pro-Moscow KKE. Papandreou had attacked the then EU as an elitist club inseparably connected to American dominated paternalistic capitalism. But once in power, he steadily abandoned this rhetoric and renegotiated the treaty of accession obtaining rather favorable economic concessions from the community. He broadened and strengthened relations with Third World countries, including the Arab World and far-flung Argentina, Mexico, and India. His successor, Kostas Simitis, enhanced and deepened Greece's ties to the EU, securing in 2002 admission to the coveted Eurozone. For the first time in its history, the country became an integral component of one of the strongest economies and currencies in the world.

The violent dissolution of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s was another significant challenge facing Greece. One of the constituent republics--the Socialist Republic of Macedonia--declared its independence under the name Macedonia and adopted as its national symbols some of the emblems associated with ancient Macedonia.<sup>49</sup> The new entity falsely claimed that its citizens were the descendants of the ancients and Alexander the Great their national hero. The Greek response was visceral, indignant, and uncompromising, and encompassed nearly the entire political spectrum, save the KKE, which has had a controversial history apropos the Macedonia issue dating well before the Greek Civil War (1946-1949).<sup>50</sup> It differentiated its position from the official line without providing a clear alternative, but eventually came out in favor of a composite, geographic based designation.

Athens viewed Skopje's actions and rhetoric as provocative and a blatant attempt to counterfeit thousand years of history that amounted to outright identity forgery. As far as Athens was concerned, ancient Macedonia was an integral part of the ancient Greek world and the citizens of the new state were South Slavs who arrived in the area centuries

later and ergo had no right to claim Macedonian identity or statehood that contained the word Macedonia, even in a composite form.<sup>51</sup> The Greek public, especially in the northern regions of the country, known as Macedonia, reacted in fury holding colossal demonstrations and protests urging the authorities to stand firm. Symbolism dwarfed every other possible consideration and realism. Despite some efforts--including United Nations mediation--to find a solution, the issue remained dormant for nearly three decades, when in 2018 the SYRIZA (*Synagermos Rizospastikis Aristeras*) left-of-center government signed the Prespa Agreement in which the two sides settled on the geographic appellation name: Republic of North Macedonia as *erga omnes* (toward all, or all uses).<sup>52</sup> To its credit, the SYRIZA government signed the agreement notwithstanding the less intense but still considerable opposition of Greek public opinion as well as the Hellenic diaspora. Washington exerted great efforts to resolve the dispute, driven primarily by its desire for Skopje to become a member of NATO and curtail Russian influence in the Balkans. In the process American diplomacy placed considerable pressure on Athens to accommodate Skopje. Following the Prespa accord, the Republic of North Macedonia was admitted to NATO, even though Moscow expressed strong opposition.<sup>53</sup>

The domain of public services is another area worth looking at. To catch up with its community partners and in preparation for the 2004 Summer Olympics, and with EU help, Greece made impressive developments in infrastructure, especially in the 1980s and 1990s. These include the new Athens airport, an underground metro, the Rio-Antirio Bridge (a project conceived in the 1870s but never got off the ground), ring roads around the capital as well as Thessaloniki, and an extensive highway network. Today, the country sports an extensive motorway system in Southeastern Europe and one of the most advanced in Europe.

In addition, a national health insurance system (ESY) was established in 1983, which, despite its many shortcomings, provides citizens (as well as people residing in Greece) with nearly free and fairly good quality medical care. In the 2021 Social Progress Index (SPI), Greece occupies the 31st spot, out of 168 countries included in the report; the US is in 24<sup>th</sup> place.<sup>54</sup> With respect to the Health and Wellness indicator, included in the same report, the country scores 83.74 (0-100 scale, the higher the better), which is lower than highest-ranking Japan (92.10), but higher than the US's (74.33). At the bottom of the list (21.03) is Papua New Guinea. On Nutrition and Basic Medical Care, Greece (98.53) compares very favorably to leading performers like Sweden (99.90), Germany (98.70), France (98.58), and slightly better than the US (97.51). The lowest-ranking Central African Republic scores 36.42.<sup>55</sup> As far as life expectancy at birth is concerned, with a score of 82.80, in 2022 Greece shares with New Zealand the 19<sup>th</sup> spot--higher than highly advanced counties like Austria, Germany, UK, Netherlands, and Denmark; the USA is in 46<sup>th</sup> place.

Furthermore, efforts were made to reform and modernize higher education. Access to nearly free tertiary education became more available; the number of university and technological/vocational education facilities more than doubled since 1974. Matriculation of university students jumped from 13.4% in 1971-72 to 24.5% in 1988-89. More impressive was the number of students in higher technical education, which from 1974 to 1989 saw an almost six-fold increase. In SPI's Access to Advanced Education Greece (82.28) rubs shoulders with top performers as the US (89.60), Norway (85.92), (Germany (84.78), and Japan (82.41), and even surpasses France (79.44). At the tail end of the pack are Niger (19.70) and South Sudan (20.17).<sup>56</sup> In the area of Access to Information, the record is a bit less impressive, but respectable. Information is readily available. The number of television channels, both public and private, has proliferated: from two public stations in the mid-1970s (no private) to four public and seven private channels, not to mention an array of sports and foreign language broadcasts in the early 2020s. More than 85% of Greeks had inter-net access in 2022. According to the 2021 SPI data, Greece scored 82.44 in this area—a rate that is well below the top performers: South Korea (98.05), UK (96.60), and US (94.01), but not too far behind more technologically advanced and affluent EU partners like Germany (89.33) or France (87.30).<sup>57</sup>

Perhaps no area saw more gains than the social arena. In 1982, the Greek parliament recognized the national resistance against the Nazis occupiers in WWII. This opened the door to thousands of the resistance participants, who as losers of the civil war had been deprived of their Greek citizenship and had become political refugees in Eastern bloc countries, to regain their citizenship and repatriate. The Papandreou government engaged in complex negotiation with the host countries so that the returnees can receive retirement pensions.<sup>58</sup> The last, and largely symbolic act, took place in 1989 when the ND-KKE "Cooperation Government" acted to "remove the consequences" of the civil fratricide and to destroy nearly all the related records. After four decades the egregious legacies of the civil war had been put to rest.

Meanwhile, the Papandreou government moved decisively to modernize the anachronistic legal framework governing marriage, legalized civil matrimony, and took a number of steps to introduce and enhance gender equality. The 1983 family code gave women legal equality within the family, decriminalized adultery, abolished the dowry practice, and recognized equal status to children born out of wedlock.<sup>59</sup> Steps were also taken to improve the life and working conditions of labor. For example, the Karamanlis government reduced the work week to 40 hours (from 48), required employers to give workers regular vacation time with pay, and mandated improvement of safety conditions in the workplace. Owing to these steps, between 1970- 1990, the rate of worker accidents decreased by 28%, while the number of those receiving social insurance benefits doubled.<sup>60</sup> Employees were guaranteed vacation with pay and the right of employers to

fire unneeded workers was considerably restricted.<sup>61</sup> The right to strike was strengthened and the number of strikes increased dramatically, with industrial workers and farmers holding the lead. In general, successor government followed similar patterns, till the advent of the devastating sovereign debt crisis hit the country in 2009-2010.

Nothing did more to elevate national pride than the holding of the XXVIII Summer Olympic Games in Athens in 2004. Despite a slow start, the Games created an incentive and the means (although much of it in the form of loans) to spruce up Athens and built an infrastructure and facilities to hold the event. Athens never looked cleaner, better organized, and more welcoming. The spirit of volunteerism was at the apogee, and national unity, pride, and a sense of accomplishment at its highest.<sup>62</sup> These sentiments were in full display when the country's youthful and newly elected Prime Minister, Kostas Karamanlis--nephew of the deceased long-time conservative leader Constantine Karamanlis--declared at the closing ceremony that with "the Olympics coming home, we've shown the world the great things Greeks can do"—a feeling echoed by the president of the International Olympic Committee finale: "these have been unforgettable dream Games." It is a pity that many of the impressive and costly installations built for the Games have not been utilized and are left to decay.

These notable achievements were made possible in large measure by a relatively strong economic performance. For example, in the 1974-2008 period the country's per capita gross domestic product (GDP)—in 2014 US Dollars adjusted to 2011 purchasing power parity (PPP) weights—more than doubled: from \$16,000 to \$36,000.<sup>63</sup> Greece always has been a private enterprise economy with a very strong, almost dominant, statist component. It was like this before the junta and remains so to the present day, despite the few changes in the last two-three decades.<sup>64</sup> The new government that assumed power in 1974 inherited an economy in trouble. The junta's claim of good economic stewardship had evaporated due to a number of domestic and international reasons, accentuated by the severe world economic slowdown caused by the oil crisis that began in 1973 when OPEC, led by Saudi Arabia, proclaimed an oil embargo against countries that supported Israel in the Yom Kippur War. The Greek economy experienced a significant slowdown and the rate of inflation in 1973 and 1974 averaged 15.28%. There is nearly universal agreement among analysts that this hastened the dictatorship's demise, as the regime no longer could tout the handling of the nation's economy as one of its cardinal achievements.<sup>65</sup>

For the first decade and a half, successive center-right and center-left democratic governments that followed pursued what can be characterized as statist and labor friendly economic policies. Heavy state involvement in Greece's economy is not a new phenomenon, even during the 1950s when the conservatives ruled the country, but in the

post-dictatorship years the already heavily statist economy became even more statist.<sup>66</sup> Rooted in Orthodox emanating cultural values, the Greek society has had an ambivalent attitude toward entrepreneurship and wealth accumulation.<sup>67</sup> These sentiments became more pronounced during the dictatorship, as large segments came to believe that Greek economic elites gained from and supported the regime.<sup>68</sup> In this climate, the Karamanlis governments proceeded to take over or acquire substantial portion of privately owned enterprises in the banking, aviation, transportation, shipbuilding and other sectors. Among those include the Andreadis Group conglomerate of companies and banks, as well as the single air carrier, Olympic Airways. The Papandreou years saw more enlargement and deepening of state involvement in the economy as more enterprises became unprofitable and appeared on the verge of collapse. The largest of these became known as DEKO (Dimosies Epixeiriseis Koinis Ofeleias), and in time proved a significant drain in the country's economy.

A similar set of considerations and added pressure from the reinvigorated organized labor movement prompted considerable increases in wages, salaries, and pensions. It is important to note that before 1974, industrial wages in Greece were considerably lower than other EU countries. The Karamanlis government responded by increasing the real wages of industrial workers, which went up by 11% in the space of five years. Despite this, in 1980 of cost of labor production in Greece was 12.9% of the gross industrial output—much lower than in other Mediterranean economies: Spain 19.1%, Portugal 18.4%, and Italy 14.7%.<sup>69</sup> The Papandreou cabinets were by far more generous, granting large increases in wages, salaries, and pensions, so much so that by the end of 1982 (1974-1982) hourly wages went up nearly 65%. Additional pro-labor policies included a substantial increase in the number of people employed by the government. In the 1975 to 1985 decade, the growth in the government workforce averaged 3.5% annually, roughly in equal proportions between the center-right and center-left administrations. Meanwhile, pensions saw a large increase and farmers were included in the retirement system. The number of pensioners increased from 13.9% of the population in 1981 to 18.7% in 1989.<sup>70</sup>

While welcome and needed, these measures pushed up government expenditures, without a corresponding increase in revenue. Public expenditures went up substantially in the 1970s and saw an even larger increase in the 1980s. In the first half of the 1980s, government spending increased from 25.3% of the GDP to 31.6% in 1985. Instead of helping, public corporations (DEKOs) added to the increase in government expenditures. The total DEKO deficit jumped from 2.7% of the GDP in 1980 to 5.5% in 1985. Labor strikes and farmer protests, low productivity, endless bureaucratic hurdles, and weak foreign investment inevitably had a negative impact on the country's economy. While in the 1970s the country experienced an average GDP growth of about 3.6%, the 1980s and early to

mid-1990s saw significant economic deterioration. Another economic slowdown in the developed world made things worse. As a result, from 1980-1990 the Greek economy grew annually by only 1.3% in the 1980s decade and a mere 0.5% from 1990 to 1993. Government deficit increased from 34.5% of the GDP in the mid-1970s to 68.9% in 1989. Government borrowing followed a similar trajectory: from 9,1% in 1981 to 14.4 in 1989. Inflation shot up and remained high as well, averaging about 18% in the 1973 -1994 period.<sup>71</sup>It dropped to single digits in 1995.<sup>72</sup> By the end of the 1990s the Greek economy was in trouble suffering from slow growth, anemic investment, low productivity, high deficits, dependency on state subsidies, and high inflation.

Following a lengthy political stalemate, ND assumed the reins of power in 1990 under the former centrist Constantine Mitsotakis. Despite a paper-thin majority in parliament, the government imposed an unpopular austerity program and made an ambitious effort to privatize and deregulate the economy, but with little success. Facing strong opposition by organized labor the internally divided, and with the highly charged Macedonian issue dominating the political scene, the conservative interlude that lasted till 1993 had relatively limited success.<sup>73</sup>PASOK came back in 1993, but the ailing Papandreou was soon replaced by the less charismatic, more technocratic, but reform minded Kostas Simitis, who went on to win two additional four-year terms. His stewardship lasted till March 2004.

Rising unemployment and control of labor organizations by his party enabled Simitis to blunt opposition to his reform agenda that stymied Mitsotakis', though the road ahead was less than even or straightforward. There were successes but notable frustrations as well, including failure to mend the costly and nearly bankrupt social security system due to popular opposition and privatize the deficit-drowned airline. Perhaps the most glaring failure was inability to fight corruption, something that eluded his predecessors and successors alike.<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, in his more than eight-year tenure Simitis enacted a fairly ambitious reform program. Segments of the economy, including telecommunications, were privatized, a good number of redundant public organizations were closed, and some measures were undertaken to streamline the horrendous bureaucratic process. In addition, significant steps were taken to promote competition and to create a more favorable entrepreneurship and employment environment. Finally, in early 2002 Greece became a full-fledged member of the Eurozone (EZ).<sup>75</sup>

These reforms, along with aid packages from the EU and access to low international interest rates, produced encouraging results. In the 1995 to 2000 period, Greece's GDP grew by an average of 3.1%, making the country one of the fastest-growing economies in the EU. Equally important, the rate of inflation dropped in 2000 to 3.0%--a rate slightly higher than the average EU.<sup>76</sup> The building of the infrastructure in preparation for the

Athens Olympics brought additional funds and galvanized national unity. Although unemployment remained relatively high, wages and pensions went up reasonably and an air of optimism seemed to prevail in the Greek society. Even some of the generally problematic DEKOs showed some improvement, especially those in the areas of utilities (electricity and water), ground transportation, and communications. David Close cites a *Eurobarometer* survey in which the Greeks were much more satisfied with public transportation, water supply, post office, and telephone services than citizens of other EU countries. But he adds a caveat: this may be due to the Greeks could have lower expectations than those of other Europeans.<sup>77</sup> Despite these improvements, corruption and many structural problems remained largely untouched. Reform seems to have lost much steam in the last years of Simitis' tenure.

In the March 2004 elections, the voters sought change and handed power to ND led by Kostas Karamanlis. Although he ran on a platform pledging far-reaching changes, during his five-years in office there was little reform activity.<sup>78</sup> There appeared no urgency to introduce changes as the economy seemed to maintain momentum and continued to grow at a fairly good clip (between 4.3-4.5%). At about 3.3%, inflation, too, was in acceptable levels. Though historically high, unemployment stood fairly constant, below 10%. However, there were ominous signs of trouble in the horizon and some early warnings by European partners as well as the governor of the Bank of Greece, which seem to have gone unheeded. Revenue took a downward turn while government spending increased considerably. For instance, the government budget deficit grew from 5% of the GDP in 1999 to 15% in 2009. To make up the shortfall, the government took advantage of low interest rates and borrowed freely to close the gap. As a result, Greece's debt-to-GDP ratio increased dramatically from 127% in 2000 to 179% in 2009. At Eurogroup meetings Greece was cautioned that the size of the debt ratio and the government debt in relation to the GDP were too high. The government made vague promises and initially sought to assure the public that the country's economy was well insulated and would not be impacted by the severe world economic recession that hit in 2007. The loyal opposition PASOK, led by the late Andreas Papandreou's son George, was not exactly all ears to the warnings either.

Privately the prime minister and his colleagues saw the storm coming and proclaimed early elections for October 4, 2009—less than two years since ND had its mandate renewed—on the grounds the unprecedented world economic crisis required a fresh mandate to allow the government to take drastic steps to protect the country. Looking for a way out, Karamanlis took the high road during the campaign saying that if reelected he would impose an austerity program, which would include salary and pensions reductions, cuts in other programs, and a government hiring freeze for at least two years. Papandreou's central campaign slogan was that there is no need for cuts, as



there can be enough money, all needed is to collect the revenue by declaring war on corruption and tax evasion. In addition, he promised other steps that would reform the electoral system and fight inertia, opaqueness and malfeasance in the country's administrative apparatus, which, among other things, would require all records to be posted on an electronic, on-line system. Papandreou's slogan was edited out and reduced to: *there is plenty of money*. In no time, it became a stigma and the butt of jokes that haunts him ever since.

Receiving nearly 44% of the vote, Papandreou and his PASOK won a pyrrhic victory as the worsening financial crisis hit them like a bombshell when it was revealed that the prior government had concealed the statistics that showed the depth of the sovereign debt problem as soon as they assumed office. The debt rose rapidly, interest rates hit the ceiling, the ability to borrow evaporated, and the government was close to the point that could not meet its financial obligations. Having few options, Papandreou was forced to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)—known as *Mnimonio*--with the *Troika*: IMF, the European Central Bank (ECU), and the EU. In exchange for an 80 plus billion Euro loan, the Greek government agreed to undertake drastic steps to bring its financial house in order and reform the economy.<sup>79</sup> Among others, these included unpopular, draconian cuts in pensions and salaries. As a consequence, the country's economy contracted and caused a bigger recession than anticipated. In little more than two years, Greece lost "almost 14.1% of the real GDP and the unemployment rate skyrocketed from 8.4% on an annual basis at the end of 2007 to 17.9% at the end of 2011."<sup>80</sup>The data indicates that 2010 reached the zenith of the crisis as the GDP contracted by 10.1%. In the space of 6-7 years, wages, salaries, pensions, and other social benefits dropped dramatically, perhaps by as much as 40%. According to EUROSTAT, between 2000 and 2016 the real disposable income of Greek households fell by 9% while tea verge EU increased by 17.1%.

As might be expected, Papandreou's position became untenable and was forced to resign two years after taking office. The short-term government supported by the majority of political forces in parliament--led by a non-politician—was forced to sign a second memorandum with the Troika, which added another 164.5 billion Euros to the previous amount. The new adjustment program was predicated on very rosy assumptions: that the Greek economy would grow "past 2014 (real GDP target for 2014 at 2.5%) plus the optimistic premise that the debt-to-GDP ratio would decline to 120% by 2020."<sup>81</sup> Despite the generally gloomy environment, the country's economy began to show some signs of recovery. After six years of decline the GDP grew by .5% in 2014, unemployment started going down, privatization gained some speed, a balanced budget was submitted to parliament in November 2014, and the ND-PASOK coalition government was able to have some limited access to financial markets.

The impact of the crisis on Greece's party system, however, was nothing short of seismic. Public opinion was divided between those who saw the memoranda as a necessary evil and those who viewed them as completely unacceptable. Positions often cut across ideological lines. In general, the bulk of the center-left to center-right of the political spectrum and parts of the soft left—pro EU forces—formed the nucleus of the former, while the harder left, including the frozen in time KKE, and portions of the extreme right wanted out without providing a clear alternative, other than the vague promise to return to the old national currency, the drachma. The two major parties (ND and PASOK) were blamed for the economic morass and lost considerable public support. The once mighty PASOK saw a precipitous, devastating decline: from 43.92% in 2009 its share of the vote dropped to a mere 4.68% in 2015. ND's losses were a bit more manageable: from 45.36% in 2004 to 18.85% in 2012. Much of PASOK's support shifted to a hitherto marginal, motley left-of-center formation, SYRIZA (Synaspismos Rizospastikis Aristeras-Proodeftiki Symmahia), led by the neophyte but telegenic Alexis Tsipras. The more conservative ND supporters went to ANEL (Anexartitoi Ellines—Independent Greeks) who took an anti-memorandum position, and fewer to LA.OS (Laikos Orthodoxos Synagermos—Popular Orthodox Rally). Others—a minority consisting mainly of residual fans of the dictatorship—opted for the pro-Nazi Golden Dawn (Chrisi Avgi). While in time ND gained back much of its support, reaching 39.85% in 2019, PASOK made only modest gains topping 8.1% of the vote. This trend held, and even increased, in the recent (2023) elections.

The slow but steady improvement in the economy that began in 2012 was temporarily interrupted in 2015-2016 when the parliament failed to elect a head of state thus forcing early elections. Promising an immediate termination of the unpopular memoranda with one stroke and to restore all wage, pension and other cuts, SYRIZA won by 35.46% in the January 2015 elections and formed a coalition with the right-wing ANEL who shared the same anti-memoranda position. Captive of his rhetoric and lacking experience, the young leader and his loquacious finance minister engaged in acrimonious back and forth with the troika, especially the Eurogroup, which brought Greece close to Grexit and possible bankruptcy, though he never mentioned, at least explicitly, leaving neither the EC nor the Eurozone.<sup>82</sup>

Having no options, Tsipras made a complete about face and in August 2015 signed a third memorandum every bit as stringent, if not more, than the previous two he had anathematized.<sup>83</sup> In the summer of 2015 the SYRIZA-led government staged a referendum to demonstrate to the Troika that the majority of the Greek people opposed its new austerity program. Accordingly, Tsipras called upon the Greek people "to say a big 'NO' to ultimatums, 'NO' to [Troika'] blackmail." The voters heeded his advice and 61.30% voted against the Troika's demands for a new austerity memorandum. Still, a week later the

Greek Premier capitulated and proceeded to sign the third MoU. Notwithstanding Tsipras' about face, his party emerged victorious in the September 2015 elections the premier was forced to hold when a segment of SYRIZA bolted in protest over his compromise.

In the aftermath of all this, things settled down gradually, the economy started growing again, albeit at a slow pace. The GDP grew by 1.1% in 2017 and 2018 and 1.7% in 2019. The renewed conservative ND came back to power in 2019 under Kyriakos Mitsotakis, son of the late Premier Constantine Mitsotakis, and the economy, COVID related emergencies notwithstanding, continued to show progress: 1.2% average annual growth between 2019 and 2022; the rate of unemployment averaged about 12.5% in 2022. Despite all the turmoil, the ups-and-the-downs in the last dozen or so years, there were some bright spots as well. Inequality as measured by the Gini Index is one of them. In 2022, for instance, Greece ranked 152 out of 169 countries included in the report, which compares favorably with countries like Italy 150, Spain 153, and Germany 137, but much better than the US, which ranked 71. The Czech Republic has the lowest inequality, while South Africa and Namibia are at the bottom.<sup>84</sup> As far as GDP Per Capita-Data Quality Ranking is concerned Greece was ranked in 2022 by the *World Global Economic Wealth* as the 31st in the world and 20th in Europe most affluent country.<sup>85</sup>

### **Assessing the Responsiveness Chain**

The preceding examination of government activity in the post-dictatorship period, though abridged, provides ample evidence that Greek democratic governance, by and large, has been responsive to the needs and desires of the Greek population. The record is fairly even across the four integral elements of responsiveness: policies to be at the heart of public interests, government services, material benefits to society, and symbolic goods. In the general area of policies reflecting public interests, Greek democracy has established a liberal, stable, and well consolidated legal structure that guarantees civil liberties and rights, ended the painful legacies of the civil war, expanded educational opportunities, improved the rights and status of women, and liberalized and modernized the anachronistic family legal framework. Though the weakest of the four due to a dysfunctional bureaucracy, the realm of social services also has had some successes. The building of an extensive road system, the Athens metro, a new international airport, the national health system (despite its many problems), and expansion and improvement in communications--with some private sector involvement--can be cited as good examples in this area. Utilities, telephone, water, and even sanitation services have seen adequate improvement as well. Material elements are one the strongest elements. Substantial wage,

salary, and pension increases--along with paid vacation, shorter work hours and stronger collective bargaining--are among the many material and life-improvement benefits Greeks received, often beyond what the economy could afford. Finally, managing to stage the Olympics in Athens as well as intransigence with respect to the Macedonian issue--despite the better judgment of successive cabinets regarding the latter--are clear manifestations of symbolic goods. Even the temporary withdrawal from the military wing of NATO in 1974 fits the symbolic category.

It is imperative to point out that the nation's major political parties, especially those entrusted with the responsibility of governance, showed considerable sensitivity and acumen identifying and prioritizing the voters' needs and expectations, as well as bringing many of them to the third in the chain of linkages: policy making. The Greek public accepted these benefits with delight and was glad to render strong and consistent endorsement to the two leading parties. In a multi-party system, the two parties that governed the country from 1974 till the sovereign debt crisis was full blown--ND and PASOK--managed to receive 80% or more of the votes cast combined, reaching the all-time high of 86.87% in 1989. This dropped to an all-time low (56.55%) at the height of the crisis in 2012.

Partisan rhetoric aside, as time wore on the two parties converged on most major policy areas. The various parties representing the extreme right never exceeded 7% of the vote, and, with the minor exception of ANEL,<sup>86</sup> none of them survived more than two electoral contests. Besides bravado in foreign policy and occasional anti-communist rhetoric on the one hand, and civil war-like discourse on the other, they seem to offer no clearly discernable vision. Similarly, various leftist formations, including the KKE, never got more than 13.19% electoral support. The KKE still longs for the lost paradise of the dictatorship of the proletariat, while the softer left is pro-European and favors a more social-democratic orientation. In addition, with only one exception, in the pre-crisis period the two governing parties were given two or more consecutive terms, and never left office due to failure to maintain parliamentary confidence. The only exception took place in 1993, when ND split and Mitsotakis was forced to call early elections. Anecdotal evidence, including life-long personal observations, corroborate the views and choices of the Greek voters expressed in the ballot box. Of course, one can argue that voters are not always informed and their views change, but these are legitimate theoretical concerns that are as old as democracy itself.

All these do not mean that post-1974 governments have tackled and/or solved all problems, and there are notable omissions or failures to point to. The list can include neglect to deal with pervasive corruption, inability and/or willingness to make the country's administrative apparatus more efficient and more responsive, failure to stem

rising crime, and improve economic productivity and competitiveness, to mention only some. Financial difficulties, international constraints, and even cultural imperatives do not excuse neglect or failure in these and other areas. But as the preceding theoretical discussion suggests, even the most advanced and sophisticated democracies cannot be expected to perform well in every dimension, and all the time.

The advent of the financial crisis, and its aftermath, brought about significant changes in the party configuration, as well as the nature of the political discourse. The once marginal SYRIZA replaced PASOK as one of the two major parties, and the first time in recent history the country experienced coalition government that lasted more than a few months. Stunned and upset by the impact of the crisis, Greek voters became more circumspect and less willing to render their support to the governing parties. The level of the combined vote for the two major parties—ND and SYRIZA—began to climb again, but has yet to reach 75%, which is well below pre-crisis levels. In addition, despite seeming ideological differences, parties differ little on most policy areas, and instead engage in mundane and often substantive-lacking debates. Even on the hot Macedonian issue, the opposition ND criticized the *Prespa Agreement* on the grounds that recognized the Macedonian language and ethnicity and voted against it, but the party leader firmly stated if parliament approved the treaty his party would consider the issue closed.

The restrictions of the three memoranda, as well as the fact that on many areas of policy EU law takes precedence over national law,<sup>87</sup> have left very little room for Greek parties to voice radically different visions or even policies; and there are no big, key issues on the horizon at the moment pressing for attention.<sup>88</sup>As such, debates center on largely routine matters and disagreements without disagreeing have become the dominant modus operandi in today's Greek parliament as well as the news media. It was also apparent in the recent parliamentary elections (May 21, 2023 and June 25, 2023) where the challenger, SYRIZA, failed to articulate a vision/program by offering an appealing and credible alternative to Mitsotakis' ND.

Finally, the discussion on government activity in post-dictatorship Greece also demonstrates that factors beyond the nation-state can affect the declarations, programs, and policies pursued by political parties and governments. The Prespa Agreement Greece signed with neighboring Republic of Northern Macedonia and the about face made by the Tsipras government following the August 2015 referendum exemplify the constraining, decisive influence external factors can have. George Papandreou's capitulation to pressure by the Troika to abort plans to hold a referendum he had announced in late October 2011 on the proposed austerity program is another illustrative example. It set in motion forces that precipitated the downfall of the PASOK government and Papandreou's own political marginalization.

## Responsibly or Responsively?

Based on the record of the post-1974 presented earlier and in view of the sovereign debt crisis that hit the country in 2009-2010, what conclusions can be reached about the quality of responsiveness of Greek democracy? A good place to begin would be to distinguish between governing responsibly and responsively. Governing responsibly means to have good judgment and the ability to act correctly and make decisions on your own. Responsibly involves accountability and being responsible for one's own actions and consequences. Saying no when it is necessary is just as important as saying yes. In contrast, acting responsively denotes responding efficiently and effectively to peoples' needs, which entails to anchor policies, strategies, programs, activities, and resources, taking into account peoples' expectations without necessarily paying particularly careful attention to future outcomes. Saying yes comes easier than saying no, even when it makes sense to do so. It is worth pointing out that the very sensitive nature of foreign policy does not fit as neatly in the responsive versus responsibly governance dichotomy. As observed earlier, the literature on the quality of democracy is very clear: one of the cardinal aspects of responsiveness is to infer from a cacophony of policy commitments, election results, and interest group demands precisely what the electorate's priorities are. Setting priorities and long-term goals and protecting citizens against their own impulses are indispensable ingredients to governing responsibly.

The preceding discussion makes clear that post-1974 democratic governments in Greece tended to act more responsively than responsibly. This was true with center-right as well as center-left cabinets. There was clear emphasis on dealing with problems and issues that can be dealt with by dispensing economic capital, i.e., pouring money. Higher wages and pensions as well as other benefits seemed to have gotten higher priority than methodical and careful attention to the consequences of such actions and policies. Equally pressing and important issues, such as reforming the state apparatus or combating corruption, require less economic but far more political capital. But political capital is a type of currency used to mobilize voters, achieve reform, or accomplish other goals. It can be banked, spent or misspent.

However, utilizing political capital does not always lead to easy or speedy outcomes. It can be used quickly and once spent is hard to replenish the stock. In democracies where political parties are there to win elections, spending economic capital is usually more beneficial than committing political capital. Reforming a bureaucracy or fighting corruption often require changing deeply entrenched cultural norms, attitudes, and practices, which is often difficult, long-term, and fraught with many uncertainties. As most old societies, Greece is less than amenable to change.<sup>89</sup> In other words, Greeks are in favor of painful reform, but only theoretically; practice is another matter. It is, ergo, no

accident that Greek governments talked about tackling such issues, but never really committed the political capital to make them reality. In post dictatorship Greece, governing responsibly carried the day over governing responsibly. As of this writing, it is yet not clear that the sovereign debt ordeal has resonated with the country's democratic policy making institutions, or the public.

With ND's term about to expire parliamentary elections were held in May-June 2023, and the party in power won re-election. At a time when the country needs a steady, technocratic management, the main opposition party, SYRIZA, sought to come back to power behaving responsibly, that is, making promises without much regard to long-term consequences.<sup>90</sup> Even though SYRIZA governed for four years, the party did not manage to transform itself from a protest entity to a regular/responsible political party prepared to assume power at any minute. By contrast, the party in power, ND, sought to extent its stay in office presenting a clearer, more realistic agenda that came closer to the tenets of acting responsibly. The Greek voters seem to have learned from the travails of the last 10-15 years and acted prudently choosing responsibly over responsibly. Defying public opinion poll predictions, ND scored a fairly clear victory while SYRIZA suffered a devastating defeat of such magnitude that is doubtful the party can be considered a viable alternative to ND. The Greek public did not punish the governing party for the February 28, 2023 disastrous train collision, as would be expected. Instead, the country's less than efficient and lethargic administrative apparatus was blamed for the deadly accident. This could well be a signal to the Mitsotakis government to move aggressively toward bureaucratic reform, something previous governments have consistently shied away.

SYRIZA's defeat, however, is not merely the result of a badly run campaign, but has much deeper philosophical, identity, and leadership roots that have left the erstwhile powerful center-left fragmented, leaderless, and unable to present the voters with the image of an organized and credible counterweight to the center-right. The center-left is in desperate need of a figure of the late Andreas Papandreou type with enough charisma, leadership qualities, and the gravitas to bring the various entities together and put forward a vision that would gain traction in the middle, working, and less fortunate segments of the Greek society. Despite his telegenic appeal, Tsipras does not possess these key qualities. He is damaged goods and cannot evade responsibility of SYRIZA's monumental defeat. For it is one thing for a political leader not to be able to fulfill campaign promises, and quite another to blatantly deceive voters as he did in 2015 when he asked them to reject the rescue plan proposed by the Troika and then turn around and signed it the next day. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to recover from such a faux pas. But the quality of democracy is best served when the citizens have more than one viable alternative to choose from. At the present time, post-crisis Greek democracy is deficient in this very vital aspect.

What the preceding analysis clearly shows, however, is that even though the financial malaise is far from over, liberal democracy in Greece has taken deep roots and is able to withstand trials, absorb severe shocks, show resilience, and bounce back. Crises often test character, resolve, and mettle. Despite the pain and tribulations associated with the sovereign debt disaster, the majority of the Greeks have, and in many respects continue to experience, they never gave up on it, even in the most trying moments. They blame politicians and have punished some of them, but have not turned their backs on democracy itself. Put differently, the contemporary Greeks appear to have internalized the adage attributed to Winston Churchill: "democracy is the worst form of government, except for all others." Despite its many failures and shortcomings, liberal democracy in Greece seems to have survived a baptism of fire in fairly good shape and is poised to celebrate its 50th anniversary in the not too-distant future.

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<sup>1</sup> Between 1974 and 1990 some 30 countries around the world transitioned from nondemocratic to democratic political systems. Samuel P. Huntington refers to this as "the third wave" in his book titled *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Twentieth Century* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

<sup>2</sup> For analyses regarding the politics of military withdrawal and democratization see Constantine P. Danopoulos, ed, *The Decline of Military Regimes—The Civilian Influence* (Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1988); and *Military Disengagement from Politics* (London: Routledge, 1988); *From Military to Civilian Rule* (London: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>3</sup> For analyses regarding the democratization of Marxist/Leninist regimes see: Constantine P. Danopoulos and Daniel Zirker, eds, *Civil-Military Relations in the Soviet and Yugoslav Successor States* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996); and *The Military in the Former Eastern Bloc* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> Larry Diamond and Leonardo Morlino, "The Quality of Democracy: An Overview," *Journal of Democracy* 15, October 2004, 20-31. An expanded version of the essay served the basis of the introduction to their compendium entitled *Assessing the Quality of Democracy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 1x-xliii. It is also included in Diamond's more recent volume, *In Search of Democracy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016). The quote is taken from p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Leonardo Morlino, *Changes for Democracy—Actors, Structures, Processes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 195.

<sup>6</sup> See my "Accountability and the Quality of Democracy in Greece," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 26, no 4 (2015), 110-131; "law Making, the Rule of Law, and the Quality of democracy in Greece," *Journal of Modern Hellenism* 31 (2015), 120-147; "Cultural Attitudes and Legal 'No-Man's Land' in Greece," *Political and Military Sociology: An Annual Review* 44 (2016), 3-24' "Civil Liberties and Rights and the Quality of Democracy in Greece," *Journal of Near East and Balkan Studies* 19, no. 4 (2017), 225-242; and "Participation, Competition, and the Quality of Democracy in Greece," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 28, no 2 (2017), 53-79.



<sup>7</sup> The Norwegian based V-Democracy Institute ([www.v-dem.net](http://www.v-dem.net)) began in 2017 the publication of an annual report of the state of democracy in the world. Among others, the yearly publication provides a Liberal Democracy Index. Between 174 to 179 countries are included, and are ranked from most to least democratic. In 2017-2022, Greece ranged from the 24<sup>th</sup> and 37<sup>th</sup> place. Scandinavian countries almost invariably topped the list, while North Korea and Eritrea find themselves at the bottom. The USA hovers between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 36<sup>th</sup> spot. It is worth noting, however, that in the latest (2023) edition, Greece is downgraded to number 49. The sliding is attributed to gradual deterioration to institutional checks and balances and encroachments in freedom of expression, including the phone-tapping scandal exposed in 2022.

<sup>8</sup> David Beetham, Edza Carvalho, Todd Landman, Stuart Weir, *Assessing the Quality of Democracy—A Practical Guide* (Stockholm: International Institute for Electorate Assistance—IDEA, 2008), 20.

<sup>9</sup> G. Bingham Powell, Jr., "The Chain of Responsiveness," in Diamond and Morlino, 2005, 62.

<sup>10</sup> Beetham, Carvalho, Landman, Weir, 2008, 24.

<sup>11</sup> Morlino, 2012, 208.

<sup>12</sup> Powell, 2005, 62.

<sup>13</sup> Morlino, 2012, 209.

<sup>14</sup> Morlino, 2012, 209. Morlino, 2008 as well as Diamond and Morlino, 2005 utilize the work of Heinz Eulau and Paul Karps published under the title "The Puzzle of Responsiveness," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 3 (August 1977), 233-254.

<sup>15</sup> Elias L. Khalil, "Symbolic Products: Prestige, Pride and identity Goods," *Theory and Decision* 49, no 1 (2000), 53.

<sup>16</sup> Morlino, 209.

<sup>17</sup> Beetham, Carvalho, Landman, Weir, 2008, 24.

<sup>18</sup> Powell, 2005, 62.

<sup>19</sup> Andrew Roberts, *The Quality of Democracy in Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 6.

<sup>20</sup> Powell, 2005, 65. The discussion on the three responsiveness linkages benefitted from Diamond and Morlino, 2005, xxix-xxxi.

<sup>21</sup> Roberts, 2010, 6.

<sup>22</sup> Roberts, 2010, 6.

<sup>23</sup> Diamond and Morlino, 2005, xxix.

<sup>24</sup> Powell 2005, 63.

<sup>25</sup> Beetham, Carvalho, Landman, Weir, 2008, 23.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 62-63.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 63.

<sup>28</sup> Roberts, 2010, 37.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 68.

<sup>30</sup> Diamond and Morlino, 2005, xxix.

<sup>31</sup> Powell, 2005, 68-70.

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<sup>32</sup> Diamond and Morlino, 2005, xxx.

<sup>33</sup> Powell, 2005, 71.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 71-72.

<sup>35</sup> Morlino, 2012, 210.

<sup>36</sup> Diamond and Morlino, 2005, xxx.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, xxx.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, xxx.

<sup>39</sup> Morlino, 2012, 211.

<sup>40</sup> Larry Diamond, Rethinking Civil Society Today, in Bernard E. Brown and Roy C. Macridis, eds, *Comparative Politics: Notes and Readings* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1996), 208-123.

<sup>41</sup> Beetham, Carvalho, Landman, Weir, 2008, 28.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 20.

<sup>43</sup> Powell, 2005, 72.

<sup>44</sup> For an excellent work on the KKE see Nikos Marantzidis, *Under Stalin's Shadow: A Global History of Greek Communism* (Ithaca and London: Northern Illinois University Press, An Imprint of Cornell University Press, 2023).

<sup>45</sup> The constitution has been amended four times.

<sup>46</sup> For a first-rate work on the subject see Neovi M Karakatsanis and Jonathan Swarts, *American Foreign Policy Toward the Colonels' Greece: Uncertain Alliance and the 1967 Coup d'Etat* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

<sup>47</sup> For a comprehensive and balanced treatment of the subject see, Eirini Karamouzi, "Negotiating the American Presence in Greece: Bases, Security and National Sovereignty," *The International History Review*, 44:1 (2022), 129-144, and Stan Draenos, Reading Gifted Greek: A Research profile," *Ergon: Greek/American Arts and Letters*, 21 October 2022: <https://ergon.scienzine.com/article/books/reading-gifted-greek>

<sup>48</sup> For interesting perspectives regarding the Greco-Turkish relationship see Faruk Birtek and Thalia Dragonas, eds, *Citizenship and the Nation-State in Greece and Turkey* (London: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>49</sup> For a sociological treatment of the Macedonia questions see Victor Roudometof, *To Makedoniko Zitima—Mia Koinoniologiki Proseggisi* (Thessaloniki: Epikentro A. E., 2019).

<sup>50</sup> Despite its advocacy for a geographic based solution, the KKE voted against such an agreement when it came before parliament in 2018 on the grounds the deal was imposed by the US, NATO, EEC to further the interests of domestic and foreign capitalists.

<sup>51</sup> A paper-thin majority in parliament and a split within its own ranks forced the ND government under Constantine Mitsotakis to sign on to the agreed national line, despite reservations regarding its wisdom and viability. When the Prespa Agreement came up for a vote in parliament, ND, now the main opposition and under the leadership of Mitsotakis' son Kyriakos, voted against the treaty on account of two major weaknesses: it recognized Macedonian as a separate language and Macedonia identity. Nevertheless, Mitsotakis asserted if ND assumed the reins of government his government will consider the treaty binding and will not seek to undue the chamber's approval of the decision.

<sup>52</sup> With 153 deputies voting in favor and 146 against, the Greek Parliament approved the treaty on January 25, 2019.

<sup>53</sup> It is worth noting that there is a good deal <https://doi.org/10.1080/199448953.2023.2167179> of unhappiness about the deal on the Republic North Macedonian side. See for example, Biljana Vankovska, "Constitutions Octroyees and International. State-Building: The Macedonian Case in Focus," *Journal of Balkan and Near East Studies*, 2023: <https://doi.org/10.1080/199448953.2023.2167179>

<sup>54</sup> SPI is based on the following indicators/factors: Basic Human Rights, Foundations of Wellness, Opportunity, Nutrition and Basic Medical Care, Shelter, Personal Safety, Access to Basic Knowledge, Access to Information and Communications, Health and Wellness, Environmental Quality, Personal Rights, Personal Freedom and Choice, Inclusiveness, and Access to Advanced Education.

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.socialprogress.org.index> 2022

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> There is very little, if any, literature in English on the subject, but there is a good amount in Greek, both in compendia and single author volumes. Among others see: Giorgos Antoniou and Stathis Kalyvas, eds, *Oi Politikoi Prosfyges tou Emfiliou Polemou—Koinonikes kai Politikes Proseggiseis* (Thessaloniki: University of Macedonia Press, 2015), Efthihia Voutira, Vasilis Dalkavoukis, Nikos Marantzidis, and Maria Bontila, eds, *To Oplo Para Poda. OI Politiki Prosfyges Polemou stin Anatoliki Evropi* (Thessaloniki: University of Macedonia Press, 2005), Gabrilis Labatos, *Ellines Politikoi Prosfyges stin Taskendi, 1947-1957* (Athens: Courier 2001), and Katerina Tsekou, *Ellines Politikoi Prosfyges stin Antoliki Evropi* (Athens: Alexandria, 2013).

<sup>59</sup> For details see David Close, *Greece, 1945-2004* (Athens: Ekdoseis Thyrathen, 2005), 232-233.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 231.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 271-273.

<sup>62</sup> For a thorough work on the Olympic Games see Alexander Kitroeff, *Wrestling with Ancients: Modern Greek Identity and the Olympics* (New York: Greekworks.com, 2004).

<sup>63</sup> Costas Meghir, Christopher A. Pissarides, Dimitri Vayanos, and Nikolaos Vettas, "The Greek Economy before and during crisis," in Costas Meghir, Christopher A. Pissarides, Dimitry Vayanos, and Nikolaos Vettas, eds, *Beyond Austerity—Reforming the Greek Economy* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2017), 3-72.

<sup>64</sup> For a detailed treatment see Kostas Kostis, *History's Spoiled Children—The Formation of the Modern Greek State* (London: C Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd, 2018).

<sup>65</sup> For a good treatment of the politics of transition, See Ioannis Tzortzis, *Greek Democracy and the Junta—Regime Crisis and the Failed Transition* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020).

<sup>66</sup> In the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index, in 2011 Greece ranked 109 out of 161 countries and despite some improvement in recent years the country is in the 79<sup>th</sup> place out of 190, which still places it in the "easy" and not "very ease" category.

<sup>67</sup> See Constantine P. Danopoulos, The Cultural Roots of Corruption in Greece, *Mediterranean Quarterly* 25:2 (Spring 2014), 105-130, Manussos Marangudakis with Contributions by Theodore Chadjipandelis,

*The Greek Crisis and Its Cultural Origins--A Study in the Theory of Multiple Modernities* (Gewerberstrasse, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019); Μανουσος Μαραγκουδακης, «Ο εαυτος μας στην Ανατολικη Ορθοδοξια,» Η-Εκδοσεις Πολιτειακο, Αθηνα, 2016; Panagiotis Petrakis, *The Greek Economy in Crisis—Challenges and Responses* (Berlin Heidelberg: Springer-Varlag, 2012), Victor Roudometof, Alexander Agadjanian, and Jerry Pankhurst, eds., *Eastern Orthodoxy in a Global Age—Tradition Faces the Twenty-First Century* Walnut Creek, CA: Bowman & Littlefield, 2005), Constantine DP. Danopoulos, "Religion, civil society, and democracy in Greece," *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, 6:1 (April 2004), 41-55, and by the same author, "Church-State Relations, National Identity, and Security, Post-Cold War Greece," *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora*, 30:1 (Spring 2004).

<sup>68</sup> A small but indicative example was shipping magnet Aristotle Onassis' decision to let strongman George Papadopoulos free use of his luxurious villa outside Athens.

<sup>69</sup> Close, *Ellada 1945-2004*, 2005, 271-272.

<sup>70</sup> Giannis Voulgaris, *I Ellada tis Metapolitieysis 1974-1990—Statheri Dimokratia Siademeni apo tin Metapolemiki Istoría* (Athens: Themelio, 2001), 166.

<sup>71</sup> Petrakis, 2012, 199-200.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 165-168, and Close, 2005, 269-272.

<sup>73</sup> Nikos Christodoulakis, "Market Reforms in Greece, 1990-2008: External Constraints and Domestic Limitations," in Stathis Kalyvas, George Pagoulatos, and Haridimos Tsoukas, eds, *From Stagnation to Forced Adjustment in Greece, 1974-1010* (London: Hurst & Company, 2012,), 97-98.

<sup>74</sup> Corruption in Greece is a diachronic phenomenon. It is estimated to range between 20-30% of the total economic activity. See Constantine P. Danopoulos and Borris Znidaric, "Informal Economy, Tax Evasion, and Poverty in a Democratic Setting: Greece," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 18: (Spring 2007), 67-84, and Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI): <https://www.transparency.org>

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 99-101.

<sup>76</sup> Close, 2005, 261.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 279.

<sup>78</sup> By many accounts, Kostas Karamanlis seemed to have adopted a hands-off leadership style. One of his senior ministers described him as conflict avoiding and preferring to deal with his ministers on an individual level instead of seeking to coordinate government activity. In the only work analyzing Greek prime ministers since 1974, Kevin Featherstone and Dimitris Papadimitriou appear to corroborate the minister's assessment: Karamanlis was perceived by members of his cabinet as having "an aversion to taking decisions—even a dithering manner—and stepping back. [His] engagement in policy development was patchy and largely confined to profile government initiatives. [As such], ministerial fiefdoms flourished [and] the Prime Minister became isolated and more vulnerable. [H]is own management choices left his court without an effective lead or modus operandi. As a consequence, his considerable rapport with the Greek electorate never really materialized into the strong and unified government that he had promised or hoped for." See *Prime Ministers in Greece: The Paradox of Power* (London: Oxford University Press, 2015), 169 and 188-189.

<sup>79</sup> For an interesting analysis of the nature of the EU approach toward the Greek crisis see Yiannis Mylonas, *The "Greek Crisis" in Europe—Race, Class and Politics* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2020).

<sup>80</sup> Gikas A. Hardouvelis and Ioannis Gkionis, "A Decade of Long Economic Crisis: Cyprus versus Greece," *Cyprus Economic Policy Review* 10:2 (Spring 2016), 6, and Petrakis, 2012, 40. Also of interest is Tasos Giannitsis' book, *I Ellada stin Krisi* (Athens: Polis, 2013).

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, 7.

<sup>82</sup> For assessment of the SYRIZA-ANEL era see Manousos Maragkoudakis and Theodoros Xatzipantelis, eds, *I Diaktyvernisi SYRIZA-ANEL: 2015-2019—Mia kritiki apotimisi* (Athens: Ekdoseis I. Sidris, 2021).

<sup>83</sup> Two self-serving but interesting accounts by two eyewitness participants are: George Papaconstantinou, *Game Over—The Inside Story of the Greek Crisis* (Athens: Papadopoulos Publishing, 2016) and Yianis Varoufakis, *Adults in the Room—My Battle with the European and American Deep Establishment* New York: Farrar, Strauss and Gioux, 2017).

<sup>84</sup> The Gini or Inequality Index measures inequality in income distribution. Using a 000-100 value scale, the index ranks countries: the higher the value, the higher the rank, the higher the rank the higher the level of egalitarianism. See <https://data.worldbank.org> 2022

<sup>85</sup> <https://worldeconomics.com--rankings> 2022

<sup>86</sup> ANEL was found in 2012 and survived three electoral contests. Its strongest showing took place in the May 2012 elections when it received 10.62% of the vote. However, the party fizzled away in about six years.

<sup>87</sup> For a good analysis the EU can play see Timothy Garton Ash, "Postimperial Empire—How the War in Ukraine Is transforming Europe," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2023, 64-75.

<sup>88</sup> Despite occasional rhetorical flare-ups, relations with neighboring Turkey are relatively stable. The various Greek political parties differ very little on the issues that divide the two countries.

<sup>89</sup> Marangudakis, 2019.

<sup>90</sup> Among others, SYRIZA's promises include minimum wage increases, upping the level of nontaxable income to 10,000 Euros per person, and bringing back the 13<sup>th</sup> month and pension allowance abolished during the crisis. See *TA NEA*, 3 May 2023.

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