Party fragmentation and the transition towards a multi elite party system: the cases of Greece, the European periphery, and the US

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Abstract: Why are Portugal, Ireland and, to a lesser extent, Spain, exceptions to the emergence of Brahmin left and the transition towards a multi elite party system, seen in most Western democracies? Motivated by this question, I reproduce the standardised methodology of political cleavages for Greece to include it in the World Political Cleavages and Inequality Database (WPID). I argue that I stumble upon another exception to the common trajectory of Western democracies, yet of a different kind. Greece has consistently had a Brahmin left since 1981, while its income cleavage reversed to positive as early as the 1990s, subsequently returning to negative because of the crisis in the 2010s. I discuss a number of theories that could explain these exceptional dynamics, including the inclusiveness of Greek tertiary education and the Greek cultural dualism hypothesis. Faithful to my original motivation, I subsequently undertake a systematic comparison of political cleavages in Greece to the rest of the European periphery (Italy, Spain, Portugal, Ireland), emphasising the role of challenger left and right-wing parties in the transition towards multi elite party systems. Lastly, I expand the sample of comparison to include an original analysis of political cleavages in the 2016 and 2020 US Presidential primaries, with a special focus on the candidatures of Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump.

Keywords: political economy, voting behaviour, comparative analysis of economic systems, economic history, austerity.

JEL codes: D72 – Political Processes: Rent-seeking, Lobbying, Elections, Legislatures, and Voting behaviour; P16 – Capitalist Institutions, Welfare State; P51 – Comparative Analysis of Economic Systems.

To Elena, who never left my side when writing this.

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1. Introduction

Given the multitude of evidence about how unequal our societies have become, as well as the evidence about the adverse effects of inequality on growth, political stability, social cohesion, and happiness, among many others (see Piketty 2014; Stiglitz 2012; Atkinson 2015; Buttrick et al. 2017), Piketty (2020) asks: how come has there not been a political reaction? If inequality has indeed risen that much, why have voters not demanded redistribution in supposedly well-functioning democracies. And if they have, why has the political class not responded? Are the rather widespread phenomena of disappointment and civil withdrawal from the political process, as seen in the rise of voter abstention (Kostelka and Blais 2021), evidence that Western political systems could be stuck in a bad equilibrium where some voter concerns go unheard?

Many have grappled with the issue of voter representation in electoral representative democracies. The seminal work of Gilens (2005) indeed shows that the US political system is very responsive to the policy preferences of the rich, while it largely disregards those of the poor. Hacker and Pierson (2010) explain this bias of the US political system through the role and power of lobbies. Others, such as Cagé (2020) pay more attention on the political economy of media in France and elsewhere.

Piketty takes a different approach. To understand better what is at stake, he focuses on electoral competition and, more specifically, on the socio-economic characteristics of voters of each party and family of parties. In other words, this rests on the intuition that perhaps political systems have failed to respond to the issue of rising inequality because of the multi-dimensionality of political cleavages, leading to the prioritisation of other social cleavages over that of inequality. This research project has led to the creation of the World Political cleavages and Inequality Database (WPID) and the publication of papers and books replicating a standardised empirical methodology to analyse the historical trajectory of political cleavages in a number of countries.

There are three key messages that have emerged out of this research project, as summarised in Gethin et al. (2021). Firstly, almost all Western democracies have undergone a gradual transformation from what they call single elite, class-based party systems, towards a multiple elite configuration. In other words, post-war electoral competition was primarily based on the class cleavage, with the working class (low income and low education) voting for left-wing parties, and the upper and middle classes (high income and high education) voting for right-wing parties. Gradually, highly educated people have changed camps, increasingly supporting left-wing parties. The multi-elite system refers to the fact that the left primarily represents the education elite (Brahmins), while the right the income elite (merchants).

The second political cleavage that has completely reversed in almost all countries is that of gender. Women used to be more conservative than men, mostly supporting right-wing parties, yet ever since the late 20th century they increasingly vote for left-wing parties. The third message in Gethin et al. (2021), which is also the motivation of this study, is that the only Western countries that see the opposite trajectory in terms of their education and income cleavages are Portugal, Ireland and to a lesser extent Spain. Neither of the three displays a multi-elite configuration, while in Portugal and Ireland the left has significantly increased its working-class character.

To shed light onto why these countries are exceptions to the clear pattern seen everywhere else, I undertake an original analysis of political cleavages in Greece. Portugal, Ireland, Spain and Greece are all members of the so-called European periphery, sharing a number of characteristics, both historical and recent. Most notably, they all faced a serious debt crisis during the Eurozone crisis, requesting a bail out from their European partners. I argue that Greece is the most extreme case of them all and as such it can act as a "pure type" to understand better the trajectories of political cleavages in the European periphery.

Adding another country to the database and replicating the standardised methodology though is of interest on its own. In particular because, as I will subsequently argue, Greece is an exception in its own right, of a different kind to Portugal, Ireland and Spain. There are a number of reasons why the history of political cleavages in Greece is worth special attention. Firstly, Greece went through one of the deepest and longest economic crises, losing around a third of its GDP in a few years. This caused a rupture of the political system, leading to a widespread reconfiguration of parties and dimensions of political cleavage. Understanding how such a deep economic and political crisis affected political cleavages is particularly interesting. Secondly, university education in Greece has historically been an inclusive and redistributive institution. As Tsoukalas (1975) argues, tertiary education in Greece has historically been the main mechanism of social mobility. This characteristic appears to have withstood the test of time and to have significant implications on the education cleavage. Lastly, Greece has a history of deep political polarisation along the left-right divide. The Greek Civil War (1946-1949) and a far-right military junta (1967-1974) have left an imprint on historical political cleavages. Being one of the very few Western democracies with a recent history of such political violence and polarisation, the absence of a historical analysis of its political cleavages would be an omission.

There are three key results that emerge from the examination of political cleavages in Greece. Firstly, the left has always been of the Brahmin kind, at least ever since 1981. Secondly, the income cleavage reversed as early as the 1990s, leading to a party system where voters of higher incomes voted more for the left than for the right. Both of the above imply that Greece is an important exception among Western democracies. The third result pertains to the reaction of the political system to the crisis. The emergence of challenger parties from the radical left and the far-right led to party fragmentation, while the replacement of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) by the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA) increased the working-class character of the left, similarly to what is seen in Portugal and Ireland.

After the presentation of the results on Greece, I undertake a systematic comparison of political cleavages in Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Ireland, following a 'most similar systems' design. I claim that these countries have sufficient similarities that such a comparison can produce some tentative conclusions of interest. Indeed, I find that in the absence of strong value-based conflicts, the crisis and austerity led to the emergence of workers' anti-austerity movements, often standing as obstacles the rise of the far-right. Moreover, when the mainstream left itself radicalised, it prevented the fragmentation of the party system, while when it continued competing for the political centre, popular dissatisfaction was expressed through challenger parties. Importantly, the capacity of left-wing parties to maintain support from the working-class electorate, keeping the low income and low education voters from moving to the far right, is an important way to prevent the emergence of a multi-elite party system.

Given the ability of anti-austerity new left parties to keep the support of the working-class, making the emergence of far-right parties and of multi elite party systems more difficult, in the last section I turn to an analysis of the political cleavages giving rise to such parties in the rest of Western democracies. After briefly discussing the cases of France, the UK and Germany, I present an original examination of political cleavages in US primaries in 2016 and 2020, with a particular emphasis on the candidature of Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump. While the US left, represented by the Democratic Party, appears to be one of the most Brahmin of all, I claim that without an analysis of the US primaries, a significant undercurrent of political cleavages is overlooked.

Two takeaways emerge from the last section. Firstly, I replicate the result found in the analysis of the European periphery that far-right movements are conducive to the transition towards a multi elite party system, while challenger left-wing movements with a working-class presence have the opposite effect. Secondly, it seems that far-right parties have striking similarities in their voter appeal, almost always galvanising the support of the rural and low educated electorate. Conversely, challenger left wing movements could be categorised as either more Brahmin than the mainstream centre-left, or more working-class. The latter tend to be more successful.

To sum up, there are three original contributions that this study makes to the literature. Firstly, it presents a historical analysis of political cleavages in Greece, adding Greece to the WPID. Secondly, it examines the conducive and deterrent conditions to the emergence of multi elite party systems through a systematic comparison of political cleavages in a number of countries. Thirdly, it includes an original examination of political cleavages of the last two US primaries (2016, 2020).

The study is organised as follows. Section 2 is devoted to political cleavages in Greece, presenting the methodology followed, a brief electoral history as well as the results produced on Greece. In Section 3 I undertake a systematic comparison of the results presented in Section 2 for Greece, to those on Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Ireland found in Gethin et al. (2021). Section 4 examines the characteristics of anti-austerity new left parties in France, the UK and Germany, as well as presents an analysis of the political cleavages of the 2016 and 2020 US primaries. Section 5 concludes.

2. Political Cleavages in Greece

2.1 Why Greece?

In this section, I reproduce the standard WPID methodology on the case of Greece. This is an original contribution, adding Greece to the database. As I will subsequently demonstrate, Greece constitutes an important exception among Western democracies.

Applying the WPID methodology to Greece is interesting for several reasons. Besides contributing to our understanding of political cleavages in the European periphery, it brings forward the effects of a severe and persistent economic crisis. Moreover, the political implications of the role of education as a primary mechanism of social mobility in Greece are brought to the fore, as well as the legacy of the Greek Civil War on the left-right political cleavage.

Firstly, understanding the trajectory of political cleavages in Greece arguably contributes to explaining the only exceptions found to the emergence of a multi-elite party system in Gethin et al. (2022), namely Ireland, Portugal and to a lesser extent Spain. The common economic and political problems faced by Portugal, Ireland, Greece, and Spain during the Eurozone crisis gave rise to the offensive acronym PIGS.[2] All of the above countries faced a debt crisis following the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, which pushed Greece, Ireland, and Portugal to controversial austerity bailout packages. The implementation of structural adjustment programmes was assigned to a system of international surveillance that has gone down as the "troika" (European Commission, European Central Bank, International Monetary Fund). The questionable democratic tactics, as well as the harsh austerity introduced, led to political crises that reconfigured the party landscape in all of the above countries. In this group of countries, Greece was the most extreme case: the deepest crisis, the harshest austerity, the greatest political turmoil. Hence, to the extent that these common characteristics are related to the fact that Portugal, Ireland and, to a lesser extent, Spain, remain exceptions from the rest of Western democracies, analysing political cleavages in Greece, the most peripheral of EU countries, could shed light onto why this is the case.

Secondly, the Greek crisis is arguably the deepest and most prolonged economic crisis that a capitalist developed country has faced in peacetime. Along with the fact that the three bailout packages constitute the largest loan made to a sovereign country in nominal terms (Varoufakis 2016), it is particularly interesting to see how such a deep crisis affected political cleavages in a liberal Western democracy. Notably, Greece has a history of deep political crises following global macroeconomic events. The Great Depression in the 1930s together with the failed military campaign in Asia Minor led to the default of the Greek sovereign debt. Both the conservative and liberal parties of the time collapsed, and a semi-fascist military dictatorship was brought to power by the King. It remained in office from 1933 to the German invasion and subsequent occupation that began in April 1941. Similarly, the Great Stagflation of the 1970s led to the collapse of the military junta in 1974. In short, major economic crises shake the political landscape in Greece. The weak economy and the big numbers of farmers, self-employed, and small businessowners create the conditions for major shifts in voting behaviour.

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[2] Often also used as PIIGS, to include Italy.

Thirdly, education has historically been inclusive and sought-after in Greece, creating interesting conditions for the analysis of the education cleavage. Article 16 of the 1975 Greek Constitution specifies that university education is to be exclusively provided by public institutions, free of charge. In his seminal work, Tsoukalas (1975) supports the hypothesis that tertiary education functions as the main mechanism of social mobility in Greece. Despite having one of the lowest levels of public education expenditure as a share of GDP at the time, Tsoukalas (1975) argues that Greek tertiary education was one of the most inclusive, absorbing more than 30% of students from the countryside and 10% from the working class. He adds a particularly striking OECD metric which measures the difference in opportunities between children of privileged and non-privileged families, with Greece having one of the lowest differences, 1:7.7, as compared to, for instance, France where it was 1:36. More specifically, this metric indicates that at the time (1950-1967), children of the self-employed in Greece have a 7.7 higher probability of studying in university than the children of agricultural workers.

It seems that the role of education in Greek society has hardly changed. Tsakloglou and Cholezas (2005) find that "education is the single most important factor that shapes the overall distribution of income and influences the probability of poverty". Using data on 1980-1995, Pereira and Martins (2000) find that the lower quintiles of the wage distribution accrue the highest returns to education. Bazoti (2020) finds similar results based on recent data, adding that education had a positive redistributive role during the crisis as well, acting as the main defence of the young against unemployment. Choletsos and Roupakias (2018) find that returns to education increased post-crisis, but that their progressive distribution has started to wither. A recent OECD education report (2019) seems to confirm the special role that education plays in Greece, since it displays the fourth highest tertiary enrolment rate, while educational attainment is shown to significantly affect employment rates. The Greek Statistical Authority (ELSTAT 2023) reports that poverty threatens only 7.5% of university graduates, while the population average is 26%. Hence, with universities being inclusive institutions and important mechanisms of social mobility, it will be very interesting to see how this affects the education cleavage. Even more so given the history of student political activism in universities and beyond, as seen by the student occupation and uprising against the military junta in 1973, the mobilisation against the university privatisation reforms in 1990-1991, the crisis response in 2008 and the introduction of campus police in 2021 (see Boukalas 2009; Kaniadakis 2021; Sotiris 2010; Evangelidis and Lazaris 2014).

Last but not least, events such as the Greek Civil War and the military junta had created a very polarised left-right cleavage. Greece is one of two countries in Europe that experienced a civil war in the 20th century (1946-1949). Moreover, it had political refugees (members or former members of the Communist Party) until the early 1980s. The cleavage between the right and left was so deep that the armed confrontation that followed the German occupation was officially referred to as "bandit war" until 1990, when it was officially renamed to "civil war". The anti-communist legacy of a right-wing state that resulted from the Civil War and the junta led to consistent practices of discrimination and exclusion based on political beliefs. PASOK emerged as the dominant party in 1981 and was viewed as a vindication of the socioeconomic demands of the previously excluded sectors of the population (Andreadis and Stavrakakis 2019). While polarization started to fade in the 1990s and 2000s, the Greek crisis seems to have revived aspects of the old left-right rivalry.

Therefore, for all four of the above reasons, the historical analysis of political cleavages in Greece is of particular interest. It will hopefully contribute to the understanding of political cleavages in the European periphery and notably to explaining the exceptions of Ireland and Portugal. Secondly, it provides a case study of how political cleavages are affected in the midst of great economic and political turmoil. Thirdly, the particularities of the Greek educational system might bear interesting implications on the education cleavage. The same holds for the rigid and polarized left-right divide in Greece and its potential consequences on historical political cleavages. I now turn to the methodology followed in analysing the data on Greece.

2.2 Methodology

In this section I will discuss the methodology followed to historically depict political cleavages in Greece. I start by presenting the standard WPID methodology and then turn to the particularities of the data used on Greece.

2.2.1   WPID methodology

The aim of the WPID, as declared in Gethin et al. (2021), is modestly descriptive. We recognise that our approach falls short of causal inference, but we nevertheless believe that we provide useful evidence to analyse the main potential hypotheses pertaining the historical evolution of political cleavages. The general principle followed is that the multiplication of case studies, accompanied by a process of analytical comparison, can contribute to our understanding of complex social processes.

The methodology followed in WPID in general, as well as this study in particular, is based on a collection of electoral surveys. Such surveys contain data on the voting (past or intended) of a sample of voters, along with information on sociodemographic characteristics such as income, education, age, gender, religion, religiosity, and place of origin. My focus is on national general elections, which determine the composition of government and the Prime Minister. Despite the fact that such data suffer from limitations typical to surveys (e.g. small sample sizes), they provide the only source for a macro-historical analysis of political preferences in modern democracies.

The main variables of analysis are income and education. There are a number of ways that political cleavages are measured in the literature. We choose to focus on these two because they provide objective measures, which most electoral surveys include and allow for straightforward cross-country comparisons. When the different sources are harmonised, the income and education variables are also normalised, and we produce income and education deciles. Briefly, the approach followed consists in "*allocating individuals to the potentially multiple income or education deciles to which they belong, in such a way that average decile-level vote shares are computed assuming a constant vote share in each education- or income-year cell. This is a conservative assumption, as vote shares for specific parties are likely to also vary in education groups or income brackets. The levels and changes in education and income cleavages documented herein should thus be considered as lower bounds of the true effects of education and income on the vote.*" Gethin et al. (2022).

To make the electoral surveys used more representative of electoral outcomes, we re-weigh the survey variables according to the election results. However, given that this is already a primary concern for those running the electoral surveys, this usually leaves the results unchanged.

Moreover, I group political parties in two broad families: the Left (social democratic, socialist, communist, green) and the Right (conservative, Christian democratic, nationalist, anti-immigration). This is primarily done to allow for comparisons to countries with two-party systems. However, I acknowledge that these loose families are heterogeneous, especially over time. The objective here rather is to examine how such broad families have aggregated diverse and alternating coalitions of voters over time. In particular, in Greece I group parties such as New Democracy, Independent Greeks, Golden Dawn, National Orthodox Rally (LAOS) and the Greek Solution in the family of right-wing parties, while parties such as PASOK, SYRIZA/SYNASPISMOS, the Communist Party (KKE), the Democratic Left (DIMAR), The River and MeRA25 in the family of left-wing parties.

The empirical strategy relies on simple linear probability models of the form:

$$y_{ict} = \alpha + \beta x_{ict} + C_{ict}\gamma + \varepsilon_{ict}$$

where y_{ict} is the binary outcome variable we are interested in (e.g. vote for left-wing parties) for individual observation i in country c and election t, x_{ict} is a dummy explanatory variable (e.g. being in the top 10% of income voters or not), and C_{ict} is a vector of controls (e.g. gender, age, marital status).

Without controls, β simply captures the difference between the share of top 10% income voters voting for left-wing parties and the share of the bottom 90% income voters voting for left-wing parties. Namely:

$$\beta = E(y_{ict} = 1, \qquad x_{ict} = 1) - E(y_{ict} = 0, \qquad x_{ict} = 0)$$

With controls, the interpretation is very similar: ceteris paribus, belonging to the top 10% of income voters increases one's propensity to vote for left-wing parties by β percentage points. All control variables used are also binary variables, so the model is fully saturated and can be estimated using OLS with heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors.

2.2.2 Greek data

Collecting quality Greek electoral survey data has been a challenging task. I have managed to build a harmonised dataset based on a diverse set of sources from 1981 to 2019. The data from the 1981 to the 1996 elections are drawn from the Eurobarometer. The Eurobarometer is not an electoral survey and as such is a sub-optimal solution for lack of better data. It is a general political attitudes survey, which was not specifically conducted in the context of an election, but still asked respondents to report their previous or expected voting behaviours. Even if it does not allow one to track election-to-election changes, it is nevertheless sufficient to grasp long-run changes in party affiliations, which is the objective of the WPID and this study. As such, I match Eurobarometer surveys ranging from 1980 to 1996 to their closest election.[3]

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[3] More specifically, I match the Eurobarometer surveys of 1980,81,82 to 1981; 1983,84,85,86 to 1985; 1987,88,89 to 1989; 1990,91 to 1990; 1992,93,94 to 1993; 1995,96,97,98 to 1996.

For the range of elections included in 2000-2007, I rely on the European Social Survey (ESS). The latter is also not an electoral survey, which comes with the same limitations as the Eurobarometer. However, the ESS happened to have been run in Greece three times and very close to the three elections that occurred in this time period. As such, there is less arbitrary matching and I do not rely on voting intention, but on past voting, both providing better tracking of election-to-election changes. In particular, I match the 2002 wave to the 2000 elections, the 2004 wave to the 2004 elections and the 2008 wave to the 2007 elections.

For the elections that occurred in 2009-2015, I rely on the post-electoral surveys included in the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES). This provides the best quality data based on post-electoral surveys of around 1,000 sample size each. With these data, I cover the 2009, 2012 and 2015 elections of the Greek Parliament.

Lastly, for the 2019 elections I use the post-electoral survey conducted by the Hellenic National Election Voter Study (ELNES), which is run by the group of researchers responsible for CSES in Greece and largely replicates the same methodology. [4]

Using the above diverse sources, I build a harmonised dataset covering the following variables: income, education, age, gender, religious affiliation, church attendance, race or ethnicity, rural-urban location, region of residence, employment status, marital status, union membership, sector of employment, homeownership, self-perceived social class, and (in recent years) country of birth.

In addition to this dataset, I have gotten access to aggregated data of Greek exit polls from 2009 to 2023, which include data on gender, age, education, and occupation. The fact that this dataset is already aggregated and does not include individual-level observations, while it also does not include questions on income, makes it impossible to exploit for purposes of the WPID methodology. However, I have produced a table (Table 3) on the 2023 elections, which is used in the analysis that follows. The rest of the exit polls were used for robustness checks. I have also used data on the Greek 2015 referendum found in Koustenis (2023) to produce Table 1.

2.2.3 Methodological limitations

The clearest limitation of this study pertains to the quality of data. I unfortunately have to rely on relatively low-quality data sources such as the Eurobarometer and the ESS. While the post-electoral surveys I use post-2007 are much more reliable, they still have relatively small sample sizes of around 1,000 observations each.

Secondly, I wish to make a distinction between descriptive/empirical political cleavages and what could be called normative political cleavages. It is only the former kind that are the subject-matter of this study, as they manifest in voting patterns. Namely, descriptive political cleavages capture the socio-economic dimensions of voters on which electoral competition is based, and how these evolve through time. In other words, this involves a focus on of the demand-side of electoral competition. Gethin et al. (2022) have also recently undertaken an illuminating study of the supply-side as well, including an analysis of the evolution party manifestos.

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[4] These are Professors Andreadis, Chadjipadelis and Teperoglou from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH).

Still, I argue that this falls short of grappling with the normative dimension of political cleavages, which tends to be left to political theorists and philosophers. Namely, the fact that women overwhelmingly supported conservative parties until the 1980s, does not necessarily mean that said parties were supporters of the emancipation of women. Equally, the fact that the far-right has increasingly relied on working-class support, does not necessarily mean that they have the interests of poor people at heart. Lastly, the fact that the mainstream left is increasingly relying on the support of the education elite (Brahmin left), does not necessarily make its policy platform elitist – although Gethin et al. (2022) provide further evidence that often it does indeed mean that. In short, a comprehensive analysis of political cleavages, of both the empirical and normative kind, requires the defence of a particular theory of justice, including how it manifests in particular historical conjunctures. Unfortunately, this is beyond the scope of this study.

2.3 A brief electoral history of Greece

2.3.1   Introduction

Greece sits firmly within the group of European peripheral countries such as Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Ireland. Similar to the aforementioned countries, Greece is a late industrialiser, which was severely hit by the 2008 recession. The economic crisis that ensued was addressed through unpopular austerity, leading to political crises and the emergence of challenger parties. Overall, Greece is a religious country, with the vast majority of people being Christians, following the Greek Orthodox Church. Moreover, much like the other countries of the European periphery, Greece displays a historically weak class cleavage.

The 1821 Greek National Independence Revolution from the Ottoman Empire gave rise to the modern Greek state in 1829, in an economically underdeveloped and agriculture-based region. Industry started taking form in the 20th century, particularly in the latter part of the century. Greece has historically excelled in shipping, while tourism started developing in the 1960s and 1970s and has become one of its main exports. During the years of the Great Stagflation (1965-1980), the country lost most of its industrial basis. The textiles, shipyards, and other traditional branches were lost never to be replaced (Stravelakis 2022). Following a period of state subsidization, these companies were either liquidated or privatised in part in the mid-1990s. In the place of the traditional industry, an economy based on banks and construction emerged (Garganas and Tavlas 2001).

The country suffered heavily during the Second World War, facing a 7% drop in population and hyperinflation, which culminated in a deadly Civil War (1946-1949). Political turmoil led to a military junta in 1967-1974. From the 1980s onwards, the sovereign debt started to increase at a fast pace, leading to a sovereign debt crisis in 2010. While the Greek debt crisis is supposed to have ended in 2018, when Greece regained access to capital markets, the Greek GDP remains around 20% below its pre-crisis levels of over 15 years ago.

2.3.2   Electoral outcomes

The Greek political system has seen stability and fair and free elections only after the fall of the military junta in 1974. The post-1974 political history of Greece defines the country's contemporary, post-authoritarian era.

Figure 1 - General elections in Greece, 1974-2023
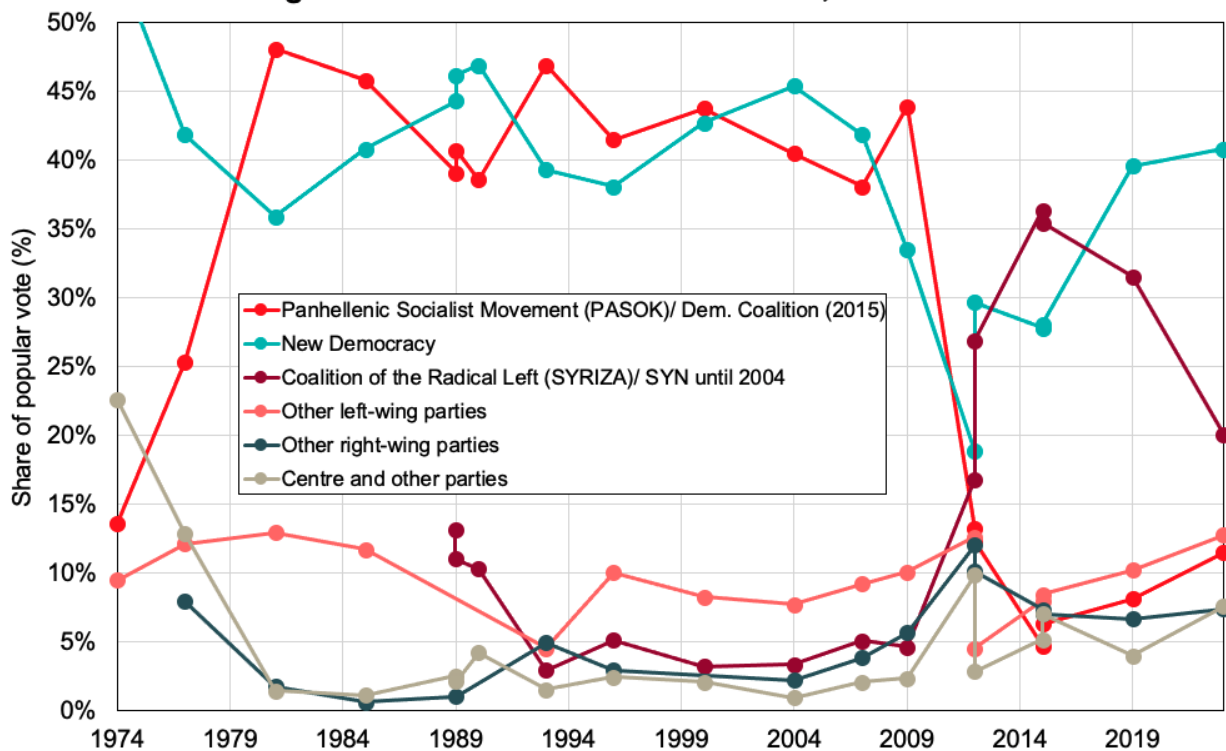
Greece is a parliamentary representative democracy, with a unicameral parliament, where the Head of Government is the Prime Minister. Figure 1 above displays the electoral outcomes of Greek national parliamentary elections since 1974. The history of Greek post-authoritarian party systems can be decomposed into three periods: 1974-1981, 1981-2012, and 2012-2023. The first period begins with the fall of the military junta and ends with the election of the first left-wing government of Greece. During this brief time defined by two elections (1974, 1977), the Greek political system was primarily preoccupied with democratic reconstruction and the rectification of injustices that occurred during the time of the junta. The main party on the right is New Democracy (ND), which remains in government throughout the first period. The main party on the left is the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), which is founded in 1974 by Andreas Papandreou and remains in opposition. In the 1974 elections, the second party in line is the centrist Centre Union that pre-existed the dictatorship, being founded by Papandreou's father, Georgios in 1961. The party is dissolved in 1974, giving way to a stronger PASOK in 1977 and a new centrist party, Union of the Democratic Centre, coming third in the elections after New Democracy and PASOK. Hence, the first period (1974-1981) was characterised by a multi-party configuration.

The 1981 elections were won by PASOK with a massive 48%, constituting the first left-wing government in Greece and the beginning of the PASOK-ND two-party system that dominated for 30 years. In parliament, one also sees a consistent presence of the Communist Party, which gathers 10.9% of the vote in 1981 but later settles at a more or less consistent 4-6% of the vote. A number of corruption scandals plaguing the PASOK leadership in 1989 led to political turmoil and three elections being held in the period of 1989-1990. Not only did New Democracy win all elections and govern until 1993, but also the Left and Progress Coalition (Synaspismos, SYN) emerged as a third party with double-digit results. The latter is a coalition of the Communist Party, which was under the influence of the USSR, and the Communist Party

of the Interior and its offspring, Greek Left, which were the Greek manifestations of Eurocommunism. In the next elections of 1993, the Communist Party ran independently. What remained of the Left and Progress Coalition (Synaspismos, SYN) later morphed into the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA) in 2004.

The economic and political crisis dealt a blow to both PASOK and New Democracy, tearing apart an era of relative political stability and of party politics seemingly abiding by the median voter theorem (Downs 1957). The politics of convergence started with the death of PASOK leader Andreas Papandreou in 1996 and his replacement by Costas Simitis. The latter articulated clearly pro-European policies, unlike his predecessor, and followed a politics of technocratic reforms and modernisation, softening some of the edges of a scandal-ridden PASOK. A New Labour sort of figure on the left was matched with the election of Konstantinos Karamanlis as leader of New Democracy in 1997, who equally followed a politics of Clinton-inspired "triangulation" (Andreadis and Stavrakakis 2019). The result being the gradual convergence of the two parties in the 2000s, culminating in a ND-PASOK coalition government in 2012-2014. Said convergence, along with the mutual implementation of unpopular austerity policies, discredited both parties, as seen in the double 2012 election results. The challenge from the radical left came from SYRIZA. From receiving 44% of the vote in 2009, PASOK ended up with 12%, while New Democracy and SYRIZA stood head-to-head in both elections. After another series of austerity reforms the following three years, SYRIZA emerged victorious in 2015, marking the end of the two-party system. Along with SYRIZA, the crisis-induced collapse of the party system brough the rise of neo-Nazi Golden Dawn and the nationalist Independent Greeks, challenging New Democracy from the right (Mavris 2012). Consistently gathering around 7% of the vote in the 2012-2015 period, Golden Dawn came third in both 2015 elections.

Figure 2 - General elections in Greece, 1974-2023
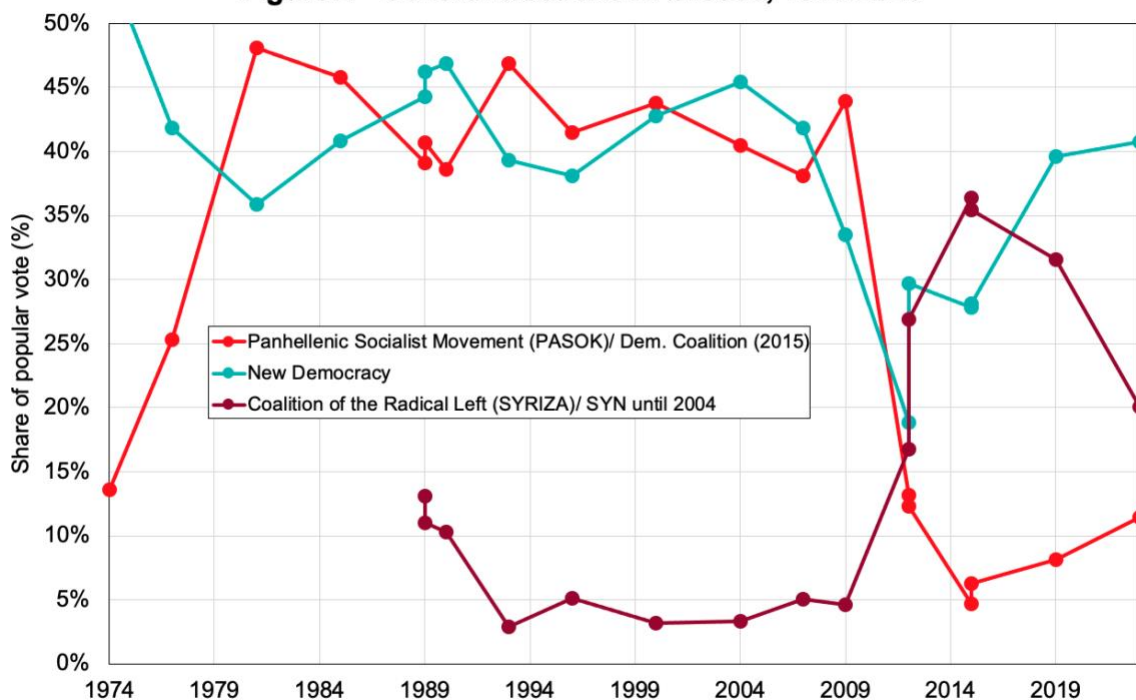
Andreadis and Stavrakakis (2019) argue that the emergence of PASOK in 1981 and SYRIZA in 2015 bear some resemblance. PASOK rose to government as a movement that represented the previously excluded and discriminated sectors of the population by the anti-Communist, exclusionary state. While it emerged as a radical, anti-systemic party, it soon compromised and came to terms with realpolitik. Most notably, it stopped questioning Greece's membership in the European Economic Community (EEC), the North Atlantic Alliance (NATO) and the Western geo-political bloc more generally. Similarly, SYRIZA emerged from 3% to 36% articulating the demands of those hit by the crisis and alienated by a political system that had embraced the politics of austerity in its entirety. The social movement of the Greek Indignados (aganaktismenoi) in 2011 played a key role by reshaping the public sphere and expressing popular dissatisfaction through civil society. Yet, despite its initial radical and often populist rhetoric, since September 2015, what remained of SYRIZA compromised with the demands of the troika and implemented a similar policy package to its predecessors.

Indeed, after a harsh seven months of negotiations with the troika, the SYRIZA government along with its coalition partner, the right-wing Independent Greeks (ANEL) party, called for a referendum on the third austerity bailout package proposed by the troika. Despite the Greek people overwhelmingly voting to reject the bailout (62%), being urged by the SYRIZA-ANEL government to do so, the government ended up signing another austerity bailout soon after. Nevertheless, SYRIZA got re-elected in the second 2015 elections and governed until 2019. In the 2019 elections New Democracy won and governed through the covid and energy crisis, getting re-elected in 2023.

An electoral history of Greece, no matter how brief, is incomplete without mentioning the role of political families. There are three ever-present political families in Greece, that have defined the historical course of the country. The Karamanlis family counts two Prime Ministers, including the founder of New Democracy, and three government ministers. The Papandreou family counts three Prime Ministers, including the founders of Centre Union and PASOK, along with one government minister. The Mitsotakis family counts two Prime Ministers, including the current one, two government ministers, a member of parliament and the current Mayor of Athens.

As seen in Figure 3 below, the new two-party system (Syriza – New Democracy) that has characterised the third period of electoral competition in Greece is weaker than its predecessor (PASOK – New Democracy). This is largely the result of the fragmentation of the political system, leading to the emergence of a number of smaller parties, mostly of the far-right and anti-immigrant kind.

Figure 3: The Greek two-party systems, 1981-2023
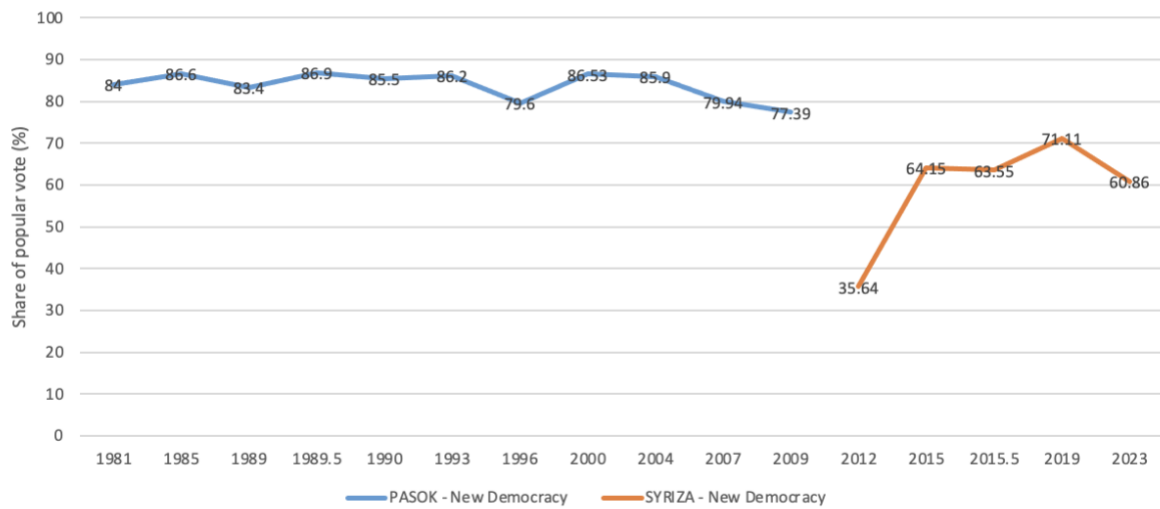
At the time of writing, the May 2023 elections have brought a big victory for New Democracy and a significant defeat for SYRIZA, which came second but still 20% behind. This is the largest difference in popular vote between the first and second parties since 1977. At the same time, PASOK has made consistent gains, perhaps challenging the short-lived SYRIZA-ND two-party dominance. A second election has been called in June 2023, with a new majority bonus electoral law expected to help New Democracy achieve a parliamentary majority. While it is too early to judge, it could be that 2023 will mark the beginning of a new period, ending the SYRIZA-ND two-party dominance. Notably, as seen in Figure 4, this is the first election since 1981 where the right-wing parties collectively gather more support than the left. Traditionally, the post-authoritarian Greek party system has had a left-wing centre of gravity, which now appears to be overturned.

Figure 4 - General elections in Greece, 1974-2023
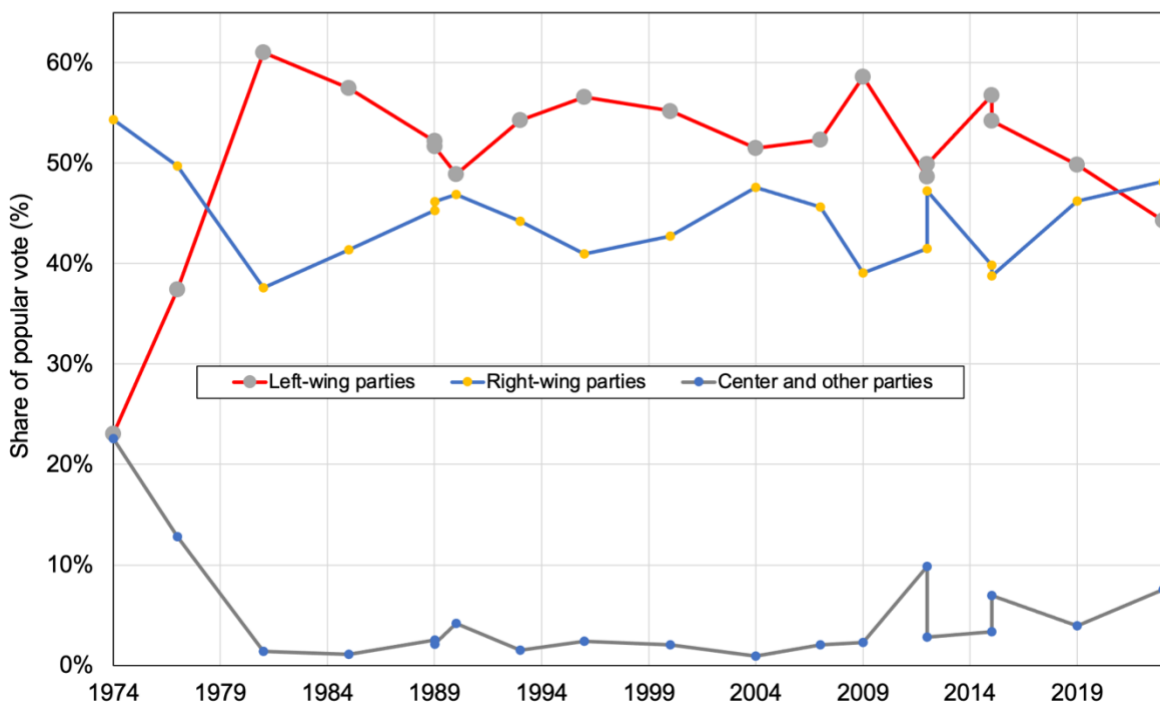
2.4 Political cleavages

In what follows, I explore the changing relationship between socioeconomic characteristics and left-right voting behaviour in Greece. Unfortunately, this analysis of political cleavages will only focus on the latter two periods of party competition in Greece (1981-2012, 2012-2023) due to absence of data. Moreover, the standard WPID graphs will only pertain the period 1981-2019 due to data restrictions, while I will include evidence that reach the 2023 elections as well. As already discussed, the main variables of interest are income and education divides and as such I begin with those.

2.4.1   Income cleavage

Figure 5 - Vote for left-wing parties among high income voters
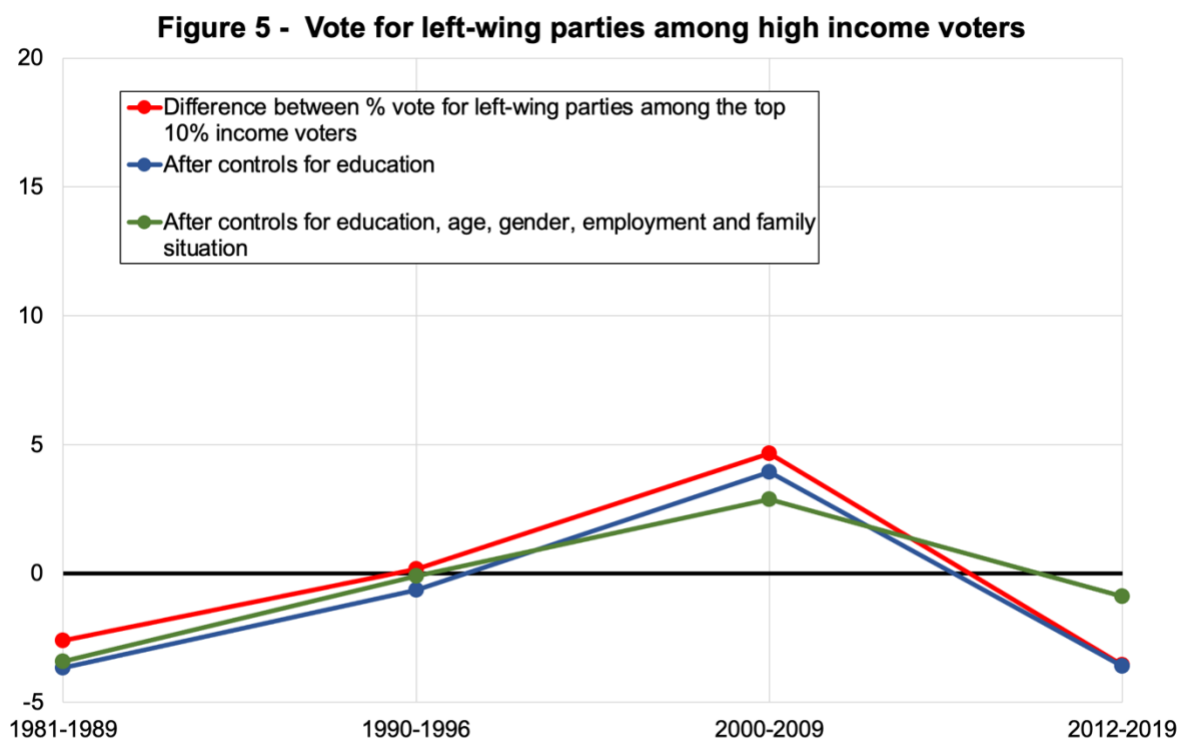
The income cleavage is portrayed in Figure 5 above. The red line shows the difference between the percent of the vote for left-wing parties among the voters coming from the top 10% of the income distribution, to the rest of the population. The blue line controls for the education of voters, while the green line additionally controls for age, gender, employment status and family situation. What emerges from this graph is that the left in Greece used to have a stronger working-class character in the 1980s, when it enjoyed the support of lower-income voters. Said working class character started to wither in the 1990s and 2000s, leading to left-wing parties collectively being supported more by higher income people. This trend appears to have reversed once again with the crisis, when left-wing parties increased their appeal in low-income groups, leading to a return of the negative income cleavage.

While the declining trend of income cleavages is seen in other countries as well, the complete reversal is relatively unique to Greece. From the rest of the Western democracies analysed to date, only Italy and the US appear to have witnessed a reversal of the income cleavage, but at a much later time (2010s). Yet, the US left refers to the Democratic Party which has no socialist

nor social-democratic history,[5] while the reversal in Italy is driven by the ability of the Five Star Movement, which is also not clearly left-wing, to gain the vote of lower-income people. This makes the reversal of the income cleavage for a country with an explicitly socialist left an important exception. Moreover, the average income cleavage in Western democracies has remained relatively stable until the 1990s at -15%, being halved by 2020 (Gethin et al. 2021). Hence, even before its reversal, Greece had an exceptionally weak income cleavage.

To understand better whether these dynamics are driven by particular parties within the left or right-wing umbrellas, or represent general tendencies, I have decomposed the income cleavage for a selected group of left-wing (Figure 6) and right-wing parties (Figure 7). Figure 6 shows that despite being a socialist challenger party at the time, PASOK emerged with a catchall voter base when it comes to income. Subsequently, Simitis ushered in a centrist policy era which focused on the necessary reforms for Greece to be able to join the Euro Area in 2002. This often came at the expense of an emphasis on traditional working-class demands and the party's socialist ideology, perhaps alienating a part of the lower income electorate. This leads to the rather unique phenomenon of the main left-wing party in Greece being supported by voters in the top 10% of the income distribution. Interestingly, until the crisis, even the radical left parties had a very weak income cleavage. The positive income cleavage of PASOK in the 2000s is mirrored in the negative income cleavage of centre-right New Democracy (Figure 7). This is testament to the aforementioned pre-crisis convergence between the two parties.

The return of the income cleavage in negative territory post-crisis appears to be the result of the expressly lower-income electorate of SYRIZA. PASOK maintains a positive income cleavage post-crisis, while New Democracy's jumps around 15 points into strongly positive territory. The working-class appeal of SYRIZA should not come as a surprise given its radical left character and its strong links to social movements and civil society. Additionally, a hypothesis that I will be coming back to is that perhaps a deep economic crisis and regressive austerity policies make the class cleavage more salient. Since the Greek austerity policy packages were highly regressive in nature, pushing the poorest of the population to poverty and social exclusion (Fasianos and Tsoukalis 2023; Mitrakos 2014), it seems reasonable that this led to an increase of anti-austerity class voting. A curious finding of Figure 5 is that most of this SYRIZA/crisis effect appears to disappear with controls. By re-running the regression with different control subgroups, one sees that this is mostly driven by employment status, marital status, and gender. That is, it was mostly the unemployed, single and women that drove this reduction in the income cleavage in the post-crisis period. Being vulnerable sections of the population, this makes sense. Especially for the unemployed, as unemployment in Greece at the time reached just below 30% overall and 60% for the young.

The reason that the aggregate left income cleavage appears weak is that along with SYRIZA, a number of far-right parties emerged, which also had a strong appeal in the working class, as seen in Figure 7. These parties were the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn, the Independent Greeks and, since 2019, the Greek Solution. I wish to make clear that grouping these three parties together is merely for the purposes of presentation, since they all appeal to a very similar voter base, as I will subsequently demonstrate. Golden Dawn was a unique phenomenon of an explicitly neo-Nazi, militaristic criminal organisation, which has thus been outlawed since 2020. In no way am I claiming that these three parties are comparable in their politics.

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[5] In fact, a recent Financial Times article shows that based on political attitudes data from Pew Research, the World Values Survey and YouGov, "British Conservative voters are closer to US Democrats than Republicans on most social issues". https://www.ft.com/content/a2050877-124a-472d-925a-fc794737d814.

Figure 6 - Vote for selected left-wing parties among high income voters

Legend:
- Difference between % vote for PASOK among the top 10% income voters and the bottom 90% income voters after controls for education, sex, age, marital and employment status
- The same, for SYRIZA / Synaspismos (pre-2004)
- The same, for the Communist Party
- The same, for all left-wing parties

X-axis: 1981-1989, 1990-1996, 2000-2009, 2012-2019
Y-axis: -10 to 20
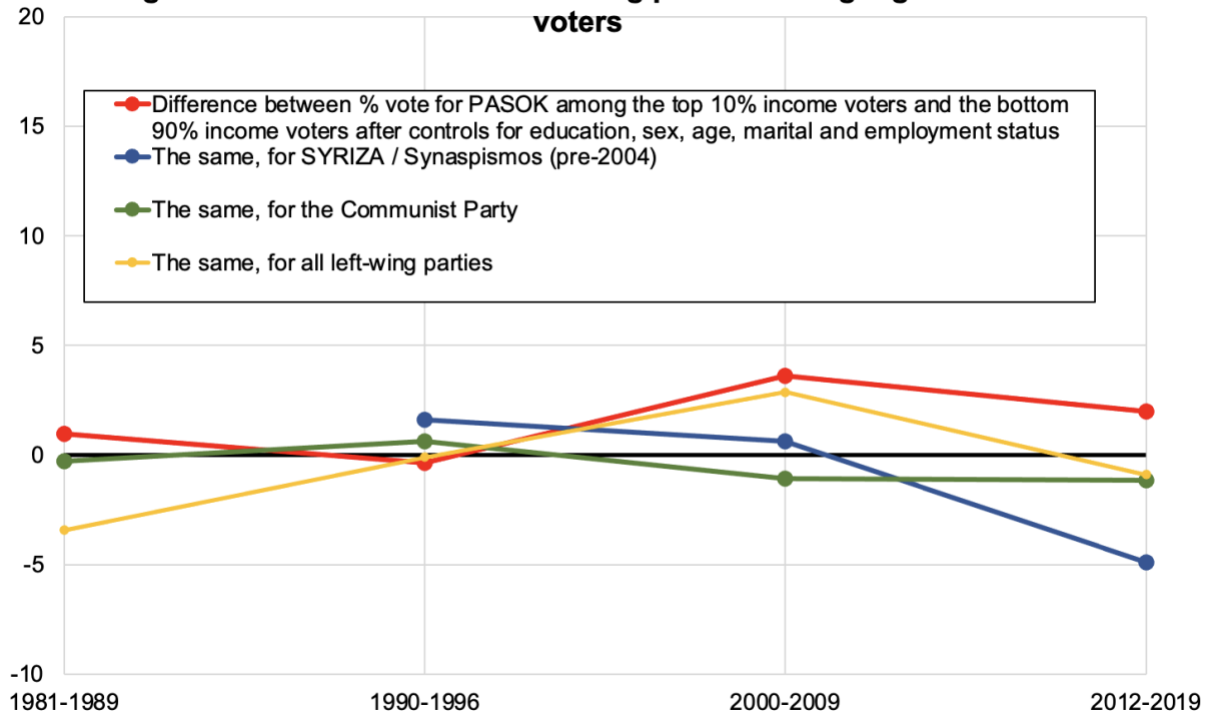
Figure 7 - Vote for selected right-wing parties among high income voters

Legend:
- Difference between % vote for New Democracy among the top 10% income voters and the bottom 90% income voters after controls for education, sex, age, marital and employment status
- The same, for all far-right parties (Golden Dawn, Independent Greeks, Greek Solution)
- The same, for all right-wing parties

X-axis: 1981-1989, 1990-1996, 2000-2009, 2012-2019
Y-axis: -10 to 20
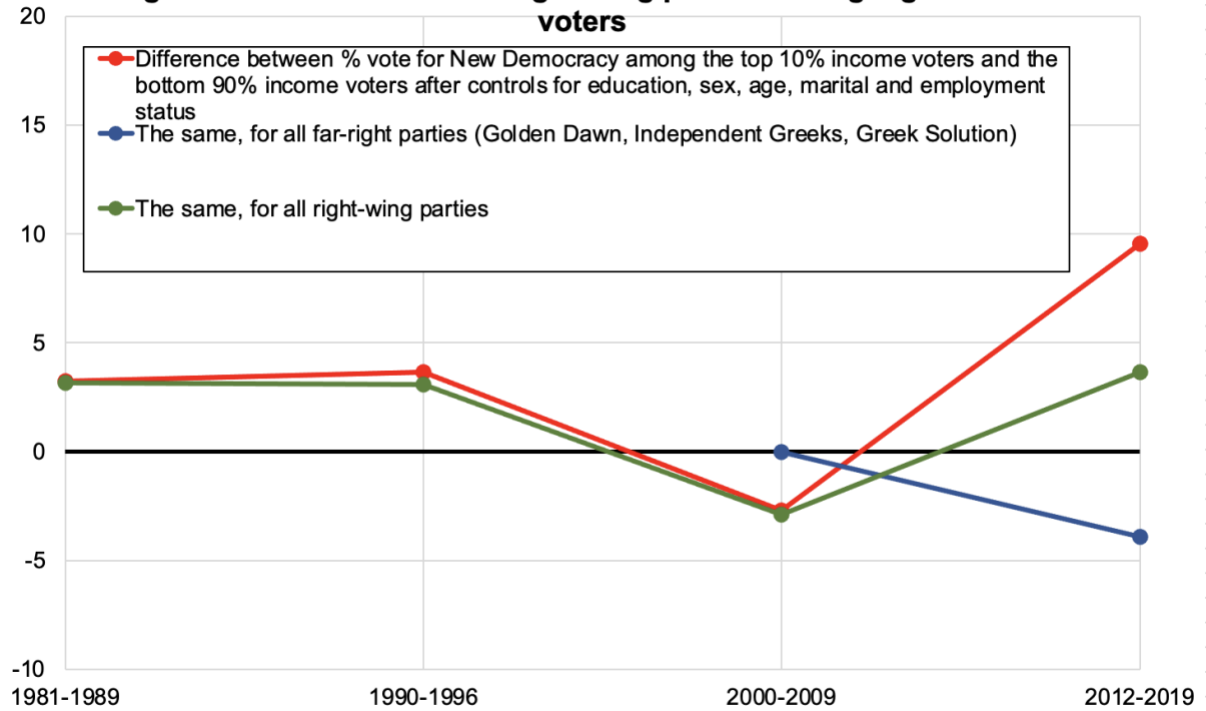
2.4.2   Education cleavage

I now turn to the education cleavage, which, together with the income cleavage, allows one to distinguish between a single and a multi elite party system, following the WPID typology.

Figure 8 presents a surprising result: there has been Brahmin Left in Greece at least since 1981. Contrary to the income cleavage, the crisis does not appear to reverse the education cleavage. Consistently, high education voters tend to vote significantly more for the left than for the right. Interestingly, in the 1980s it seems that the left had the support of both the working and the intellectual class. The rupture of the crisis and the emergence of SYRIZA does not appear to be significant. Since SYRIZA has been described as a coalition of social movements and university professors (Ovenden 2015), the fact that it maintains some of the support of the intellectual classes should not come as a surprise.

Note that the average educational cleavage of Western democracies at the beginning of the WPID time-series (1960s) is found to be -15%, while in the 1980s it is around -5% (Gethin et al. 2021). Hence, indeed the clearly positive education cleavage found in Greece in the 1980s, which remains throughout, is an important exception. Even more so since the Greek education cleavage appears rather stable, if not declining, while in almost all other Western democracies it has been steadily increasing. This exception is even more striking if one compares Greece to the rest of the European periphery, particularly Ireland and Portugal. This will be the topic of the next section though.

Figure 8 - Vote for left-wing parties among high education voters

Legend:
- Difference between % vote for left-wing parties among the top 10% education vote
- After controls for income
- After controls for income, age, gender, age, gender, employment and family situa
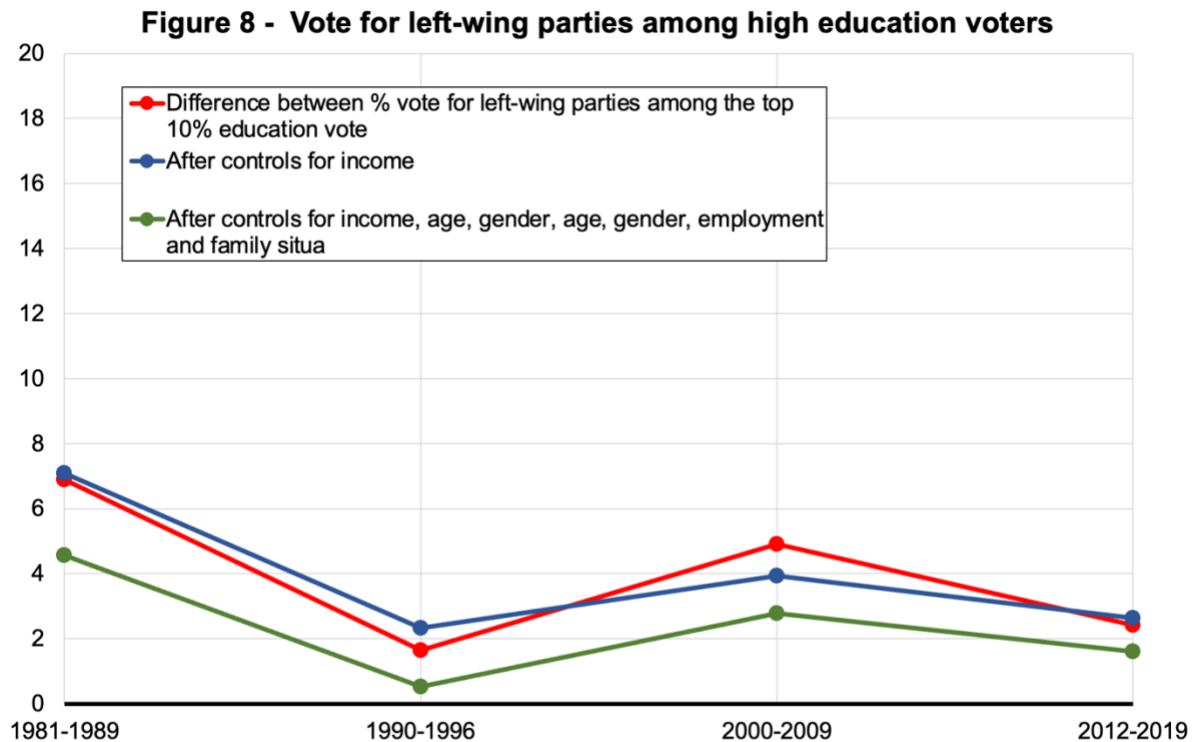
Again, I have also produced figures that decompose the education cleavage for selected left-wing (Figure 9) and right-wing parties (Figure 10). Figure 9 is particularly illuminating regarding the drivers behind the positive education cleavage in Greece. Perhaps counter-intuitively, it seems that the positive cleavage is not a result of the appeal of the main left-wing party PASOK in the intellectual circles, but rather because of the support that the highly educated show towards the radical left. Granted, the education cleavage of PASOK is weak already in the 1980s and follows an increasing trajectory ever since the 1990s. The centrist and technocratic turn of PASOK in the late 90s and the 2000s appears to have paid off with the highly educated, eventually leading to a reversal of the cleavage post-crisis. Conversely, SYRIZA and its predecessor, Synaspismos, had a positive education cleavage until the crisis, which was when SYRIZA substantially increased its support. The education cleavage of New Democracy is the mirror image of that of left-wing parties collectively up until the crisis when the emergence of the far-right with its appeal in the low educated creates a wedge. Again, given the working-class appeal of SYRIZA, the reason why the education cleavage remains positive in the third period of electoral competition in Greece is precisely the emergence of the far-right.

Figure 9 - Vote for selected left-wing parties among high education voters

Legend:
- Difference between % vote for PASOK among the top 10% education voters and the bottom 90% education voter after controls for education, sex, age, marital and employment status
- The same, for SYRIZA / Synaspismos (pre-2004)
- The same, for the Communist Party
- The same, for all left-wing parties

Figure 10 - Vote for selected right-wing parties among high education voters

Hence, while Greece displays evidence of a multi-elite party system like most Western democracies, this is not a result of a reversal of the education cleavage. That is, the sequence seen in other countries where the left is gradually "captured" by the highly educated, is not the case in Greece. When the PASOK education cleavage reversed, the party collapsed. Its collapse in 2012 was prolific of the decline of European Social Democracy, giving rise to the term "PASOKification" (Cox, 2019). Therefore, it seems that Greece is an exception to the usual trajectory of Western democracies found in Gethin et al. (2021), but not of the same kind as Ireland and Portugal, where there has been a recent turn towards a single elite party system as the left increases its working-class character.

It seems that this Greek exception could be related to the role of education in Greek society, as suggested by Tsoukalas (1975). Given that this work is seminal, albeit outdated, it is worth investigating whether its claims have withstood time. The first claim is that Greek tertiary education has been exceptionally inclusive, contributing to social mobility. The highly redistributive function of Greek tertiary education has been confirmed by a number of recent studies, as already discussed (Tsakloglou and Cholezas 2005; Pereira and Martins 2000; Bazoti 2020). Itcould be that the beneficiaries of social mobility through public tertiary education tend to vote for left-wing parties. In addition, other scholars claim that a reason why gaining a university degree was highly popular in Greece pre-crisis is because it allowed one to get a job in the public sector with tenure, providing a good wage and job security (Tsakloglou and Cholezas 2005; Bazoti 2020). Indeed, Koustenis (2023) shows that public sector workers have had a tendency to vote more for the left, than for the right, perhaps partly explaining the education cleavage.

The second claim in Tsoukalas (1975) that could be related to the education cleavage is that there is historical and cultural link between the Greek working class, the left and the highly educated. This is hard to prove, although the historically strong left-wing student movement in

Greece could be a testament to this. The third claim is that Greece has been a pioneer in tertiary education, having a high number of graduates and hence facing the complexities that come along tertiary educational expansion earlier than other countries. This does not appear to be confirmed by the data, presented in the Appendix (Figure A.1). If anything, Greece has historically had a lower percentage of university graduates than the average OECD country. A possible response in favour of Tsoukalas' argument is that Greece has historically had a large number of students abroad, which are missed by these statistics. In 1971, it appears that 20% of the Greek student population was abroad (Tsouakalas 1975), while in 2020 UNESCO documents around 40,000 Greek students abroad, a share much higher than the average European country.[6] Unfortunately, I do not have access to sufficiently good data to test whether Greek students abroad are the missing part of the puzzle, although it seems unlikely given that they always represent a small minority.

A fourth related claim is that educational expansion can be seen in the very high enrolment in Greek universities, despite some people not eventually graduating. There is evidence that Greece has much higher participation in tertiary education than other countries, as seen in the Appendix again (Figure A.2), but this tendency starts to appear in the 2000s and thus could not explain the education cleavage earlier than that. Hence, while the cultural and institutional particularities of tertiary education in Greece could partly explain the positive education cleavage, there are a number of questions that remain. Perhaps the positive education cleavage is the result of more general political and cultural patterns in Greece, which are neglected if one only focuses on education. A holistic understanding of Greek political culture is needed. I discuss this in the next sub-section.

2.4.3 Single, multiple elite party system – or *bloc bourgeois*?

A multi-elite party system describes one where both left and right-wing parties appear to represent elites, either of education or income. All multi-elite party systems analysed in Gethin et al. (2021) have the left being supported by the education elite and the right by the income (and wealth) elite. A single elite party system is one where only one side of politics is supported by elites, usually the right being supported by both the education and income elites, leaving the left to represent non-elite voters. Notwithstanding the limitations of this typology, as, for instance, the fact that the highly educated vote for the left does not mean that its policy platform is in any way elitist, it remains a tool that appears to be able to capture an important shift in the tectonic plates of Western democracies. Namely, the turn of the left away from the working class, the disconnect of green parties from popular classes and the overall under-representation of large sections of the population electorally.

Gethin et al. (2021) justify their focus on income and education when analysing political cleavages based on their aim to provide a multidimensional understanding of social class. Income and education have two major advantages compared to other measures. Firstly, they are straightforward measures of vertical inequality. Comparing two people, one with higher and one with lower income, provides an objective measure of an important dimension of inequality between those people. Secondly, income and education are relatively easy to compare across countries and over time. While there are some challenges in comparing income and education as well, they are addressed here by focusing on broad income and education groups ("top 10%" and "bottom 90%").

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[6] See the Global Flow of Tertiary-Level Students provided by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics here: https://uis.unesco.org/en/uis-student-flow.

Greece appears to fit rather uncomfortably in this typology. We could say that Greece displayed a multi-elite party system in the 1980s, with the left being supported by the education elite and the right by the income elite. However, seeing the income cleavage reverse from the 1990s means that until the crisis, Greece had a single elite party system of the opposite kind than usually found. That is, the left became the side of politics supported by income and education elites. One caveat is that, as Figure 4 shows, Greece has had a left-wing centre of gravity until 2023, meaning that on average all sectors of the population voted more for the left than for the right. It could thus be that the positive income and education cleavages simply portray a catchall party demographic that is simply tilted towards the left. Still, the post-crisis period shows that Greece returns to a more common multi-elite configuration, with the left supported by the highly educated and the right by the high incomes.

Amable and Darcillon (2022) claim that the multi-elite configuration tends to be unstable, providing evidence of the emergence of what they call the *bloc bourgeois*. Namely, the multi-elite party system in Piketty (2020) rests on the reversal of the education cleavage, leading to the conflict between the globalists and nativists becoming increasingly salient. Amable and Darcillon (2022) argue that they find evidence of a convergence of preferences between the Brahmin left and the merchant right in a number of countries, such that both income and education elites could converge to support the same side of politics, which they call *the bloc bourgeois*. That is, they find that income continues to play an important role in political cleavages. Electorally, they show that the *bloc bourgeois* is strongest in Italy and France. It could be that, at least descriptively, this was the case in Greece in the 1990s and 2000s.

Going back to the literature on the history of Greek party systems, it seems that until the PASOK compromise in the 1990s and the eventual convergence to the centre, the left-right divide was deeply polarised (Andreadis and Stavrakakis 2019). This polarisation was inherited from the Greek Civil War and the military junta. However, it appears to be more cultural than socioeconomic. The party decompositions of the income and education cleavages confirm Gunther (2005) that PASOK and New Democracy emerged as catchall electoralist parties with limited anchoring in socioeconomic cleavages.

In the 1990s, following the PASOK scandals and the election of Costas Simitis as leader of PASOK, new lines of division started to emerge. These could be linked to what Diamandouros (1994) has called the Greek cultural dualism. Diamandouros (1994) understands the Greek political and cultural landscape as divided into two camps: the pro-European modernisers and the euro-sceptical traditionalists. The former camp strives for Greece to mimic the West in terms of secularism, rationalism, democracy, and the embrace of the free market. The latter camp is characterised by an underdog culture which is introverted, highly defensive and nationalistic, bearing the imprint of Ottoman and Byzantine traditions. Market forces are feared because they would damage clientelistic networks of power.

Other scholars have defended a rather similar understanding of Greek politics at the time. Mouzelis (1986) argues that belated modernisation transformed clientelism from a personal system to a bureaucratic one, without putting an end to state despotism or creating the space for a vibrant civil society. Tsoukalas (1981) agrees with the secondary role that class divisions play in Greece since he sees Greek society as compartmentalised along extensive family and clientelist networks, with the state playing the primary despotic role in the centre of said networks. In a way, Diamandouros (1994) brings all of the above together under his cultural dualism hypothesis.

If the cultural dualism hypothesis is true, it seems to follow that elites, be it of education or income, would be on the side of modernisers. This presentation of political cleavages is in a way similar to Piketty's (2020) globalist vs nativist antagonism. After Simitis, PASOK has primarily represented the faction of the reformist, European modernisers. They were the group of people that envisioned a social, political, cultural, and institutional convergence to northern and western Europe. There have been exceptions on both the sides of PASOK and New Democracy, notably the Konstantinos Mitsotakis New Democracy government of 1990-1993, which had a neoliberal as well as European and reformist policy outlook. Therefore, since modernisers were primarily expressed by the left, at least until 2012, this could explain why both the education and income cleavages were positive in Greece between the 1990s and the 2000s. In addition to the aggregate cleavages, this could also explain the reversal of the PASOK education cleavage.

Indeed, this is very much in line with the evidence found in Piketty (2020), where he argues that the only policy dimension that aligns income, wealth and education seems to be the question of European integration, the clearest manifestation of the globalist vs nativist cleavage. In the 1992 and 2005 European referenda in France, as well as the Brexit referendum in 2016, the disadvantaged classes of any form tended to vote against Europe. Interestingly, this is exactly what transpired in the Greek 2015 referendum on the third EU-sponsored austerity bailout package, where the class cleavage became very apparent, leading to a 62% no vote. As seen in Table 1, the "no" vote is characterised by a voter profile clearly decreasing with income. Voters making less than 15 thousand euros yearly voter 70% "no", while those making over 30 thousand voted by only 44% "no". Were the scale more complete, it would be interesting to see what happens even higher along the income distribution.

Therefore, the Greek Europeanist modernisers likely mostly draw their support from the affluent factions of the Brahmin left, along with the educated ones of the merchant right, perhaps in line with the Amable and Darcillon (2022) hypothesis of the *bloc bourgeois*. Using the Piketty (2020) typology, it seems that since the 1990s, Greece was governed by alternations of internationalist-egalitarians and internationalist-inegalitarians, who gradually converged, as Andreadis and Stavrakakis (2019) argue, up until the crisis. This coalition was supported by the highly educated who, by virtue of their human capital, were shielded against European competition in product and labour markets.

Although the cultural dualism hypothesis likely has an important socio-economic dimension, as argued just above, it could be that it has an identitarian dimension as well. In fact, Gethin et al. (2021) state that the "classic explanation" for the reversal of the education cleavage is the rise of identity-based conflicts. Greece has historically stood at the crossroads of Europe and Asia-Minor, of Western Europe and the Balkans, of East and West. Campbell (1964) presents Greece as on the border of the European world, sitting on the dividing line between rational societies and those ruled by habit, guilt, and shame. Similarly, Herzfeld (2002) used the term "crypto-colonialism" to describe the modern Greek political conundrum according to which Greece stands as a buffer zone between the colonisers and the colonised and as such has traded its political independence for massive economic dependence. While in all big political decisions in the 20th century it has stood firmly with the West, having joined many intergovernmental groups exclusive to the Western inner circle, it maintains a non-negligible part of its cultural and historical identity that is non-Western. As Herzfeld (2002) argues, Greece has developed a national culture fashioned to suit foreign models. Europe has functioned as both a model and an observer, and an ambivalent one at that since Europeans were both fascinated by ancient Greece and disappointed by modern Greece. To the extent that

this identity cleavage between Greeks who wish to be Westerners, and traditionalist Greeks who wish to withstand this push exists, it seems very challenging to capture empirically. However, it could be that this cleavage is related to the curious trajectory of income and education cleavages in Greece, similarly to the cultural dualism hypothesis.

2.4.4   The post-crisis party system

As already discussed, the Greek debt crisis led to a rupture of the political system. A number of challenger parties emerged, the mainstream left party collapsed and the politics of convergence between the centre-left and the centre-right came to an end. As Kouki and Liakos (2015) argue, a new line of division emerged, which transcended the traditional left-right, or moderniser-traditionalist divides: the pro- and anti-memorandum. The term "memorandum" refers to the three Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) signed with the troika, i.e. the bailout packages with austerity conditionalities. Hence, this is a Greek variation of the pro- and anti-austerity cleavage that has emerged in a number of countries after the 2008 crisis.

The pro-memorandum camp consisted of the mainstream parties that had implemented austerity memoranda themselves, namely New Democracy and PASOK, alongside a small new centrist reformist party The River. According to the dominant pro-memorandum narrative, there was no alternative but austerity, while Greek citizens were themselves to blame since they had for years refused to embrace modernisation (Kouki and Liakos 2015). There was a significant continuity between the modernisers and the pro-memorandum camp, which is also evident in opinion polls in 2015 where the voters who were most supportive of memoranda and austerity were those of PASOK.

In the anti-memorandum camp were a number of challenger parties, from left and right, with the most prominent among them being SYRIZA. A testament to how the post-crisis memorandum cleavage transcended the left-right divide, even the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn was supported by people across the political spectrum, with many of them even positioning themselves on the left (Andreadis 2016; Georgiadou 2013). Given the populist characteristics of these movements (Vasilopoulou 2018), Greece seems to follow Mudde's (2021) assertion that "populism is an illiberal democratic response to undemocratic liberalism". Undemocratic liberalism here refers to the absence of freedom of choice for the electorate. Namely, as Koustenis (2023) also argues, the idea that there was no alternative to austerity was never particularly convincing to the Greek electorate, as seen most vividly in the 2015 referendum.

As accusations of treason became the norm, especially during the referendum in 2015, it seemed that memories of the old left-right cleavage were re-emerging, yet in a modern articulation. Moreover, while the pro- and anti-memorandum dualism transcended the left-right divide, it was deeply nested in the class cleavage. As already discussed, SYRIZA was a working-class movement, enjoying the support of low-income voters, leading to the reversal of the income cleavage. With the crisis and austerity having affected everyone, albeit regressively as I have argued elsewhere (Fasianos and Tsoukalis 2023), the reversal of the income cleavage to negative territory is perhaps understandable. Moreover, austerity led to severe cuts in the public education expenditure of 36% (Bazoti 2020), teachers' statutory salaries fell by around 30% (OECD 2020) and the tertiary education personnel labour cost was reduced by 18% (Fragiskou and Paplomatas 2014). Thus, no wonder parts of the education elite joined the anti-memorandum camp and supported SYRIZA.

These results are confirmed by Tables 1-2. Table 1 shows once again that SYRIZA has a clearly decreasing voter profile by income, while New Democracy has an increasing one. Moreover, Table 1 captures the clearest manifestation of the class element behind the pro- and anti-memorandum cleavage, namely the referendum, as already discussed. Table 2 confirms the party decompositions already presented. The far-right indeed enjoyed the support of the working class, while the small pro-memorandum centrist party The River appeals mostly to upper classes (high income and high education).

In her recent book, Mattei (2022) argues that asking whether austerity works in dealing with debt overhang and kickstarting growth is the wrong question – it obviously does not. She proposes a reconceptualization of austerity not as a technical tool for macroeconomic management, but as a political tool to stabilise class relations and protect what she calls the "capital order". Hence, despite destabilising the economy, as most vividly seen in Greece who lost around a third of its GDP during the implementation of the memoranda, austerity prevents labour organisation, increases market dependence, and enshrines the established order of the political economy. From this lens, it seems reasonable the anti-austerity movement in Greece was primarily supported by the working class, from right and left.

The memorandum dualism came to an end when SYRIZA signed an austerity bailout as well, tacitly internalising that indeed there is no alternative. Despite the very limited electoral cost that SYRIZA faced from that decision, there was a massive drop of valid votes in the second election in 2015 (by 750,000, 12.1%) which relativises the analysis of subsequent electoral outcomes, according to Koustenis (2023). Yet, SYRIZA appears to have kept its working-class character, at least until 2019. Table 3 presents the structure of the vote in the last election (May 2023) based on exit poll data. While the decomposition is less detailed, the sample size (around 6,000) is much larger than post-electoral surveys. It seems that SYRIZA has lost its appeal to the low educated electorate, which has shifted over to PASOK and New Democracy. I unfortunately do not have access to micro-data so I cannot test whether this is robust to controls. However, this is consistent with Mavris (2023), who, using electoral geography, argues that SYRIZA has lost a significant part of its working-class voters. If this is true, then SYRIZA could be at the onset of becoming a Brahmin left party, like many of its Western counterparts. Mavris (2023) explains this based on the centrist direction that SYRIZA has taken after it signed a memorandum, which made it lose its radical character that constituted its comparative advantage. Using the typology found in Gethin et al. (2022), SYRIZA moved from being a left-wing anti-austerity party, emphasising the economic-redistributive dimension, to a progressive party more focused on socio-cultural issues, hence appealing more to the highly educated.

Table 1: The Income cleavage in the referendum and the 2012-2019 elections (Koustenis 2023)											
	Share of Votes Received (%)										
	Referendum	Elections									
	2015	2012		2012.5		2015.5		2015		2019	
Average yearly income (euros)	"No" Vote	SYRIZA	New Democracy	SYRIZA	New Democracy	SYRIZA	New Democracy	SYRIZA	New Democracy	SYRIZA	New Democracy
>30,000	43.7%	17.9%	16.3%	24.1%	37.0%	26.7%	39.0%	29.3%	35.3%	23.2%	53.8%
24,000-30,000	52.5%	19.8%	14.7%	27.8%	30.8%	31.6%	32.0%	33.7%	29.8%	28.3%	45.4%
22,500-24,000	59.0%	21.7%	13.2%	31.1%	26.1%	35.2%	26.8%	37.2%	25.6%	32.5%	38.6%
20,000-22,500	63.6%	22.4%	11.7%	33.2%	23.0%	38.0%	23.5%	39.3%	22.8%	35.3%	34.4%
19,500-20,000	66.4%	22.8%	11.8%	34.2%	22.4%	39.4%	22.4%	40.3%	22.3%	37.0%	33.0%
<19,500	70.2%	21.4%	11.8%	33.6%	21.5%	40.5%	21.0%	40.3%	21.7%	37.1%	32.7%

Table 2: The structure of political cleavages in Greece, 2012-2019 (CSES-ELNES)							
	Share of votes received (%)						
	KKE	MERA25	SYRIZA	PASOK	The River	New Democracy	Far-right parties
Education							
Primary	5%	0%	32%	4%	5%	34%	10%
Secondary	3%	1%	33%	5%	4%	32%	7%
Tertiary	5%	3%	29%	5%	8%	38%	2%
Groups of income							
Bottom 50%	5%	2%	35%	4%	4%	31%	6%
Middle 40%	4%	2%	30%	6%	7%	35%	6%
Top 10%	3%	2%	22%	7%	10%	45%	2%
Age							
20-40	5%	3%	36%	3%	6%	29%	5%
40-60	3%	1%	31%	5%	7%	36%	6%
60+	5%	1%	25%	9%	5%	42%	4%
Location							
Urban	4%	2%	33%	5%	7%	35%	4%
Rural	6%	1%	22%	8%	2%	35%	11%
Church attendance							
Never	7%	2%	43%	4%	9%	22%	3%
Less than monthly	4%	2%	31%	6%	6%	35%	6%
Monthly or more	2%	1%	20%	5%	3%	46%	8%
Gender							
Woman	5%	2%	35%	4%	7%	34%	4%
Man	4%	2%	29%	6%	6%	36%	7%
Groups of education							
Bottom 50%	5%	2%	31%	5%	5%	35%	7%
Middle 40%	4%	2%	31%	5%	7%	35%	5%
Top 10%	4%	2%	30%	6%	8%	37%	3%

Table 3: Structure of the political cleavages in Greece, 2023 May elections (exit polls)					
	Share of the votes received (%)				
	KKE	SYRIZA	PASOK	New Democracy	Greek Solution
Gender					
Men	8%	18%	11%	41%	5%
Women	7%	22%	12%	40%	4%
Education					
Primary	6%	20%	13%	50%	4%
Secondary	7%	19%	11%	40%	6%
Tertiary	8%	22%	11%	40%	3%
Age					
17/18-34	8%	22%	10%	31%	5%
35-54	7%	19%	11%	40%	5%
55+	7%	20%	13%	47%	4%
Occupation					
Agricultural employment	8%	10%	13%	48%	8%
Self-employed	6%	13%	9%	55%	4%
Public sector employment	6%	24%	13%	36%	3%
Private sector employment	10%	23%	12%	29%	6%
Unemployed	7%	20%	9%	34%	7%
Student	7%	26%	11%	31%	5%
Housewife	6%	18%	14%	46%	3%
Pensioner	6%	20%	13%	49%	3%

2.4.5   Rural-urban cleavage

As Gethin et al (2021) argue, the rural-urban cleavage has been a consistently sharp cleavage in capitalist democracies. Urban areas tend to concentrate more economic activity and a greater array of opportunities for their residents compared to the countryside. Nevertheless, historically, the left has faced a difficulty penetrating the demographic of rural voters. This is linked to the fact that left-wing parties emerged from the industrial cleavage and were concentrated in urban, working-class areas after the Industrial Revolution (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Gethin et al. (2021) add that one reason why class divides are weak in late industrialisers is that the stabilisation of their party systems occurred at the time when the agricultural sector was still strong, with many rural workers unwilling to support left-wing parties. Hence, the rural-urban cleavage in these countries tends to be strongly cross-cutting, blurring class lines.

Figure 11 - Vote for left-wing parties among rural voters
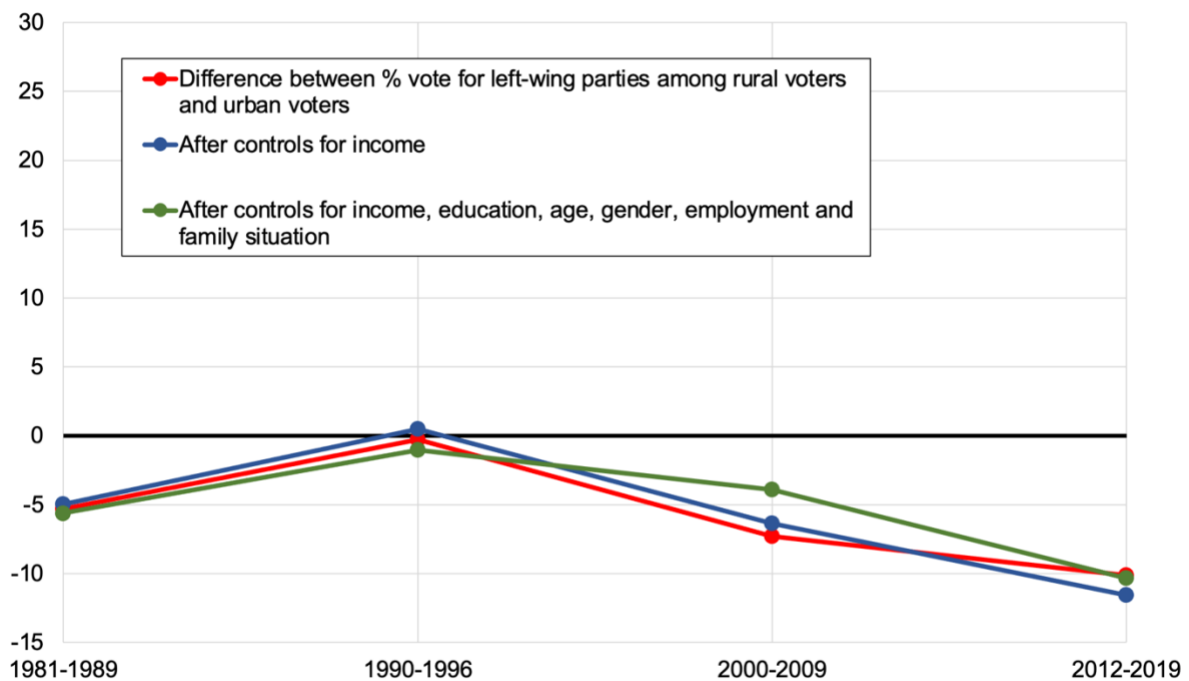
This does not appear to be the case in Greece. While Greece indeed has a weak class cleavage, this does not appear to be so because of the cross-cutting nature of the rural-urban cleavage, if we take Figure 11 at face value. The pre-crisis period of PASOK-ND dominance in Greece displays a relatively weak rural-urban cleavage. While I reproduce the well-established result that rural voters have a tendency to vote for the right, this does not seem to be a strong tendency in Greece. In the post-crisis period though, the cleavage seems to become stronger.

For reference, the average rural-urban cleavage in Western democracies has fluctuated around -10% since the 1950s. Only Italy bears some similarities to Greece. In the 1980s and 1990s both countries displayed a cleavage of similar strength, while they both saw their rural-urban cleavage deepen in the 2010s. This trend in Italy though is related to the regionalist cleavage, as I will discuss in Section 3, while in Greece the pattern towards a stronger cleavage seems to have started earlier, from the 2000s.

To have a clearer understanding of this trajectory in Greece, I have decomposed the rural-urban cleavage by parties. Figure 12 presents the rural-urban cleavage for selected left-wing parties. Interestingly, it seems that PASOK has consistently had a slightly positive rural-urban cleavage, despite being a left-wing party. This could partly be linked to its party machine of networks and connections in the countryside,[7] which has allowed it to sustain rural support. Despite replacing PASOK in the post-crisis two-party system, SYRIZA has been unable to match PASOK's party machine, facing more difficulties to reach the rural voter. SYRIZA emerged from mostly urban social movements, while its radical left ideological profile perhaps made it even harder to convince the countryside. As SYRIZA rose to power, its rural-urban cleavage became strongly negative, explaining the post-crisis negative dip of the left-wing rural-urban cleavage overall.

Figure 12 - Vote for selected left-wing parties among rural voters
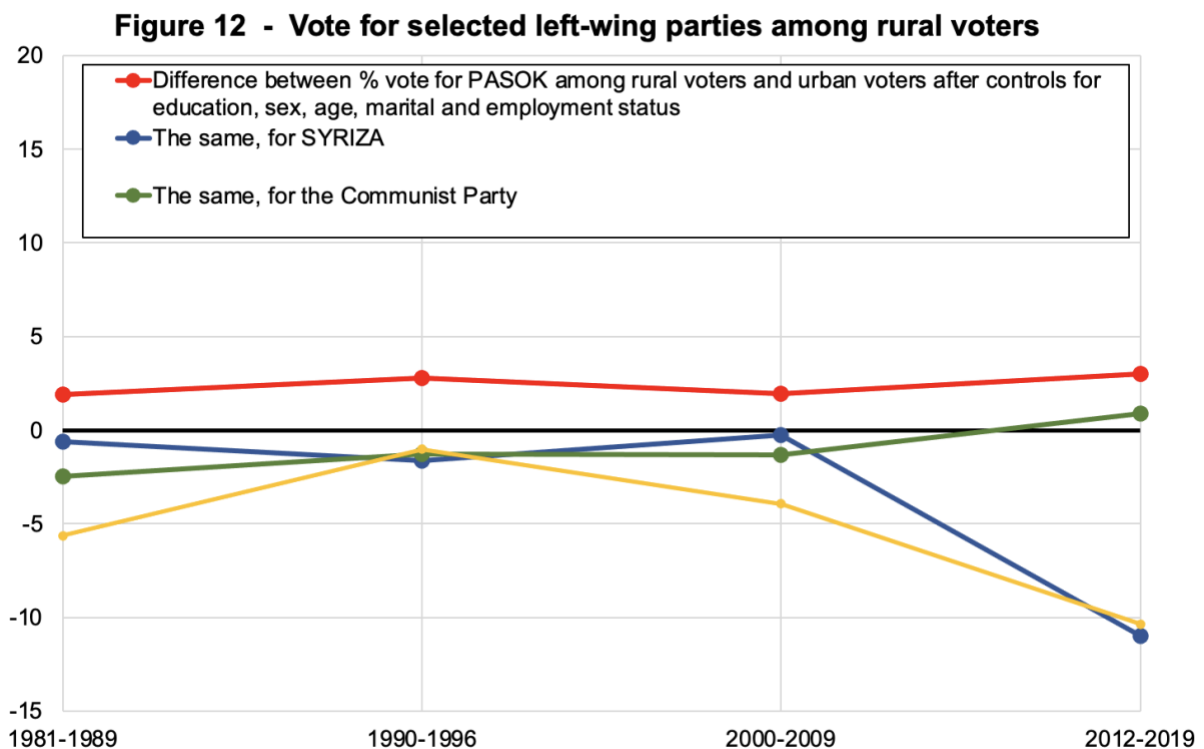
Figure 13 presents the equivalent decomposition, this time for right-wing parties. It appears that New Democracy has been more popular with rural voters than PASOK, explaining the slightly negative rural-urban cleavage for left-wing parties overall. The third period of electoral competition in Greece (2012-2019) though brought a reduction of New Democracy's appeal to the countryside, along with a strongly positive rural-urban cleavage for far-right parties. The appeal of far-right parties in the countryside is evident from Table 2 as well but is now also confirmed with controls.

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[7] Including connections of clientelist patronage, see Afonso et al. (2015).

Figure 13 - Vote for selected right-wing parties among rural voters

- **Difference between % vote for New Democracy among rural voters and urban voters after controls for education, sex, age, marital and employment status**
- **The same, for all far-right parties (Golden Dawn, Independent Greeks, Greek Solution)**
- **The same, for all right-wing parties**
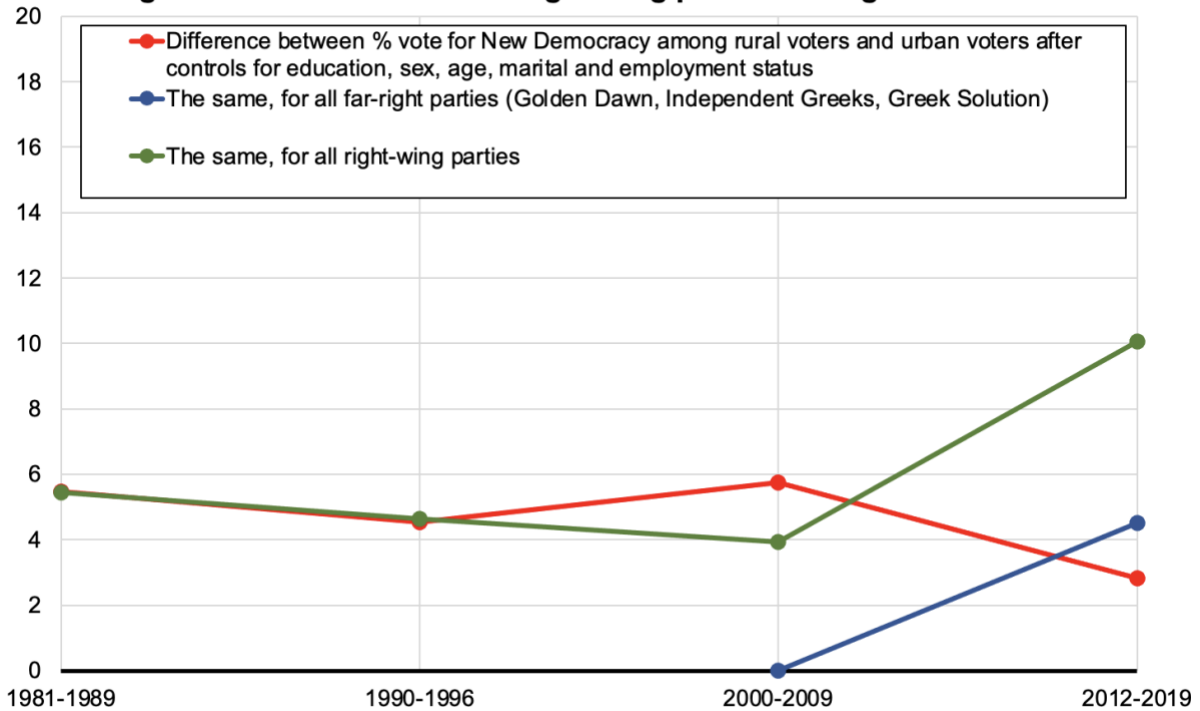
An additional cleavage that could partly be behind this is that between the Greek region of Macedonia and the rest of the country, following the signature of the Treaty of Prespa with Northern Macedonia in 2018. Before the agreement, the country of Northern Macedonia was officially recognised by most countries as the Republic of Macedonia, while Greece continued to call it the Former Yugoslavic Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). After decades of disputes between the two countries regarding the usage of the term Macedonia as well as claims of historical heritage to the Ancient Kingdom of Macedonia, the Treaty of Prespa settled the quarrel and provided grounds for further integration between the neighbouring countries. However, there were mass mobilisations in Greece against the Treaty, especially in the northern region of Greek Macedonia. Ever since, Macedonia has increasingly shifted to the far-right, which are the only parties that continue to promise scrapping the Treaty. The result being that in the May 2023 elections, the far-right got 18.5% of the vote in Macedonia, compared to the 39.1% of New Democracy (Mavris 2023). Such votes are even more concentrated in the rural areas of Macedonia.

The historically weak rural-urban cleavage in Greece could be related to the strong links that people in urban centres have maintained to the Greek countryside. Tsoukalas (1975) observes that Athens went from being a town of a few thousands in the mid-19th century, to becoming the largest city in the Balkans before the First World War. This happened, he argues, through the planned and temporary migration of men from villages to the city, primarily to study and to achieve a better socio-economic standing. They subsequently joined a social class of petty bourgeois, mostly unproductive labour. As such, Tsoukalas (1975) argues, while Greece urbanised, workers did not become proletarianized. Hence, migrants to urban centres maintained close links to the countryside, where usually members of their family still lived. Moreover, they often still owned a small house in their village of origin, as also seen in the very high homeownership rates that Greece continues to display (Fasianos and Tsoukalis 2023).

The rural-urban cleavage becomes even fuzzier, as many Greeks living in Athens and Thessaloniki, the two big urban centres, have kept their voting rights in the countryside. Every election period, there is a massive exodus of people from the cities to the countryside to go to vote.[8] Hence, a sizeable proportion of people who appear in electoral catalogues in the countryside, in fact live in urban areas. If one could accurately distinguish between the actual residents of the countryside and those that have simply maintained their voting rights there while living in the city, then arguably the rural-urban cleavage would have been stronger. Perhaps, the pattern observed in Figure 11 towards a stronger cleavage not only has to do with the crisis and the urban character of SYRIZA, but also with the fact that the links to the countryside for people living in urban centres are gradually becoming weaker. Younger generations could have either moved their electoral registration to their actual place of residence out of convenience, or because the crisis forced them to sell their family houses in their village of origin in search for liquidity. At any rate, this could mask the cross-cutting nature of the rural-urban cleavage, which could still be related to the weak class cleavage found in Greece.

2.4.6   Age and gender cleavages

In this sub-section I will present the results on the historical evolution of the age and gender cleavages in Greece. Figure 14 presents the age cleavage, reproducing the well-established result that younger people tend to vote more for the left than older people. The pattern followed is similar to other Greek political cleavages already analysed, namely a U-shape. It seems that in the 1980s, the left in Greece appealed to the expected demographic of working-class and young voters. There is a clear declining tendency of its appeal to the young though, culminating in the 2000s when the young, if anything, vote more for the right than the left. If we assume that the left has a natural tendency to enjoy greater support among the young, then this can be explained by the aforementioned strategies of convergence to the right and the emergence of a technocratic and centrist PASOK that seems to have discouraged young voters. The crisis and the emergence of radical left SYRIZA appears to have broken this pattern, regaining the vote of the young. This is in line with the evidence provided in Gethin et al. (2021), where challenger left-wing parties such as Die Linke in Germany and Podemos in Spain, are found to have a voter profile decreasing in age. Indeed, Tables 2-3 confirm the appeal of SYRIZA to young voters and students, contrary to PASOK that seems to be particularly successful with old voters and pensioners. This is confirmed in the party decomposition of the age cleavage presented in the Appendix (Figure A.3).

Compared to most other countries in the WPID, Greece has had a strong age cleavage. In Europe, only Spain and Belgium had a double-digit age cleavage in the 1980s, while only the Netherlands briefly faced a strongly negative age cleavage in the 2000s. Almost all European countries face a more or less consistently positive, but relatively weak age cleavage.

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[8] The massive exodus of Greek voters from urban centres towards the countryside to vote is covered by Greek media at the time of every election (see: https://www.news247.gr/ekloges/ekloges-2023-synechizetai-i-exodos-ton-psifoforon-ayximeni-kinisi-se-limania-kai-ktel.10049879.html. , or: https://www.lifo.gr/now/greece/ekloges-2023-koryfonetai-i-exodos-ton-eterodimoton-kinisi-se-limania-aerodromia-ktel.) . However, I have not been able to find comprehensive data that estimate how many people indeed live in urban centres but have kept their electoral rights in the countryside (the so-called 'eterodimotes').

## Figure 14 - Vote for left-wing parties among young voters
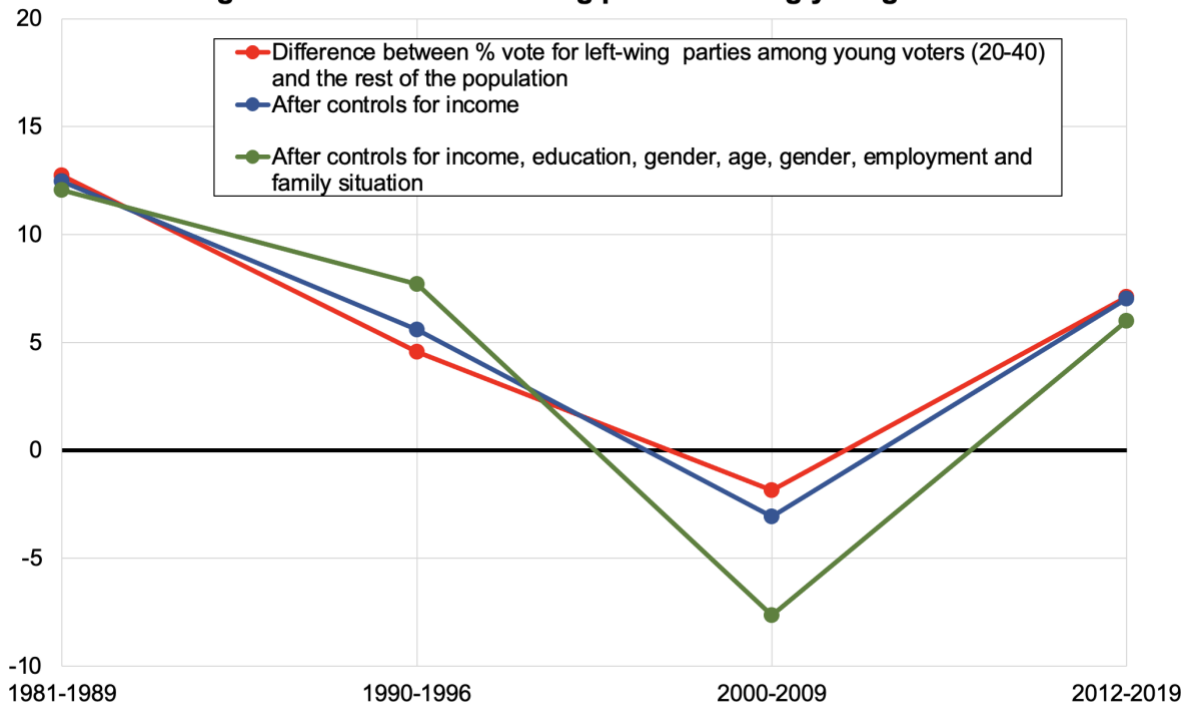
I now turn to the gender cleavage, presented in Figure 15 below. The two major reversals that Piketty (2020) finds in terms of political cleavages are the education and the gender cleavage. In most countries, the highly educated used to vote for the right and they now vote for the left, while women used to vote for the right ("traditional gender cleavage") as well and they now vote for the left ("modern gender gap"). I have already discussed how the education cleavage reversal does not happen in Greece because, at least since 1981, the highly educated always supported the left. The reversal of the gender cleavage does happen in Greece though. Starting from a weak "traditional gender cleavage", Greece quickly moves to a strong "modern gender gap". Since the 1980s, the tendency to vote for the left seems to be very balanced between men and women. As late as in the 2010s we see the pattern found in other countries, namely that of women turning more towards left-wing parties. This "modern gender gap" appears in Greece later than most other Western democracies, for which the cleavage on average reverses in the 1980s (Inglehart and Norris 2000). However, once the modern gender gap appears, it leads to Greek women having one of the strongest tendencies to vote for the left among Western democracies.

Interestingly, it seems that the trajectory of the Greek gender cleavage is closer to that of Scandinavian countries than to the rest of the Southern European periphery. Portugal, Spain, and Italy had a strong "traditional gender cleavage" in the 1980s, which simply weakens until the 2010s, without turning into a "modern gender gap". Conversely, Scandinavian countries such as Sweden, Norway and Denmark were characterised by a historically weak "traditional gender cleavage", and the emergence of a strong "modern gender gap", rather similarly to Greece. Given the socio-cultural similarities of Greece and the European periphery, this is a surprising result.

Moreover, Gethin et al. (2021) find that the tendency of women to vote for right-wing parties in the mid-20th century is largely driven by religiosity or religious affiliation in countries with a strong religious cleavage, such as France, Italy, and Spain. Controlling for religiosity in Greece I also find that the gender cleavage becomes more negative in the 1980s and 1990s, but the sudden drop in the 2010s remains. Ergo, the recent emergence of the "modern gender gap" in Greece does not appear to be liked to changes in the religiosity of women.


Figure 15 - Vote for left-wing parties among male voters
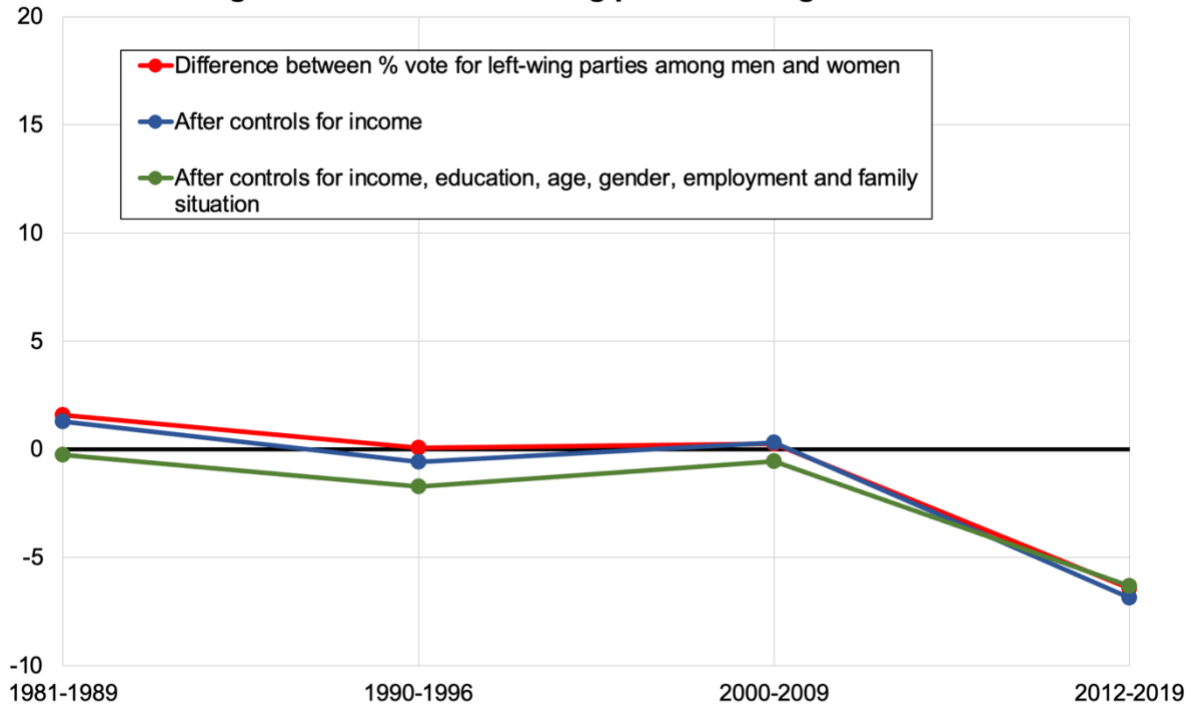
The strong "modern gender gap" seems to be related to the effects of the crisis and the rise of SYRIZA and the far-right. Firstly, the position of women in Greek society has been highly unequal. According to the Gender Equality Index, published every year by the European Institute for Gender Equality, Greece displayed the lowest Gender Equality score out of all 27 European Union countries in 2022. There is also evidence that women were more severely affected than men by the crisis and austerity policies, in terms of employment, health as well as mental health (Vaiou 2014; Drydakis 2015). Hence, it might not come as a surprise that when offered an anti-systemic, anti-austerity, and untainted alternative, women were inclined to support it. Especially since PASOK and New Democracy have almost always been run by men and have relied mostly on men for ministerial duties. A new radical left party, with links to social movements, including the feminist one, appears to have strengthened the gender cleavage by convincing more women to vote for the left. Additionally, the emergence of far-right movements being overwhelmingly supported by men has also contributed to the negative gender cleavage. This is confirmed in Tables 2-3. SYRIZA seems to have more of an appeal in women than most other parties, certainly more than New Democracy and PASOK, while the far-right is primarily supported by men. I reproduce this result through a decomposition of the gender cleavage by parties even after controls, provided in the Appendix (Figure A.4).

2.4.7 Religion (and minority) cleavages

Another result found in Piketty (2020) and Gethin et al. (2021) is that religious, as well as ethnic minorities in Western countries have overwhelmingly been voting for left-wing parties lately. For instance, this is clearly seen in the voting of Muslims in France, Black people in the US and people of Caribbean and Indo-Pakistani descent in the UK, who all vote for left-wing parties by around 80-90% (Piketty 2020).

The analysis of religious and minority cleavages in Greece has certain advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, Greece is the only majority Christian Orthodox country to be included in the WPID, making it an interesting case study. Moreover, the direction of the cleavages seems to confirm the literature, as seen in Figure 16. Namely, Muslim and people of no religion tend to vote significantly more for left-wing parties. However, Greece is a very homogeneous and religious country. In fact, Greece constitutionally recognises the "prevailing religion" of Orthodox Christianity, having withstood for years the implementation of secularism. In 2006, it is estimated that 96.9% of the population was Orthodox Christian, with only 2% declaring themselves as atheist. Nowadays, the percentage of Orthodox Christians has fallen to 81.4%, with 14.7% being non-religious.[9] People of Muslim faith are estimated to be around 1-2% of the population.[10] Hence, the results displayed in Figure 16 should be interpreted with caution. I only present the Muslim vote for the 2000s because for the rest of the elections there are too few observations.

Figure 16 - Share of vote for left-wing parties by religion

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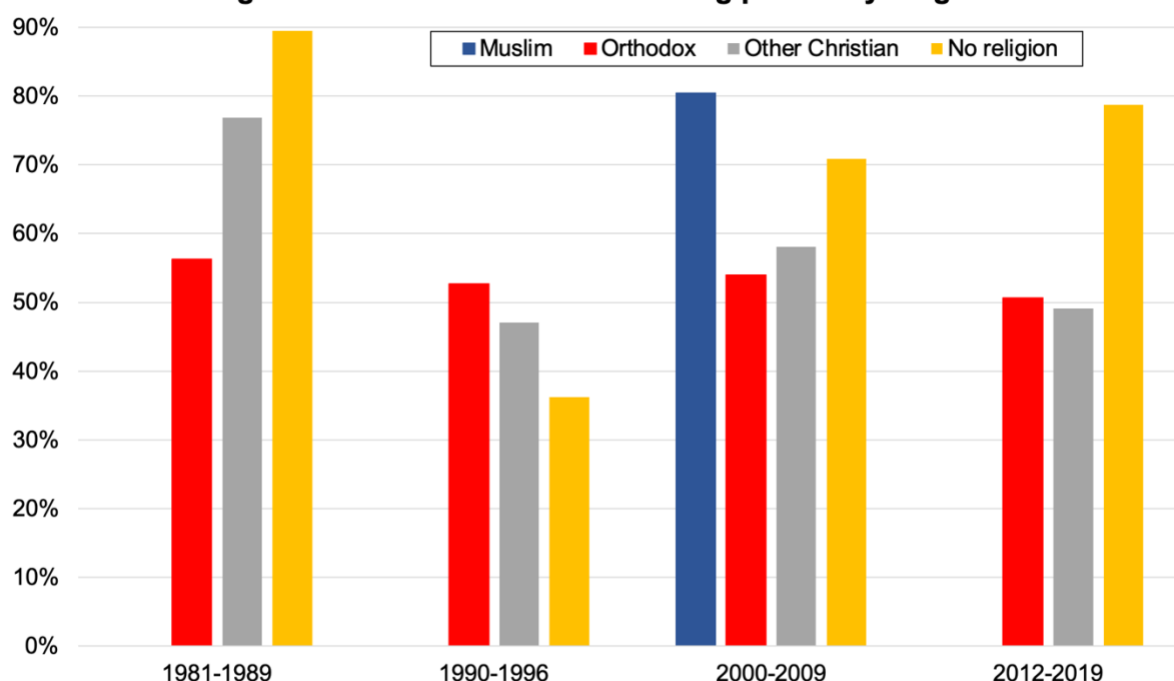
[9] As quoted by the public opinion polling company Kapa Research: https://kaparesearch.com/en/easter-faith-and-religion-in-greece/.

[10] This statistic is found both in the 2019 report of the US State Department on religious freedom in Greece (https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/greece/.) and in this 2017 Pew Research Center report on religious beliefs in Central and Eastern Europe (https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2017/05/10/religious-affiliation/.)

The impact of the Muslim vote was very clear in the last elections, in May 2023. Figure 17 presents the electoral map, where the only region in Greece that did not give a majority to the centre-right New Democracy is that of Rodopi, in the North-East of Greece. Mavris (2023) argues that this is because SYRIZA managed to maintain the support of the Muslim community in Rodopi, despite its electoral collapse. In fact, in the municipalities where the Muslim community is concentrated, SYRIZA received an absolute majority (Amaxades 62.2%, Sostis 59.6%, Fillyria 51.9%).

Figure 17: Electoral map of the May 2023 Greek parliamentary election
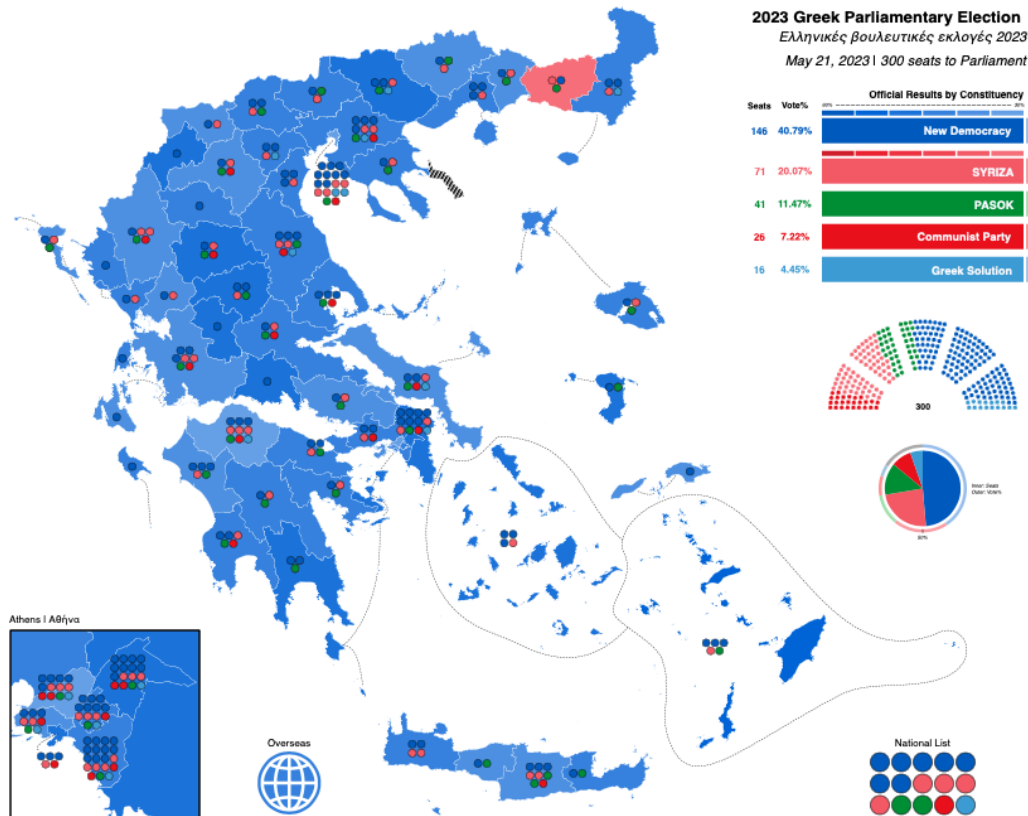
I now move to the religious-secular cleavage, for which there is more statistical variation. Figure 18 reproduces the well-established result that religious voters have an affinity to right-wing parties. In Greece, just as in most other Western countries, the conservative party has maintained the closest links to the church and religious voters, while Greek left-wing parties have a history of fighting for secularisation, albeit with limited success. This explains the very strong religiosity cleavage presented in Figure 18, which shows that less religious people overwhelmingly vote for left-wing parties. While the cleavage appears relatively stable itself, after controls there appears to be a declining tendency. This is the result of gradual secularisation. In the 2010s there start to appear 10-15% of the respondents who declare no religion. Those with no religion tend to never, or rarely, attend religious services. Hence, controlling for religion makes the cleavage reduce. This is very similar to the evolution of the religious-secular cleavage in Spain, as presented in Gethin et al. (2021). Overall, Greece displays a relatively similar trajectory to the rest of the religious European periphery, of a strong but declining religious-secular cleavage due to secularisation.

Going back to Table 2, SYRIZA has a greater appeal among the non-religious than PASOK. So, were it not for secularisation, the religious-secular cleavage would have increased after the crisis and the rise of SYRIZA. The Communist Party (KKE) also enjoys support among the non-religious, while the right-wing parties are much more popular among the church-going. This is confirmed in the party decomposition of the religious-secular cleavage after controls presented in the Appendix (Figure A.5).

Figure 18 - Vote for left-wing parties among voters never attending religious services
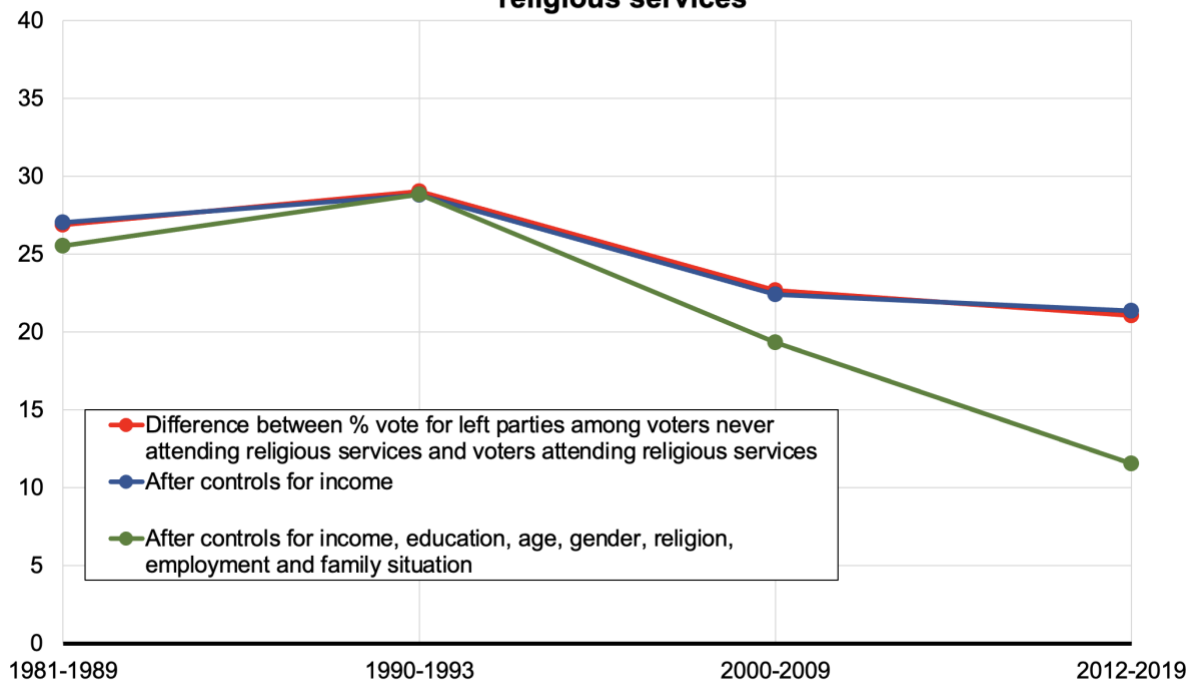
There are at least two instances when the religious-secular cleavage became apparent in contemporary Greek political history. The first is in the 2000s, when the left-wing Simitis PASOK government passed a law that withdrew references to religion from Greek identity cards. The Church, which remains a powerful institution in Greece, rallied people against this reform. Archbishop Christodoulos was at the forefront of the movement, which enjoyed widespread popular participation (Andreadis and Stavrakakis 2019). The second was during the SYRIZA government in 2015-2016, when the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs tried to pass a number of secular reforms, including transforming the rather catechistic Religion class taught to primary and secondary education pupils into a more pluralistic Religious Studies course. The reaction of the Church was so severe that the government was forced to replace the said Minister and pass a much softer version of its secularisation programme. Hence, there are times when the strength of the religious-secular cleavage has become apparent in Greek political history, bearing notable consequences.

Despite Greece being a very ethnically homogeneous country, a minority whose voting behaviour has been found in the literature to be consistently different are the Christian refugees who arrived from Turkey under the 1923 population exchange. This is the so-called cleavage between old and refugee Greeks. Although Murard (2022) finds that the social integration of the 1.2 million refugees has been successful in the long-run, Logothetis et al. (2023, ongoing) suggest that political attitudes have not converged. Notably, first-, as well as second-generation refugees have a tendency to vote for left-wing parties. Interestingly, they suggest that this is

because they have structured a cultural identity based on victimhood and exclusion that is transmitted through songs, among other things. They show that, on the one hand, refugee descendants are clustered in specific neighbourhoods and, using a spatial regression discontinuity design, they argue that said neighbourhoods consistently support left-wing parties more. On the other hand, they use machine learning techniques to demonstrate that the songs of refugees and refugee descendants overwhelmingly display themes of exclusion, victimhood, and hardship. If true, this again confirms the result in Gethin et al. (2021), that minorities tend to vote for left-wing parties. The curious finding here is that this appears to be the case despite the successful integration of the minority group.

The cleavage between old and refugee Greeks re-emerged recently with the rise of far-right parties, most notably the Golden Dawn. Koustenis (2023) finds that Golden Dawn was particularly successful in regions that where severely affected by the economic crisis and where left-wing parties had been traditionally weak. Namely, these are regions where residents faced a big reduction in incomes and a rise in unemployment, but where there has historically been a limited presence of refugee Greeks, hence making left-wing parties less popular. In some of these electoral districts, Golden Dawn achieved double digits in 2012-2015.

2.4.8   Summary

Attempting to bring all of the above evidence together, it seems that Greece is an exception regarding both its income and its education cleavage. Its income cleavage appears to have completely reversed from the 1990s. The pattern in most Western democracies is one of stability of the income cleavage, if not slight decline. Only Italy and the US have witnessed a reversal, but for both countries this happened in the 2010s, much later than in Greece. The political and economic crisis was so deep that the income cleavage has returned to negative territory in the 2010s. As for the education cleavage, it has remarkably remained positive and stable ever since 1981. It seems that the left in Greece has always been of the Brahmin kind, enjoying the support of the highly educated sections of the population. The income and education cleavages in tandem give a curious description of the Greek party system until the crisis, which appears to have been dominated by a left *bloc bourgeois*. The crisis has subsequently pushed Greece towards a multi-elite configuration, which seems to be rather unstable.

Regarding the other political cleavages analysed, Greece broadly follows the patterns seen in other Western democracies. Greece has displayed a historically rather weak but emergent rural-urban cleavage, which could be explained by the close links Greeks in urban areas have maintained to the countryside. Young Greeks have voted more for the left, with an exception in the 2000s, while the gender cleavage has historically been weak but recently became strong, displaying the established tendency of women increasingly voting for the left. The religious-secular cleavage has been particularly strong in Greece, while the effects of a belated secularisation are starting to ap

3. Comparison to the European periphery

3.1 Introduction

In this section, I will undertake a systematic comparison of the results presented for Greece, to those in Gethin et al. (2021) on Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Ireland. Acknowledging the limitations of such a 'small n' comparison, there are two tentative takeaways that will emerge. Firstly, regionalism appears to be a pivotal cross-cutting cleavage, blurring the class lines even in times of crisis. Secondly, party systems appeared to be faced with an implicit dilemma when the crisis hit: polarisation or fragmentation. The direction they took seems to have significantly affected the ensuing political cleavages.

As a reminder, the PIIGS (Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece, and Spain) display a number of common characteristics. They are all late industrialisers, with religious populations and a strong religious-secular cleavage, often preventing voter alignment along the class cleavage. They were the weakest members of the Eurozone when the Global Financial Crisis reached home, all facing serious debt problems. As a result, three out of five reached out to the troika for emergency assistance in the form of bailout austerity packages. Arguably, Spain and Italy received a similar, albeit more nuanced, form of assistance. In Spain, a loan with austerity conditionalities was given through the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) to bail-out Spanish banks in 2012, but without the involvement of the IMF. In Italy, instead of a formal adjustment programme, intervention took the form of the secret Trichet-Draghi 2011 letter, which pushed for austerity reforms, as well as the Draghi "whatever it takes" moment in 2012, uttered primarily to reduce the Italian debt servicing costs. Furthermore, Gunther (2005) finds that, with the exception of Ireland, these four are the European countries that consistently display the highest levels of electoral volatility in the late 20th century. Hence, given their common trajectories, a comparison of the evolution of political cleavages among those countries is very interesting.

An underlying motivation in the analysis that follows is that the crisis, coupled with the effects of regressive austerity, make class cleavages more salient. In other words, it is an event reinforcing the class cleavage. Turning the Inglehart and Norris (2019) cultural backlash theory on its head, when a substantial proportion of people return to agonising about material deprivation, they perhaps care less about post-material issues. As such, one would expect a turn away from Brahmin left and towards a single elite system. Of course, I am not claiming that it is this straightforward, as there can be a number of other cross-cutting cleavages preventing such a voter realignment. However, given this common experience that these countries share, it is interesting to investigate why in some countries there was voter realignment, as one would expect, while in others there was not.

An alternative way to justify this motivation is provided in Lefkofridi et al. (2014). In their study they argue that in all Western European countries, there is a sizeable group of left-authoritarian voters (economically redistributive, socio-culturally conservative), which are consistently cross-pressured between left-liberal and right-authoritarian parties. In fact, Greece appears to have the highest percentage of such voters (36.2%), with all other countries of the European periphery also ranking relatively high (Italy 25.2%, Spain 25.7%, Portugal 25.7%, Ireland 22.3%). Lefkofridi et al. (2014) show that whether this group of voters supports left or right-wing parties depends on how concerned they are about the economy, compared to immigration. If the economy takes precedence, then they overwhelmingly vote left, while if

immigration fear dominates, they vote right. From this perspective, the crisis and austerity are expected to increase concern for the economy.

3.2 Comparing Italy and Spain to Greece

3.2.1 Italy

Besides being neighbours and sharing a great classical past, the trajectory of political cleavages in Greece and Italy appear to share some characteristics. Just as PASOK compromised with the status quo in the 1990s, the Italian Communist Party (PCI) also compromised in 1993 by breaking up, leading to the subsequent fading of its radical elements in its offspring, Partito Democratico. In both countries the religious cleavage has a cross-cutting nature, as people are drawn to one party based on class and another based on religious lines. This leads to a weak class cleavage and a clear tendency of religious people to vote for right-wing parties. Yet, the decline of religiosity in Italy came together with the weakening of class voting, while in Greece class voting was already very weak even prior to the more belated decline of religiosity. Another crucial difference between the two countries is the strength of the regionalist cleavage in Italy and the lack thereof in Greece. The strength of the regionalist cleavage is an additional reason behind the decline of class voting in Italy.

The crisis brought the fragmentation of the party system in both countries. In Greece, fragmentation materialised in 2012 and 2015 with the emergence of a radical left anti-austerity party (SYRIZA), two far-right anti-immigrant parties (Golden Dawn, Independent Greeks-ANEL) and a centrist party (The River). For the first time since the re-establishment of democracy in Greece, a non-mainstream party came to government in 2015. Similarly, the crisis led to the emergence of a populist left party (Five Star Movement) in Italy, a far-right regionalist party (Lega) and a far-right party (Fratelli d'Italia). In 2018, the Five Star Movement and Lega formed a coalition government, becoming the first non-mainstream parties to govern post-authoritarian Italy. Similar to the 2015 SYRIZA-ANEL government, it involved the coalition of a challenger left-wing, with a challenger right-wing party.

Comparisons of the voter demographic between parties is not very straightforward given the significant regionalist element in Italy. As seen in the Appendix (Table A.1), the Five Star Movement primarily captures the vote in the South and the islands, while the Lega is concentrated in the North of Italy. Being the two challenger parties from the left, SYRIZA and the Five Star Movement both have a young, low educated and non-religious voter base. However, the Five Star Movement also enjoys the support of high incomes, while SYRIZA does not. The Lega, by virtue of being concentrated in the richer Northern parts of Italy, also enjoys the support of high incomes as well as some non-religious voters, contrary to the Golden Dawn and the Independent Greeks, who primarily rely on a low-income, rural, and religious voter base. Hence, it is clear that the regionalist cleavage plays a role in blurring other political cleavages underlying Italian society.

While Greece and Italy displayed similarities in their weak multi-elite, or rather *bloc bourgeois*, party systems, the regionalist question likely plays an important role. The Italian education cleavage reverses in the 1980s and the income cleavage in the 2010s. The education cleavage in Greece in the 1980s is also found to be positive, two to three times more than the Italian, but due to lack of data we cannot know if and when it reversed. In addition, as already mentioned, the income cleavage in Italy reverses in the 2010s because of the Five Star Movement, which is more of a populist than a left-wing party, significantly fuelled by the regionalist cleavage. In

Greece, the income cleavage reversed in the 1990s when PASOK turned centrist. Therefore, even if Italy, just like Greece, fits uncomfortably in the WPID typology, it seems to be the case for different reasons.

3.2.2   Spain

Moving on to Spain, one also sees a number of commonalities with Greece, but for the crucial implications of the regionalist cleavage. Both countries share a recent fascist authoritarian past. Similar to PASOK, PSOE compromised in 1979 by renouncing Marxism and becoming a status quo social-democratic power. Spain had a consistent presence of a Communist Party until the 1990s, until it joined the IU coalition appealing to a high education electorate. This is contrary to the trajectory that the Greek Communist Party (KKE) has followed, also having briefly joined a coalition in the 1990s but soon exiting it and having maintained its mass, working-class voter demographic.

The crisis hit both countries severely. Greece through a sovereign debt crisis and Spain through a housing bubble which later morphed into a sovereign debt crisis. Spain also faced a radical fragmentation and reconfiguration of its party system, seemingly of a very similar kind to Greece. Much more so than Italy. Podemos emerged as an anti-austerity sister party to SYRIZA, Ciudadanos as a centrist sister party to The River in Greece and Vox, albeit with some delay, as a far-right party, seemingly rather similar to the Greek ones (Golden Dawn, Independent Greeks, Greek Solution after 2019). However, the voter demographics are remarkably different (Appendix, Table A.2). The only parties that share the same electoral appeal are Ciudadanos and The River, who both attract high income, high education voters and urban voters. Despite its sisterhood to the largely working-class SYRIZA, Podemos attracts a significant high education and high-income electorate (like the Five Star Movement), largely because of its support of Catalonian independence. Catalonia and the Basque County, which gave rise to strong independentist movements, are also some of the richest regions of Spain, significantly blurring the class divides. The far-right Vox party is also very different to its Greek (and Italian) equivalents, galvanising significant support among the high-income and urban sections of the electorate. This is largely because of its endorsement of neoliberal policies, as well as its reaction to Catalan nationalism. Once again, the regionalist cleavage appears to be an important reason behind the different reaction of the Spanish political cleavages to austerity and the crisis.

Spain is considered a weak exception to the Western trajectories found in Gethin et al. (2021), because it does not yet have a multi-elite party system. Its education cleavage has not reversed, but it has still weakened significantly. Gethin et al. (2021) suggest that this is because of the recent authoritarian past and the belated rise of a far right which has struggled to capture the low income and low educated vote. Greece though also has a recent authoritarian past as well as a left-wing centre of gravity in its political system. While a far-right party capturing low income and low educated voters emerged in response to the debt and immigration crises, a radical left working-class party also emerged, appealing to a seemingly similar voter demographic. As a result, both the income and the education cleavages in Greece dropped during the crisis. Hence, for Spain to turn into a multi elite system, either Vox could gain the support of low income and low educated voters, and/or left-wing parties (PSOE, Podemos) could lose their working-class character and further embrace a Brahmin formulation. Greece shows that the emergence of a challenger far right and radical left party can offset their effects on the education cleavage, provided the left party, unlike Podemos, has a working-class

character. Indeed, it seems that it is the working-class character of PSOE that has delayed the transition to a multi-elite system, and perhaps restricted the rise of Vox.

3.3 Comparing Portugal and Ireland to Greece

This section is particularly interesting because Portugal and Ireland are the two main exceptions found in Gethin et al. (2021) to the rise of the Brahmin left and the shift of their political systems towards a multi elite configuration. As I argue in the previous section, Greece should also be added to this short list of exceptions but is an exception of a different nature. Greece has had a Brahmin left at least since the 1980s, which has remained so. It also faced a reversal of the income cleavage as early as the 1990s, which returned to negative territory only following the crisis. Trying to square these differences with the common socioeconomic characteristics that these three countries have, as well as the common experience of the crisis and the austerity bailouts, is a challenging task. Crucially, none of the three countries discussed in this section have a strong regionalist cleavage.
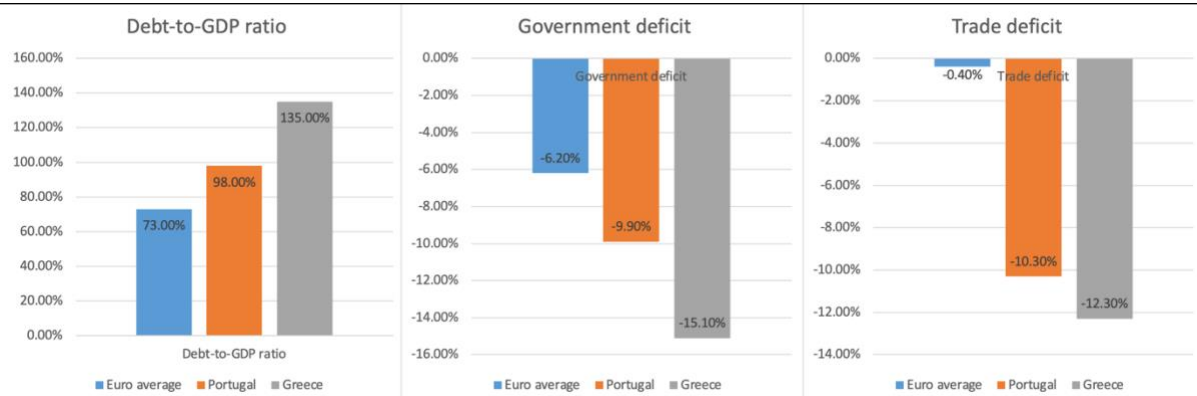
3.3.1   Portugal

Portugal has many similarities to Greece, both historically and in the lead-up to the crisis. Portugal also started its post-authoritarian era with the collapse of a far-right dictatorship in the mid-1970s, just like Greece. It faced weak party polarisation until the crisis, similar to Greece post-1990s, and a consistent presence of a Communist Party and a radical left coalition (Left Bloc). While the Portuguese and Greek Communist Parties have both maintained a working class, trade union and institutional standing, the Portuguese has done so by modernising and coalescing with the Greens, while the Greek KKE has remained old school Marxist-Leninist, often displaying conservative socio-cultural preferences.[11] Gethin et al. (2021) suggest that there was a cordon sanitaire on the radical left, pushing mainstream parties to compete for the political centre. This is similar to the pre-crisis convergence story that Andreadis and Stavrakakis (2019) provide for Greece. Moreover, Portugal faced the most similar debt crisis to Greece, since it involved the gradual accumulation of sovereign debt which suddenly became unserviceable when the Eurozone crisis led to an increase of interest rates.

The crisis hit Portugal in 2011, pushing it to sign a bailout agreement with the troika, only a year after Greece. Yet, both the political and the economic trajectories of the two countries could not have been more different. Portugal soon exited the crisis and maintained its party configuration, while it took Greece two more austerity bailouts to have a semblance of economic stability, facing in the meantime a complete fragmentation of its party system. The political and the economic dimensions are of course intimately related in this context.

Despite the commonalities between Greece and Portugal, Greece faced a much deeper crisis. The Greek debt-to-GDP ratio, government deficit and trade deficit were all higher than Portugal when the crisis hit, as seen in Figure 19 below. As a result, the austerity implemented involved a much harsher fiscal consolidation, most strikingly captured by the resulting cyclically adjusted primary balance improvement (IMF), which was 16.2% for Greece and 8.4% for Portugal. While this seems to explain the resulting reactions of the political systems of the two countries, it is arguably only a part of the picture.

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[11] For instance, KKE voted against a 2015 SYRIZA bill to extend cohabitation agreements to same-sex couples. In 2018, it voted against another SYRIZA bill for the legalisation of medical cannabis. In both cases, it was only joined by right-wing parties.

Figure 19 – Comparison of the fundamentals in Greece and Portugal when the crisis hit (Eurostat)

Importantly, the Portuguese party system saw a rise of polarisation post-crisis, which arguably saved the mainstream parties and has led to its single elite configuration. While both mainstream parties in Portugal accepted the structural adjustment programme, the right-wing vowed to go further than the troika in liberalising the Portuguese economy, while the Socialists focused on supporting the most disadvantaged from the regressive effects of austerity. In 2019, the Socialist party broke the cordon sanitaire and cooperated with the Communist Party and the Left Bloc. It is perhaps not accidental that Portugal did not see the rise of challenger parties in the 2010s. On the one hand, the anti-austerity elements were already expressed within the dominant Socialist Party, as seen by the expressly working-class character of its electorate. On the other, along with the absence of other value-based cleavages such as immigration, this kept the low income and low education electorate voting for left-wing parties, leaving no void for a prospective far-right (Appendix, Table A.3). This clearly juxtaposes the post-crisis convergence of Greek mainstream parties, apparent by their coalition in 2012-2014 to implement the second structural adjustment programme in Greece. Polarisation increased in post-crisis Greece as well, but not *within* the mainstream parties, rather *between* the mainstream parties and the challenger parties. The emergence of a new pro- and anti-austerity cleavage meant that anti-austerity elements were not welcome in mainstream parties, who strove to present the structural adjustment programmes as a necessity. Equally, anti-austerity challenger parties often articulated a euro-sceptic critique, refusing to cooperate with the troika, until pushed to do otherwise (see SYRIZA in 2015).

More specifically, the post-crisis Portuguese Socialist Party gathers a voting base which is similar to SYRIZA because of its expressly working-class character. The two respective Communist Parties seem to compete for a similar, working-class voter demographic. Interestingly, it is the Left Bloc in Portugal that displays the characteristics of a Brahmin left, getting the support of the highly educated, as well as some support from high incomes, similar to PASOK and MERA25. The right-wing Portuguese Social Democratic Party attracts high income and high education voters, similar to New Democracy.

There are two other explanations found in the literature for the different political reactions to the crisis between Portugal and Greece. The first is the absence of conflict around European integration in Portugal, in contrast to the cultural dualism of Greece. Euroscepticism never caught-on in Portugal, as seen also in the Euro break-up index (Sentix),[12] which was only

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[12] The Euro break-up index captures the percentage of investors who believe that the given country with exit the Eurozone within the next twelve months. Found here:

around 10% in Portugal in 2012. Conversely, not only has Euroscepticism been historically present in Greece (Vasilopoulou 2018), the equivalent index was around 60% the same year. Greek euroscepticist parties were on the rise as more people questioned whether the EU-sponsored austerity policies would be beneficial to the Greek people. This contributed to political turmoil in Greece, as the question of Grexit was looming ever since 2012. As the mainstream parties remained committed to EU and Eurozone membership, this contributed to the fragmentation of the party system. The second reason is suggested by Afonso et al. (2015), wo argue that Greek governments only reluctantly supported the reforms because of their reliance on clientelistic linkages. Austerity, coupled with the liberalising reforms proposed by the troika, would deal an important blow on the patronage system that Greek parties relied on and were therefore very hesitant to implement it. Conversely, the reforms in Portugal displayed a much higher level of ownership by the political class, which was less reliant on clientilistic patronage.

Interestingly though, the Portuguese exceptionalism in terms of its resistance to the far-right appears to have come to an end with the emergence of Chega as third in the legislative elections of 2022. The literature seems to confirm the aforementioned intuition that a main reason why such a party was so late to emerge was the absence of value-based conflict and the predominance of socio-economic concerns in the Portuguese political landscape (Mendes and Dennison 2020). However, despite the lack of fertile ground, the far-right has caught on in Portugal as well. It seems that the space for Chega was created due to an internal crisis of the centre-right Social Democrats. Despite the absence of regionalist, immigration, or any other value-based conflict, Chega has attempted to create one of its own, by raising the salience of the Roma community in Portugal, who constitute only 0.5% of the population (Braz 2023). It appears to be paying off, as Chega has the highest support in the regions with the highest Roma concentration (Afonso 2021). Among others, it has also based its narrative on a critique of corruption and the welfare state. It would be very interesting to see how Chega affects the income and education cleavages in Portugal, and whether it attracts the usual far-right demographic: rural religious men with low education, or, because of its neoliberal critique of the welfare state, it concentrates its support among the high incomes like Vox in Spain.

3.3.2   Ireland

Moving on to Ireland, the only country in this section that is not in Southern Europe. There are more similarities to Greece than one would expect given how far away the two countries are. Both countries have a strong religious and civil war cleavage which affected party politics. Similar to Greece post-1990s, Ireland has seen limited polarisation and a general consensus regarding its political and economic direction. The 2008 crisis though led to a number of Irish banks defaulting that were bailed out by the government, which subsequently required bailing out itself. The structural adjustment programme in Ireland was relatively successful, at least compared to the Greek one, leading to the Irish post-crisis economic miracle. Yet, it was at the same time very regressive.

As the mainstream centre-left party, Fianna Fail, drifted to the centre-right, a working-class radical left party, Sinn Fein, rose to fill the void. Sinn Fein enjoys the support of the low education and low-income electorate and has thus shifted Ireland towards a stronger single elite system (Appendix, A.4). This bears a lot in common to the rise of SYRIZA that emerged to

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http://www.sentix.de/index.php/en/item/sebi.html#:~:text=The%20sentix%20Euro%20Break%2Dup%20Index%20(EBI)%20for%20Euroland,breaking%20apart%20within%20this%20period.

replace PASOK, which had also drifted towards the centre-right, after adopting austerity. Similar to Ireland, this has made the Greek education and income cleavages less positive than before, yet still in positive territory.

A curious difference between the two countries pertains to the religious-secular cleavage. Gethin et al. (2021) suggest that the strength of Catholicism in Ireland has historically prevented the emergence of a proper left-wing party. The rise of Sinn Fein is contemporaneous with the very fast pace of secularisation of Irish society. Namely, the share of Irish voters attending church once a month or more declined from 80% in the 1990s to 28% by 2020. In Greece, secularisation is also happening but at a much slower pace, with the share of voters never attending church increasing from around 2% in the 1990s, to around 15-20% in the 2010s. Yet, despite the religiosity of the Greek population, social democratic, socialist, and communist parties have consistently had a strong presence. It is interesting that there is a persistent, albeit small, section of the church-going population that supports even the Communist Party. In fact, the 1980s and 1990s saw the emergence of an intellectual current called "Neo-Orthodoxy", which was an amalgam of Marxism and Christian Orthodoxy, represented by a number of prominent intellectuals, politicians and artists (Mitralexis 2019). Hence, while the religious-secular cleavage is very strong in Greece just as in Ireland, it has not been sufficient to prevent the emergence of explicitly left-wing parties and movements.

3.4 Discussion

Through the systematic comparison of the electoral histories and the political cleavages of Italy, Spain, Portugal, Ireland and Greece, two takeaways emerge: the regionalist cleavage can be particularly powerful in blurring the class lines, while when the mainstream parties themselves radicalised, they left less of a void to be filled by challenger parties post-crisis.

The Italian party system displays some *bloc bourgeois* characteristics. Following the convergence of mainstream parties and the dominance of a bourgeois voter base of the centre-left, a number of challenger parties emerged leading to fragmentation. Challenger parties are not aligned along class lines, largely due to the regionalist cleavage. Similarly, Spain also saw the fragmentation of its party system post-crisis, while the class character of challenger parties was itself hazy due to the regionalist cleavage. The main difference to Italy is that centre-left PSOE has maintained a working-class presence (contrary to Partito Democratico), which has arguably delayed the reversal of the education (and income) cleavages, as well as delayed the emergence of the far-right Vox.

Conversely, the crisis in Portugal and Ireland led to the radicalisation of left-wing parties, increasing their working-class character and therefore preventing the emergence of a far right in the 2010s. The absence of a regionalist cleavage also likely contributed to the absence of a tendency towards a multi elite system. In Portugal this happened without party fragmentation, since the Socialist Party itself moved leftwards, adopting a redistributive and anti-austerity agenda. In Ireland, Fianna Fail's drift rightwards left a void for the emergence of a challenger workers' party, Sinn Fein.

The belated rise of the far-right Chega in Portugal in 2022, despite the absence of value-based conflicts and the working-class character of the Socialist Party is a very curious phenomenon that stands out against other similar right-wing challenger parties. Arguably, the absence of party fragmentation through polarisation post-crisis significantly delayed the far-right challenge, which appears to be linked to the disintegration of the centre-right. Still, it seems to

have not been enough to prevent it altogether. It will be very interesting to update the analysis of political cleavages for Portugal to include the 2022 elections and see how Chega affects Portuguese exceptionalism.

Once again, Greece sits in an uncomfortable in-between. On the one hand, much like Italy and Spain, it displays the characteristics of a weak multi elite (or *bloc bourgeois*) party system. Class cleavages are weak, the educated vote for the left and far-right parties have emerged. However, this is so likely for very different reasons to Italy and Spain. There is no strong regionalist cleavage in Greece, while, as I have argued above, the Greek configuration likely has to do with the particular historical role of education in Greece, along with the Greek cultural dualism. On the other hand, much like Portugal and Ireland, Greece saw the emergence of a workers', anti-austerity movement, which has made the income cleavage reverse to negative and the education cleavage less positive post-crisis. The fact that such a movement appears to have been sufficient to prevent, or significantly delay, the emergence of a far right in Portugal and Ireland, but not Greece, might have to do with the depth of the crisis in Greece, coupled with an immigration crisis. Neither Portugal nor Ireland were affected by an immigration crisis, while Italy and Spain were. In addition, while Greece does not have a strong regionalist cleavage, there is a recent regionalist dimension to the rise of the far-right, as already discussed, seen in its predominance in the Greek region of Macedonia.

To sum up, the following seems to be a tentative conclusion from this 'small n' systematic comparison. The regionalist cleavage can be a strong cross-cutting cleavage, preventing voter alignment along class lines. In the absence of a regionalist cleavage, the crisis and the implementation of regressive austerity contributed to the class cleavage becoming more salient. If mainstream parties continued to compete for the centre, following the median voter theorem, they left a void for challenger parties to emerge with the support of low income and low educated voters. If mainstream parties diverged, with the mainstream left adopting a politics of redistribution, then it could keep the support of the low income and low educated and delay the emergence of Brahmin left and the resulting multi-elite system. Lastly, a very deep crisis, matched with an immigration crisis, can create a sufficiently big political void that both a workers' and a far-right party can emerge at the same time, pushing the mainstream parties, left or right, further towards a *bloc bourgeois* configuration. The gist of this comparison is presented in Table 4 below.

In other words, the focus on specific parties within the left or right umbrella, acknowledging the heterogeneity of such party families, is something that Gethin et al. (2022) also recognise. In their most recent paper, they chose to contrast green and anti-immigrant/far-right parties, as those partly driving the transition towards the multi elite party system, as Abou-Chadi and Hix (2021) have also argued. However, green parties are nowhere to be found in the European periphery. While green parties appear to have contributed to the rise of the Brahmin left in the rest of the Western democracies, anti-austerity challenger left parties appear to have prevented, or at least delayed this transition in the periphery.

Table 4: Systematic comparison of political cleavages in the post-crisis European periphery					
	crisis + austerity	value-based conflict		anti-austerity workers party	far-right
		immigration	regionalism		
Italy	X	X	X		X
Spain	X	X	X		X
Portugal	X			X	*(X)*
Ireland	X			X	
Greece	X	X		X	X

These results appear to be partly consistent with the idea of a 'swing' left-authoritarian voter group proposed by Lefkofridi et al. (2014). The crisis and austerity increase concern for the economy, shifting the left-authoritarians towards the left, while an immigration crisis increases concern for immigration, shifting left-authoritarians towards the right. While such an analysis lacks from Lefkofridi et al. (2014), it is reasonable to expect that a large section of left-authoritarians belong in the working class (low income, low education). Again, the rise of Chega in Portugal cannot be explained from this lens, unless we assume that Chega did not capture the left-authoritarian voters, but rather right-authoritarian voters, following the disintegration of the centre-right. Further research is needed to clarify this.

4. The characteristics of the anti-austerity new left

4.1 Introduction

In the previous section, I argued that grouping all left and right parties under two umbrellas misses the heterogeneity of parties. It seems that from a systematic comparison of the results produced on the political cleavages of the European periphery, one can decipher a particular role of anti-austerity new left parties, as well as of far-right anti-immigrant parties. The former tend to counter the emergence of multi-elite party systems, while the latter tend to accelerate it. As Gethin et al. (2021) show, almost all far-right parties rely on low income and low education voters. Hence, it seems that the ability of left-wing parties to retain this voter demographic, which has traditionally had a tendency to vote for the left in most countries, is crucial to prevent the emergence of the far-right. Moreover, this would also prevent, or delay, the emergence of a multi-elite party system, which, as Piketty (2020) argues, has a tendency to create problematic voter representation. In particular, in Gethin et al. (2021) Piketty argues that the evolution towards a multi-elite party system is related to the absence of a democratic response to rising inequality, as well as to the rise of "populism" (challenger parties) as low income and low education voters tend to feel abandoned by their political system.

Focusing on the European periphery, it seems that countries without a strong cross-cutting value-based conflict, which also saw the rise of anti-austerity workers parties, did not transition to multi elite party systems. Given the shortcomings of such a 'small n' comparison with five countries, this section attempts to expand the country sample by going deeper into the voter demographic of other anti-austerity new left parties that recently emerged in Western democracies. These are Die Linke in Germany, La France Insoumise in France, Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party in the UK, and Bernie Sanders' bid for the nomination of the Democratic Party in the US. For Germany, France and the UK I rely on calculations already made in Gethin et al. (2021), while for the US I present my own.

A note of caution is that this section moves away from a "most similar systems design" comparison, since Greece and Portugal have very few things in common with the UK or the US. Still, it is interesting to see if some of the takeaways from the previous section are confirmed in different contexts.

4.2 Anti-austerity new left in France, the UK and Germany

Piketty in Gethin et al. (2021) suggests that the 2017 French election cuts the French electorate into four quarters of relatively equal size. The internationalist-inegalitarians vote for Macron, the nationalist-inegalitarians vote for Fillon, the nationalist-egalitarians vote for Le Pen, while the internationalist-egalitarians vote for Mélenchon/Hamon. The latter voter group is the one closest to movements such as SYRIZA or Sinn Fein. In 2021, Mélenchon, Hamon and a number of left-wing movements and parties subsequently created the coalition called NUPES (New Ecological and Social People's Union), a testament to their ideological proximity. From the evidence provided in Gethin et al. (2021), one sees that the group of internationalist-egalitarian candidates got the largest share of the vote in the first round (28%), coming primarily from high-education and low-income people. While the over-representation of the highly educated is greater for Macron, the internationalist-egalitarians nevertheless constitute a Brahmin left formulation (Appendix, Table A.5). Yet, Mélenchon/Hamon still manage to capture a very high share of the working-class, low-income vote. On the other hand, Le Pen captures the usual far-right voter demographic of low income and low education voters, getting 26% of the vote and coming first in the first round.

In the UK, the election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the mainstream Labour Party in 2015 constituted a significant break with centrist politics. Corbyn got ushered in by a grass-roots movement, originating from the left-wing faction of the Labour Party (Seymour 2016). While he lost two elections, Labour vote shares reached their highest levels since the 2001 election. The income, wealth and education cleavages produced in Gethin et al. (2021) clearly show that the Labour Party under Corbyn appealed to a similar demographic to Mélenchon/Hamon (Appendix, Figure A.6). The education cleavage turned even more positive under Corbyn, a testament to the Brahmin character of the Labour Party. At the same time though, the income cleavage took a large dip, and the wealth cleavage stalled its previously increasing pattern, indicating the low-income and working-class support that Corbyn managed to re-inject into the Labour voter base.

In Germany, the main challenger left-wing party has been that of the Greens. However, there is also the anti-austerity party called Die Linke, which remains rather small perhaps precisely because the Greens have managed to articulate the main progressive critique of the SPD post-crisis. Gathering up the ruins of the old Eastern German Communist Party[13], Die Linke emerged as a radical left challenger party appealing to a similar voter demographic to the aforementioned, albeit with much more limited success. It peaked in 2009 in the Bundestag elections where it gathered 12% of the vote but has ever since seen a decline back to around 5% in the 2021 elections. While small, a brief mention of its voter demographic is of interest. As seen in the Appendix (Figures A.7 and A.8), its education cleavage is almost neutral, meaning that it appeals to the average educated voter, after controls. Its income cleavage is negative but less negative than SPD, which remains the main representative of the working class in Germany. This perhaps has to do with the strong links that the SPD maintains to powerful German trade unions. Die Linke appears to be caught in a similar conundrum to

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[13] Formally known as the Socialist Unity Patty of Germany (SED).

Podemos, since despite their apparently more radical character, both parties have remained more Brahmin than the mainstream centre-left in their respective countries. This stands in sharp contrast to SYRIZA and Sinn Fein, for instance.

4.3 The 2016 and 2020 US Primaries

4.3.1 Why focus on these elections

The historical analysis of political cleavages in the US by Piketty is already included in the collected volume (Gethin et al. 2021). However, US primaries have not been touched upon before. On the one hand, when comparing political cleavages along the left-right divide, the US two-party system provides a straight-forward way to do so. On the other, having already discussed the heterogeneity within each ideological umbrella, if one wants to decompose political cleavages further, one needs to include an analysis of US primaries. Indeed, Piketty himself mentions that there is large ideological heterogeneity within the Democratic and Republican parties. Conflicts are arbitrated within said parties, instead of through the creation of challenger parties, like in most European countries for instance. The main locus of such conflict arbitration is the presidential primaries.

In this section I will present an analysis of the 2016 and 2020 US presidential primaries for a number of reasons. Firstly, these were the elections that clearly solidified the multi-elite party system in the US, as seen by the positive spike in the education cleavage. Secondly, they were the only post-crisis primaries which included a strong challenger movement from the right (Donald Trump) as well as a challenger movement from the left (Bernie Sanders). As such, they bear a lot of similarities to the post-crisis reaction of many other Western political systems, such as Spain and Greece. Thirdly, both these challenger movements persisted from 2016 to 2020, while the centrist Democratic candidate changed from Hillary Clinton (2016) to Joe Biden (2020), both of which are lifelong Democrats and some of the main figures of the Obama administration. Hence, arguably there is a continuity from the 2016 to the 2020 primaries, allowing for an analysis of the evolution of political cleavages within this short timeframe.

4.3.2 US Data and methodology

I rely on the American National Election Studies (ANES) post-electoral surveys for 2016 and 2020. These are the main data sources that Piketty also uses when analysing the US political cleavages. The sample sizes are relatively large, around 8,000 for 2020 and 4,000 for 2016. I follow the standard WPID methodology, exactly as in Greece, presented in section 2.2.1 above.

Briefly, I harmonise the two datasets, keeping the variables relevant for this analysis. Namely, instead of keeping the variable showing whom the respondent voted for in the Presidential elections, I focus on the variable showing whom the responded voted for in the Presidential primary, regardless of party. I also keep variables such as the respondent's education level, family income, gender, race, age, employment status, religion, religiosity and whether they reside in an urban or rural location. For the education and income variables, I also create deciles and quintiles of the distribution, as already discussed in section 2.2.1.

For the 2016 election I only focus on Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders on the side of the Democrats, and Donald Trump and Ted Cruz on the side of Republicans. For the Democrats, this choice is straightforward as Clinton and Sanders were the only candidates that reached the

Democratic convention, having split the pledged delegates 54% for Clinton and 46% for Sanders. For the Republicans, I also include Cruz as a frame of reference, alongside Trump, since he was the only realistic contender during the primaries, gathering 22.3% of the bound delegates, compared to the 58.3% of Trump. When it comes to the popular vote though the gap was smaller, with Cruz getting 25% of the vote and Trump 45%.

For the 2020 election I focus on Joe Biden and Bernie Sanders on the side of the Democrats, and Donald Trump on the side of Republicans. While Sanders did not reach the convention in 2020, he still got 27% of the popular vote, making him the main contender to Joe Biden. Including Sanders in 2020 also allows me to present figures of the evolution of political cleavages from 2016 to 2020. On the side of Republicans the choice is straightforward, since being the incumbent President, the competition that Trump faced was very limited, gathering 94% of the popular vote.

When presenting figures of the evolution of political cleavages, I group Clinton and Biden together for continuity. While acknowledging their differences, they are both lifelong Democrats, important figures of the Democratic establishment and some of the main figures of the Obama administration.[14] Hence, I argue that they are sufficiently close to be grouped together for the purposes of these figures, particularly when juxtaposed to Sanders who ran for the Democratic ticket while being an independent himself, and an outspoken socialist and critic of the Democratic Party.

4.3.3   Brief presentation of the US context

The US is one of the clearest examples of the reversal of the education cleavage and the transition to a multi-elite party system. Having faced a shocking increase in inequality since the latter part of the 20th century, it is one of the purest cases where it seems that the multi elite party system has prevented a democratic redistributive response. Interestingly, 2016 brought the reversal of the income cleavage as well, having the top 10% of income voters voting more for the Democratic than the Republican Party. This can partly be explained by the Trump effect, although not fully. As already argued before, the reversal of the income cleavage in the US, just as in Italy, is less striking than its reversal in Greece. Neither the Democratic Party nor the Five Star Movement have historically had strong links to the working class, nor are they explicitly socialist or social democratic parties.

In addition to class cleavages, the US has historically faced a strong race cleavage. Black Americans have been voting for the Democratic Party by 80-95% ever since 1964. The Latino and other non-Black minorities have voted Democrat by 55-70% in 1972-2016, while White Americans tend to prefer Republicans. Hence, the racial dimension of political cleavages is very important in the US and as such I always control for race in the figures I present below. I confirm the result that Piketty finds, namely that controlling for race tends to shift the Democratic education cleavage upwards since Black people tend to, at the same time, have low education and vote for the Democratic Party.

Lastly, the gender cleavage has reversed ever since the 1960s, with the "modern gender gap" emerging whereby women tend to vote more for Democrats than for Republicans. The US also faces a persistent rural-urban cleavage, as the Republican appeal in rural areas has been stronger, while Democrats tend to concentrate their support in urban centres.

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[14] Namely, Hillary Clinton was Obama's Secretary of State and Joe Biden the Vice-President.

4.3.4 Political Cleavages in the 2016 and 2020 US presidential primaries

Table 5 below presents a decomposition of the vote for the selected candidates in the 2016 and 2020 US presidential primaries. Starting with the 2016 presidential primary elections, as expected, Clinton seems to represent the Democratic voter base as it transpired in the actual Presidential elections in 2016. Namely, the highly educated and those with high incomes, hence the positive education and income cleavages. Moreover, perhaps we see evidence of candidate effects: the tendency of women to vote for women candidates (see Brians 2005). This is not clear though since the education cleavage has reversed in the US and women always tend to vote Democrats more than Republicans. Black Americans also overwhelmingly supported Clinton, a testament to her being perceived as the 'established' Democratic candidate, appealing to the usual voter demographic for Democrats. Clinton also mostly got support from urban areas.

Being an outsider Democrat, and a left-wing challenger movement, Sanders does not appeal to the usual Democrat demographic. He appeals to all levels of education and primarily to non-black non-white ethnic minorities. Similarly to other anti-austerity new left challenger movements, he maintains support from low income, young and non-religious voters. Moreover, he has low support among the Black community, who overwhelmingly support Clinton, and later Biden.

Similarly to Clinton, Trump also captures a similar demographic in the primaries as in the Presidential elections. His voter base is very similar to the usual far-right voter coalition: low education, rural and men. Consistent with the Republican demographic, he also gets the support of mostly White and old Americans. Cruz has a more catchall demographic regarding income and education, while he gets overwhelming support among the highly religious and those that live in rural areas.

Moving on to the 2020 presidential primaries, one sees many similarities to 2016. Biden, similarly to Clinton, appeals mostly to the highly educated, old, urban, Black and women. There are three groups of voters in which Biden substantially increased his support compared to Clinton: lower incomes, Black and women. All of the above are mirrored in losses in the Sanders voter base in 2020. It is interesting that, despite being a grassroots left-wing candidate, Sanders appears to lose his lower income comparative advantage in 2020. Also, Biden's stronger appeal in women could be evidence that Clinton did not benefit from candidate effects, but simply from a reversed gender cleavage. As for Trump, he continues to appeal to mostly white voters with low education in rural areas. The absence of a contender in the 2020 primaries means that his voter share in the highly religious, rural, white, and native American voters becomes even higher. These were the groups in which Cruz seemed to have a comparative advantage in 2016, which have now moved over to supporting Trump.

To make the above conclusions more robust, I have also produced figures for the income and education cleavages with controls for sex, age, marital status, employment, and race, as well as income for the education cleavage and education for the income cleavage. As already discussed, I group Clinton and Biden together, while I do not include Cruz, to have some continuity between 2016 and 2020. The very similar voter demographics that Clinton and Biden appealed to, as seen in Table 5, are proof that grouping them together is reasonable for the purposes of these figures.

Table 5: The structure of political cleavages in the 2016 and 2020 US Primaries (ANES)							
	Share of votes received (%)						
	Bernie Sanders		Democratic Presidential candidates		Donald Trump		Ted Cruz
	2016	2020	Hillary Clinton 2016	Joe Biden 2020	2016	2020	2016
Groups of education							
Bottom 50%	22%	13%	36%	39%	32%	47%	10%
Middle 40%	28%	17%	31%	41%	29%	42%	12%
Top 10%	26%	15%	50%	58%	17%	27%	7%
Groups of income							
Bottom 50%	28%	15%	34%	44%	28%	41%	10%
Middle 40%	22%	16%	32%	43%	30%	42%	16%
Top 10%	21%	16%	37%	43%	30%	41%	11%
Age							
20-40	48%	36%	26%	35%	20%	28%	6%
40-60	20%	13%	40%	44%	27%	43%	12%
60+	16%	6%	40%	47%	34+	47%	10%
Location							
Urban	27%	17%	41%	51%	24%	32%	9%
Rural	20%	11%	23%	34%	38%	55%	19%
Gender							
Woman	24%	15%	43%	58%	24%	27%	10%
Man	26%	21%	29%	40%	34%	38%	11%
Church attendance							
Never	47%	26%	33%	29%	20%	45%	0%
Less than monthly	24%	12%	34%	42%	36%	46%	6%
Monthly or more	16%	6%	36%	38%	32%	56%	16%
Ethnicity							
White, non-Hispanic	25%	13%	28%	37%	36%	49%	12%
Black, non-Hispanic	19%	11%	79%	86%	2%	3%	1%
Hispanic	31%	27%	50%	47%	10%	27%	8%
Asian or Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic alone	30%	20%	41%	42%	23%	38%	7%
Native American/Alaska Native or other race, non-Hispanic alone	29%	13%	29%	39%	29%	48%	14%
Multiple races, non-Hispanic	26%	28%	40%	42%	18%	30%	16%

Figure 20 below presents the income cleavage for centrist Democrats (Clinton, Biden), Sanders and Trump between the 2016 and 2020 presidential primaries. After controls, the differences between Clinton, Sanders, and Trump in the 2016 primary are small. Sanders has the strongest appeal to the low-income electorate, while Clinton the weakest. This is consistent with Table 5. The difference is larger without controls, but it is interesting that it persists even after controls. As already seen in Table 5, Biden indeed substantially increases his appeal to lower incomes, reversing the income cleavage for both Trump and Sanders. Biden's capacity to appeal to the lower income electorate might have played a role in his eventual election as President, contrary to Clinton. This phenomenon is also seen in the income cleavage of US presidential elections in Gethin et al. (2021), where the 2016 elections lead to a big spike, while 2020 reduces the income cleavage, which nevertheless remains positive.

Figure 20 - Vote for selected US Presidential primary candidates among high income voters, 2016-2020

Legend:
- Difference between % vote for centrist Democrats (Hillary Clinton 2016, Joe Biden 2020) among the top 10% income voters and the bottom 90% income voters after controls for education, gender, age, race, marital and employment status
- The same, for Bernie Sanders
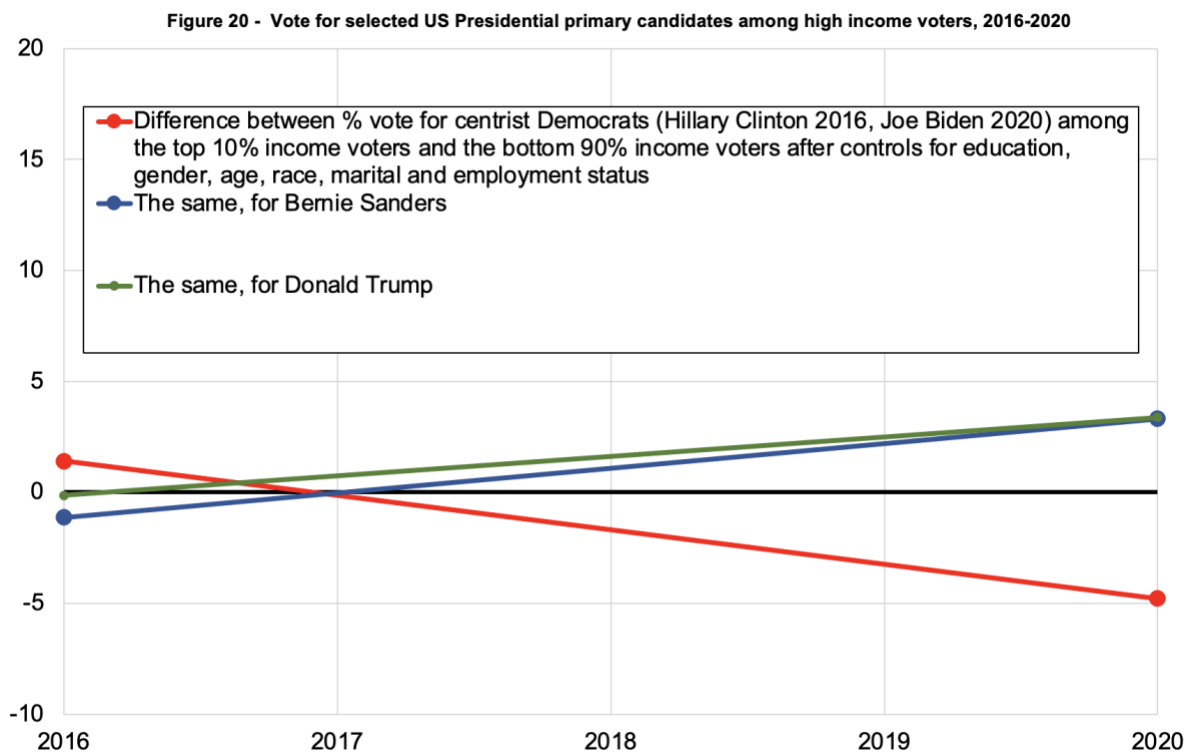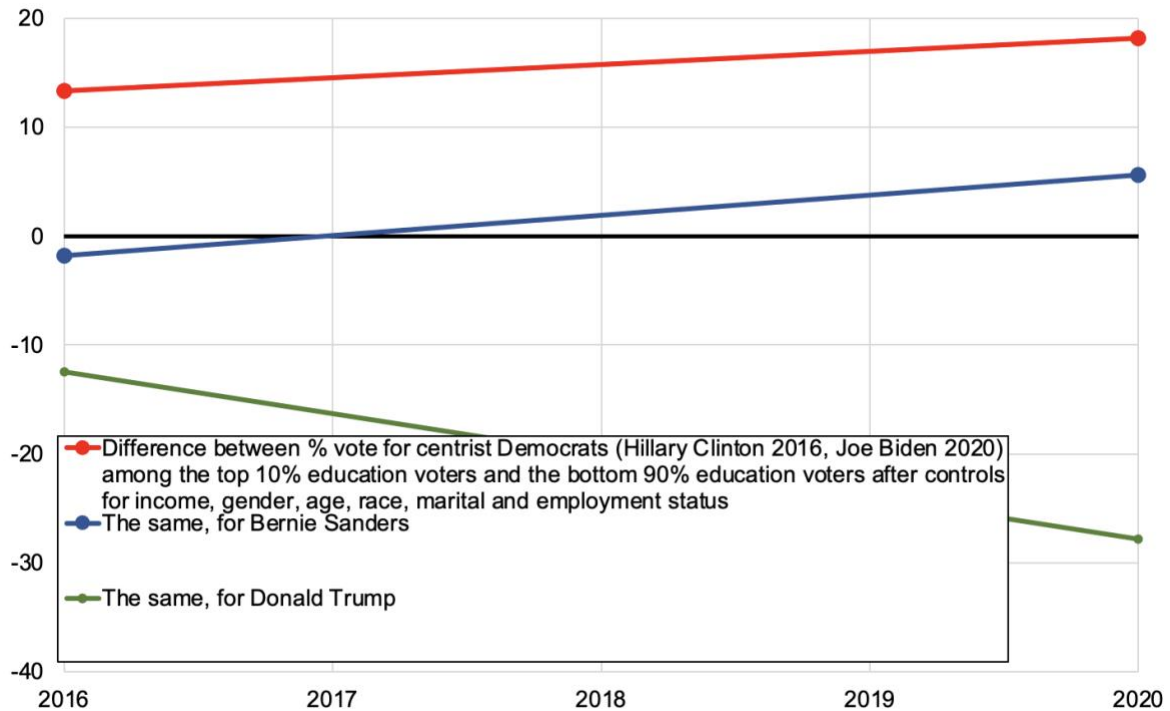- The same, for Donald Trump

Figure 21 presents the education cleavage for the same candidates and the same presidential primary elections. The education cleavage seems to be very strongly positive for centrist Democrats in the primaries as well, even after controls. That is, the Democratic establishment mostly appeals to the highly educated. Interestingly, this tendency becomes even stronger with Biden. This is consistent with the education cleavage of US presidential elections in Gethin et al. (2021), which continues to have an increasing trajectory even after 2016. Sanders had a negative education cleavage in 2016, a testament to the grassroots and working-class character of his challenger movement. The education cleavage though turns positive in 2020, which confirms what was already discussed in reference to Table 5, namely that the Sanders candidature lost its working-class character in 2020. The Trump education cleavage was very negative in 2016 and turns overwhelmingly negative in 2020. Once again, this is very much in line with the voter demographic that other far-right parties have captured in the post-08 era. Controlling for race in the education cleavage shifts the blue line upwards and the green line downwards, aggravating the differences between the Democratic and Republican presidential candidates.

Figure 21 - Vote for selected US Presidential primary candidates among high education voters, 2016-2020

Legend (inside chart):
- **Difference between % vote for centrist Democrats (Hillary Clinton 2016, Joe Biden 2020) among the top 10% education voters and the bottom 90% education voters after controls for income, gender, age, race, marital and employment status**
- The same, for Bernie Sanders
- The same, for Donald Trump

4.4 Discussion

In this section, I have discussed the political cleavages in a number of different countries, some of which are very dissimilar. Hence, it is hard to claim that any robust conclusions can be reached from this presentation. However, the motivation of this section is found in trying to see whether the patterns found in the European periphery regarding the characteristics of the voter base of left-wing and right-wing challenger parties, and their respective contribution to the transition of political systems towards a multi elite party configuration, are replicated. In the process, I present some original work on political cleavages in the last two US presidential primary elections (2016, 2020).

Firstly, indeed it seems that in the context of the established tendency of mainstream centre-left parties to increasingly appeal to the highly educated, the emergence of challenger left-wing parties with a working-class character stands as an obstacle against the stability of a multi elite party system. Similarly, the emergence of right-wing challenger parties, usually of the far-right kind, significantly contributes to the transition towards, and perhaps the stability of, multi elite party systems. At the risk of simplifying, we could say that an important dimension of any electoral battle is who is going to convince the popular classes (say, the bottom 50% of the income/education distribution). As these voters have increasingly moved away from the mainstream centre-left, often towards the far right, this contributes to the reversal of the education cleavage and perhaps even leads to a decline of the income cleavage. As centre-left parties increasingly struggle to appeal to this key voter demographic, the main alternative to the popular classes moving to the far-right is often the emergence of a grassroots left-wing challenger party. Indeed, movements such as SYRIZA, Sanders, and Sinn Fein, appear to partly play this role.

Secondly, political cleavages are multidimensional and complex, such that one cannot talk of any necessary or sufficient conditions for the emergence of multi elite party systems. As already discussed in section 3, other cross-cutting cleavages play an important role, alongside institutional differences. Namely, Presidential systems such as in France or the US seem to have institutionally stifled challenger left-wing movements. It is clear from the previous section that Sanders appealed to a very different voter demographic than the average Democrat, which was characteristically working-class, particularly in 2016. However, since he lost the nomination in the primaries, this working-class support appears to have dissipated in the 2016 Presidential elections. Similarly, even though the internationalist-egalitarian candidates in France in 2017 collectively got the plurality of the vote in the first round of the presidential elections, the fact that neither Melénchon nor Hamon made it to the second round meant that this voter demographic subsequently dissolved, rather than moved over to Macron.

Thirdly, it seems that there is heterogeneity in left-wing challenger parties, while right-wing challenger parties are more similar to each other. Almost all right-wing challenger movements appeal to a working-class electorate, primarily to religious men with low education in rural areas. The only exception is Vox in Spain that gets the support of high-income voters, which is fuelled by the regionalist cross-cutting cleavage. Trump and Le Pen confirm this pattern. On the other hand, there are challenger left-wing movements that have a stronger Brahmin character than the mainstream centre-left, and those that do not. The clear examples of the former category are Podemos in Spain and Die Linke in Germany. Although Sanders in the 2020 primary has a lower education cleavage than Biden, he nevertheless has less support among low incomes than Biden. Corbyn's Labour could also fit in this category, since his election as leader causes to a spike in the education cleavage, but the fact that he did not lead a challenger party but simply became leader of the mainstream left-wing party means that there is no counterfactual.

There are also challenger left-wing movements that have a stronger appeal in the low educated sections of the population compared to the mainstream centre-left. Such cases are SYRIZA in Greece, Sinn Fein in Ireland, the post-crisis Socialist Party in Portugal and Sanders in the 2016 primaries. Such movements tend to be more successful, it seems. None of the challenger left-wing movements of the Brahmin kind have been successful, while SYRIZA and the Socialist Party of Portugal have won elections, Sinn Fein has had a consistently increasing trajectory, while Sanders in 2016 fared a lot better than in 2020. In fact, many polls predicted that Sanders was a stronger candidate against Trump than Clinton.[15] Perhaps more importantly, it is when such movements maintain support in the popular classes, (low education and low income), that they can hinder the transition to a multi elite party system, such as in Portugal and Ireland, and perhaps even prevent the emergence of a strong far-right party.

Moreover, arguably there is a substitutability between the Greens and the anti-austerity left. The weakest anti-austerity party discussed in this section is in Germany, where the left-wing challenge has been articulated by a successful Green Party. In all other countries discussed in this study, Green parties are very weak. Given that Green Parties are characteristically Brahmin, while anti-austerity parties not necessarily, these two alternative formulations of left-wing challenger parties appear to have had opposite effects on the transition towards a multi elite party system.

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[15] See for instance the Reuters/Ipsos and the RealClearPolitics polls, as quoted here:
https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2016/5/15/polls-sanders-has-more-potential-to-beat-trump.

5. Conclusion

Greece is an important exception to the trajectory of political cleavages found in other Western democracies. Not only has the education cleavage been positive at least since 1981, it also seems to follow a decreasing pattern. Moreover, the income cleavage has remarkably reversed into positive territory since the 1990s, meaning that high income voters vote more for left-wing parties than for right wing parties. Therefore, the Greek party system fits very uncomfortably in the WPID typology. I have argued that the inclusivity of Greek education, as well as the Greek cultural dualism, appear to be related to these curious results.

The crisis brought the fragmentation of the party system and the replacement of the mainstream centre-left PASOK, by a radical left anti-austerity challenger party, SYRIZA. This post-crisis reconfiguration seems to challenge the previous equilibrium of the party system, bringing the reduction of the education cleavage and the reversal of the income cleavage back to negative territory. The post-crisis multi elite configuration can be explained by the fact that the political and economic crisis, coupled with an immigration crisis, led to the emergence of a number of far-right parties. These parties are consistently supported by working-class voters (low income, low education), pushing both income and education cleavages upward.

This study was partly motivated by the hope that replicating the WPID methodology on Greece could help explain the exceptions of Portugal, Ireland and, to a lesser extent, Spain. However, I argue that I have actually stumbled upon another exception, yet of a different kind. Still, the post-crisis trajectories of all those countries, including also Italy, have some similarities. By systematically comparing them, I reach the following tentative conclusions. Value-based conflicts, particularly those of regionalism and immigration, are pivotal cross-cutting cleavages, perhaps sufficient to prevent voter realignment along the class divide, despite the austerity and crisis. Secondly, the rise of anti-austerity movements, within or outside mainstream left parties, seems to be a conducive development to preventing the emergence of multi elite party systems and perhaps even the emergence of the far-right. Thirdly, whenever mainstream left-wing parties continued to compete for the political centre post-crisis, adopting austerity, they left a void to be filled by challenger parties, while when they radicalised by welcoming popular dissatisfaction with austerity, they prevented party fragmentation.

In section 4 I turn to analysing the remaining challenger left-wing movements in Western democracies, namely Melénchon/Hamon and subsequently NUPES in France, Corbyn's Labour in the UK, Die Linke in Germany, and Sanders in the US. For the latter, I also present an original analysis of political cleavages in the 2016 and 2020 US presidential primaries. Including these countries in the analysis confirms that the emergence of far-right movements contributes to the transition towards multi elite party systems, while challenger left-wing movements can be conducive to hindering this transition. Moreover, far-right movements display a striking homogeneity of voter base across countries, while challenger left-wing parties are more heterogeneous, particularly regarding their links to the low-education and low-income electorate. It seems though that when they manage to penetrate the popular classes, challenger left wing movements tend to be more successful.

There are a number of avenues of further research on the topics touched upon in this study. Given the historically segregated Greek tertiary education system between the plurality studying law and social sciences, and a small minority studying applied and technological sciences (Tsoukalas 1975), it would be interesting to be able to decompose vote by subject studied. This could perhaps shed more light onto the curious trajectory of the education

cleavage in Greece. Moreover, since the literature suggests that Greeks enroled into university to find a job in the public sector, it would also be interesting to further analyse vote by occupation. Perhaps the positive education cleavage has partly to do with public sector workers voting for left-wing parties. Is this also true in other countries? In addition, given the low-quality data of some Geek surveys, and the absence of income questionnaires in exit polls, electoral geography could be used to match poorer areas with their election results and perhaps get a more accurate depiction of the income cleavage.

Moving away from Greece, it would be useful to update the analysis of Portuguese political cleavages to include the 2022 legislative elections, when the new far-right party Chega substantially increased its voter share and parliamentary seats. How does this affect the income and education cleavages? Does this push Portugal towards a multi elite party system and what is the Chega voter profile like? Moreover, the study would be more complete if it included an analysis of the supply-side of electoral competition. Using manifesto data, Gethin et al. (2022) show that in most countries polarisation along the economic-redistributive axis has remained stable, while along the socio-cultural axis it has consistently been increasing. This however captures relative polarisation and could perhaps miss a consistent drift of mainstream left parties towards traditionally centrist or centre-right economic policies. That is, if the whole party system moves to the right, relative polarisation remains the same. Yet, inequality remains unaddressed, and more and more people become disillusioned with the political system. Once the crisis hit, it seems that this void became a locus of electoral competition between the radical left and the far-right. The relative balance of power in this competition played an important role in the transition towards a multi-elite party system, or not. Hence, attempting to use manifesto data to capture absolute, rather than relative changes in the economic-redistributive dimension of parties over time will be very interesting and could shed further light on this hypothesis.

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Appendix

Figure A.1 - Population with tertiary education in Greece (% of 25-34 year olds) - OECD
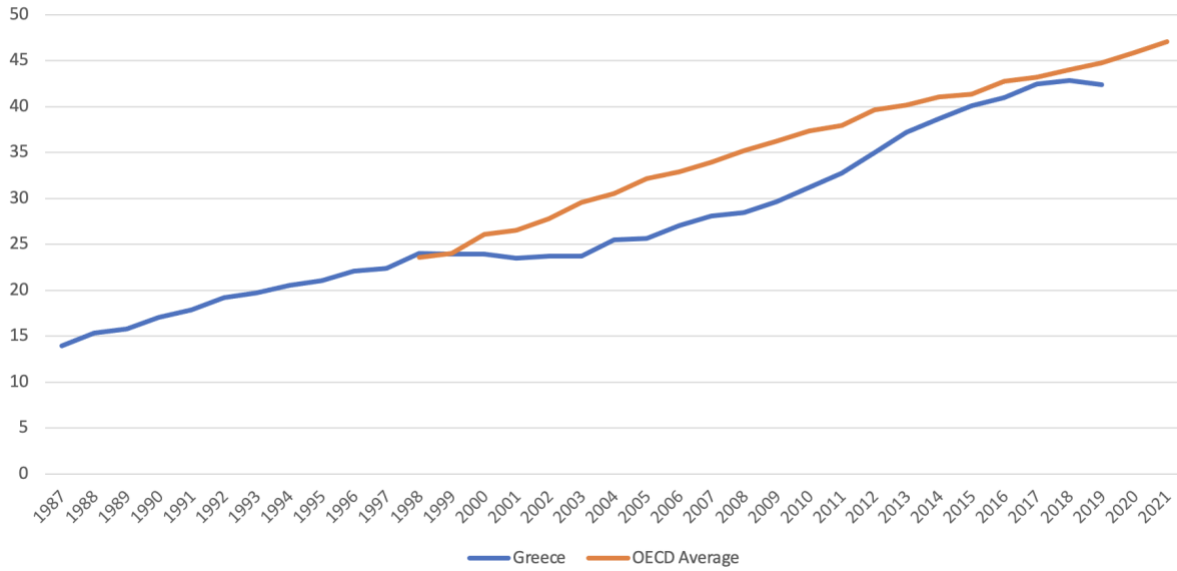
Figure A.2 - Tertiary education enrollment in Greece (% gross) - World Bank
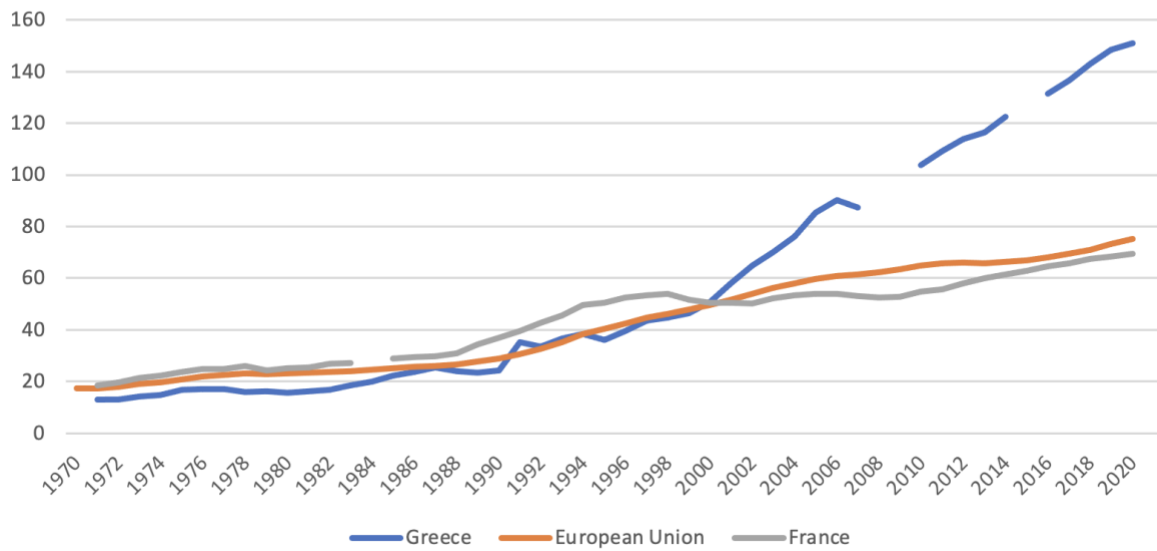
Figure A.3 - Vote for selected left-wing parties among young voters

Legend:
- Difference between % vote for PASOK among young voters (20-40) and the rest of the population after controls for education, sex, age, marital and employment status
- The same, for SYRIZA
- The same, for the Communist Party
- The same, for all left-wing parties
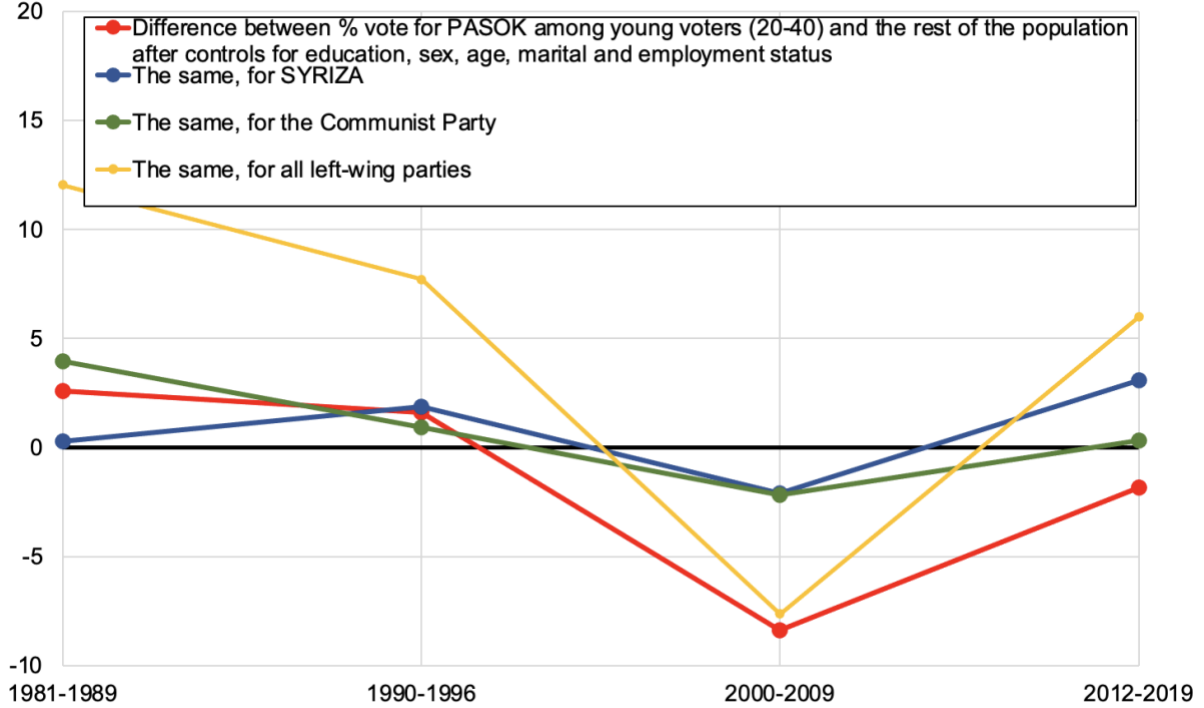
Figure A.4 - Vote for selected left-wing parties among men

Legend:
- Difference between % vote for PASOK among men and women after controls for education, sex, age, marital and employment status
- The same, for SYRIZA
- The same, for the Communist Party
- The same, for all left-wing parties
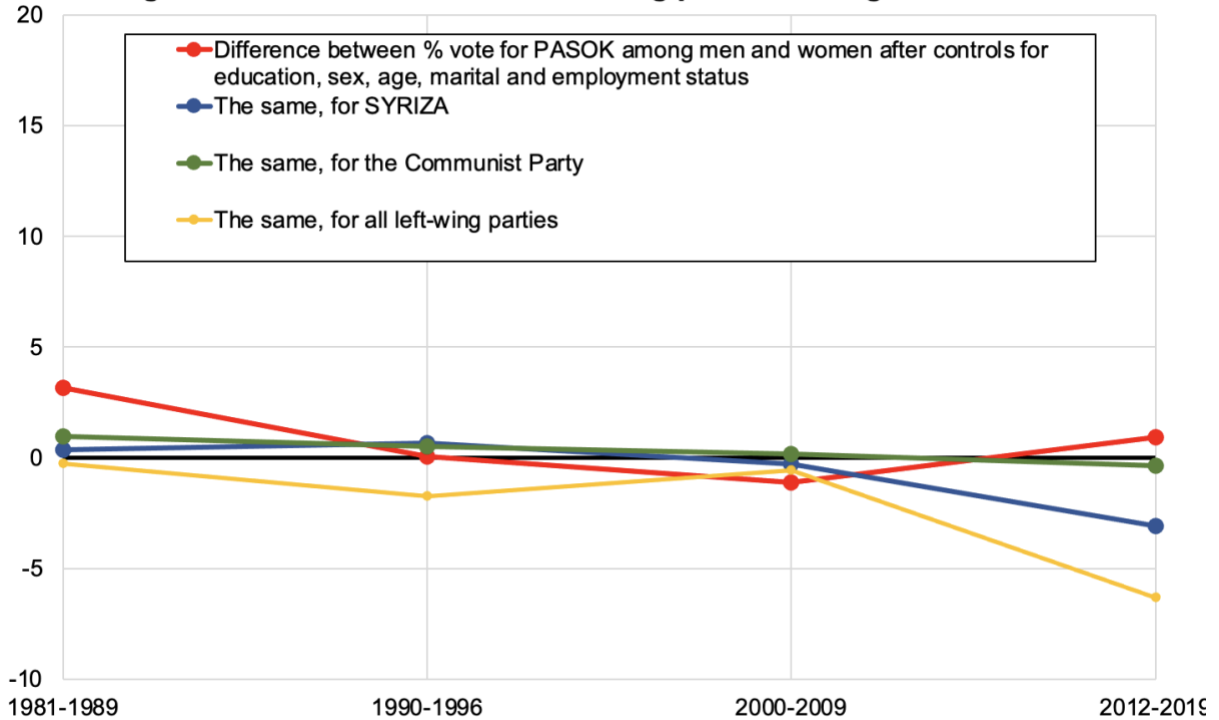
Figure A.5 - Vote for selected left-wing parties among voters never attending religious services

Legend:
- Difference between % vote for PASOK voters never attending religious services and voters attending religious services after controls for education, sex, age, marital and employment status
- The same, for SYRIZA
- The same, for the Communist Party
- The same, for all left-wing parties

Table A.1 – The Structure of Political Cleavages in Italy, 2018 from Gethin et al. (2021)
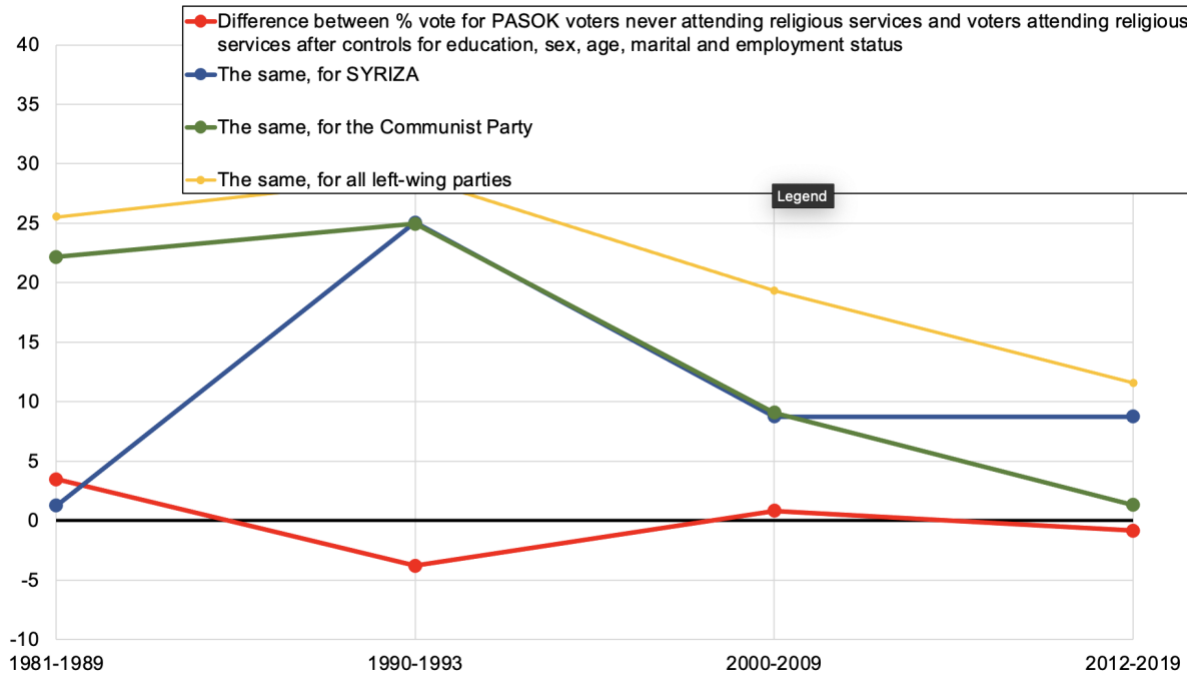
| | Share of Votes Received (%) | | | | |
	Socialists/ Soc. Democrats	Five Star Movement	Conservatives/ Liberals	Lega	Fratelli d'Italia
Education					
Primary	16%	33%	19%	29%	1%
Secondary	24%	38%	7%	22%	5%
Tertiary	34%	30%	10%	14%	7%
Income					
Bottom 50%	21%	38%	9%	22%	6%
Middle 40%	33%	32%	9%	18%	5%
Top 10%	33%	30%	10%	18%	5%
Age					
20–39	24%	38%	9%	21%	5%
40–59	32%	37%	5%	14%	4%
60+	26%	37%	8%	19%	5%
Religion					
No religion	33%	36%	7%	16%	3%
Catholic	23%	34%	8%	25%	8%
Other	20%	45%	7%	17%	10%
Region					
North	30%	24%	9%	29%	4%
Center	28%	33%	9%	18%	7%
South	23%	51%	8%	8%	6%
Islands	22%	51%	11%	8%	6%

Data Source: Authors' computations using Italian electoral surveys (see wpid.world).

Note: The table shows the share of votes received by the main Italian political parties by selected individual characteristics in 2018. Social democratic/socialist parties were supported by 16% of primary-educated voters, compared to 34% of tertiary-educated voters.

Table A.2 – The Structure of Political Cleavages in Spain, 2019 from Gethin et al. (2021)

	Share of Votes Received (%)					
	Podemos	PSOE	Ciudadanos	PP	VOX	Nationalist parties
Education						
Primary	7%	38%	7%	32%	5%	8%
Secondary	16%	27%	11%	16%	16%	10%
Tertiary	20%	22%	15%	17%	9%	12%
Postgraduate	18%	20%	21%	17%	5%	19%
Income						
Bottom 50%	13%	35%	9%	23%	11%	6%
Middle 40%	17%	26%	13%	15%	14%	10%
Top 10%	15%	20%	14%	16%	15%	17%
Age						
20–39	23%	21%	14%	11%	17%	8%
40–59	15%	28%	13%	16%	13%	11%
60+	7%	35%	7%	31%	7%	11%
Location						
Urban areas	15%	28%	12%	18%	13%	10%
Rural areas	6%	30%	8%	28%	10%	13%
Religion						
Catholic	6%	30%	13%	26%	15%	7%
Other	17%	39%	9%	10%	9%	11%
No religion	35%	24%	8%	4%	7%	17%

Data Source: Authors' computations using Spanish electoral surveys (see wpid.world).
Note: The table shows the average share of votes received by the main Spanish political parties by selected individual characteristics during the two elections held in 2019. Podemos was supported by 7% of primary-educated voters, compared to 18% of voters with postgraduate degrees.

	Share of Votes Received (%)			
	Left Bloc	Socialist Party	Greens/ Communists	Social Democratic Party/Social Democratic Center-People's Party
Education				
Primary	5%	43%	11%	39%
Secondary	13%	37%	9%	37%
Tertiary	14%	24%	6%	52%
Income				
Bottom 50%	8%	43%	10%	37%
Middle 40%	9%	35%	10%	41%
Top 10%	15%	24%	6%	54%
Religion				
No religion	24%	32%	17%	23%
Catholic	9%	37%	9%	42%
Other	15%	42%	7%	34%
Age				
20–39	15%	31%	6%	43%
49–59	12%	35%	10%	39%
60+	6%	43%	11%	39%
Country of Birth				
Portugal	10%	37%	10%	40%
Brazil	10%	59%	0%	30%
Other ex-colony	9%	31%	12%	48%
Region				
North	10%	38%	5%	42%
Center	8%	29%	5%	57%
Lisbon	12%	40%	16%	29%
Alentejo	7%	54%	23%	12%
Algarve	15%	36%	11%	36%

Table A.3 – The Structure of Political Cleavages in Portugal, 2015-2019 from Gethin et al. (2021)

Data Source: Authors' computations using Portuguese electoral surveys (see wpid.world).
Note: The table shows the average share of votes received by the main Portuguese political parties by selected individual characteristics over the 2015–2019 period. During this period, 43% of primary-educated voters voted for the Socialist Party, compared to 24% of university graduates.

Table A.4 – The Structure of Political Cleavages in Ireland, 2020 from Gethin et al. (2021)

	Share of Votes Received (%)				
	Sinn Féin	Labour Party	Green Party	Fianna Fáil	Fine Gael
Education					
Primary	43%	4%	1%	23%	13%
Secondary	27%	4%	7%	24%	19%
Tertiary	20%	5%	8%	21%	24%
Income					
Bottom 50%	30%	4%	5%	21%	17%
Middle 40%	20%	5%	8%	25%	22%
Top 10%	16%	4%	8%	22%	33%
Religion					
No religion	29%	5%	16%	12%	15%
Catholic	23%	4%	3%	28%	22%
Protestant	16%	8%	7%	13%	40%
Age					
20–39	27%	5%	14%	16%	18%
40–59	26%	4%	5%	21%	20%
60+	20%	5%	4%	30%	24%

Data Source: Authors' computations using Irish political attitudes surveys (see wpid.world).

Note: The table shows the share of votes received by the main Irish political parties by selected individual characteristics in 2020. Sinn Féin was supported by 43% of primary-educated voters during this election, compared to 20% of university graduates.

Presidential Election 2017 (1st Round)	All Voters	Mélenchon/ Hamon ("Egalitarian Internationalist")	Macron ("Inegalitarian Internationalist")	Fillon ("Inegalitarian Nativist")	Le Pen/ Dupont-Aignan ("Egalitarian Nativist")
	100%	28%	24%	22%	26%
"There are too many immigrants in France" (% agree)	56%	32%	39%	62%	91%
"In order to achieve social justice we need to take from the rich and give to the poor" (% agree)	51%	67%	46%	27%	61%
University graduates (%)	33%	39%	41%	36%	16%
Monthly income > €4,000 (%)	15%	9%	20%	26%	8%
Home ownership (%)	60%	48%	69%	78%	51%

Data Source: Author's computations using French postelectoral survey 2017 (see wpid.world).

Note: In 2017, 28% of first-round voters voted for Mélenchon/Hamon, 32% of them believed that there were too many migrants in France (vs 56% among all voters), and 67% believed that we should take from the rich and give to the poor (vs 51% on average). This electorate can therefore be viewed as "egalitarian-internationalist" (pro-migrants, pro-poor), while the Macron electorate is "inegalitarian-internationalist" (pro-migrants, pro-rich), the Fillon electorate is "inegalitarian-nativist" (anti-migrants, pro-rich), and the Le Pen/Dupont-Aignan electorate is "inegalitarian-internationalist" (anti-migrants, pro-poor). The votes for Arthaud/Poutou (2%) and Asselineau/Cheminade/Lassalle (2%) were added to the votes for Mélenchon-Hamon and Fillon, respectively.

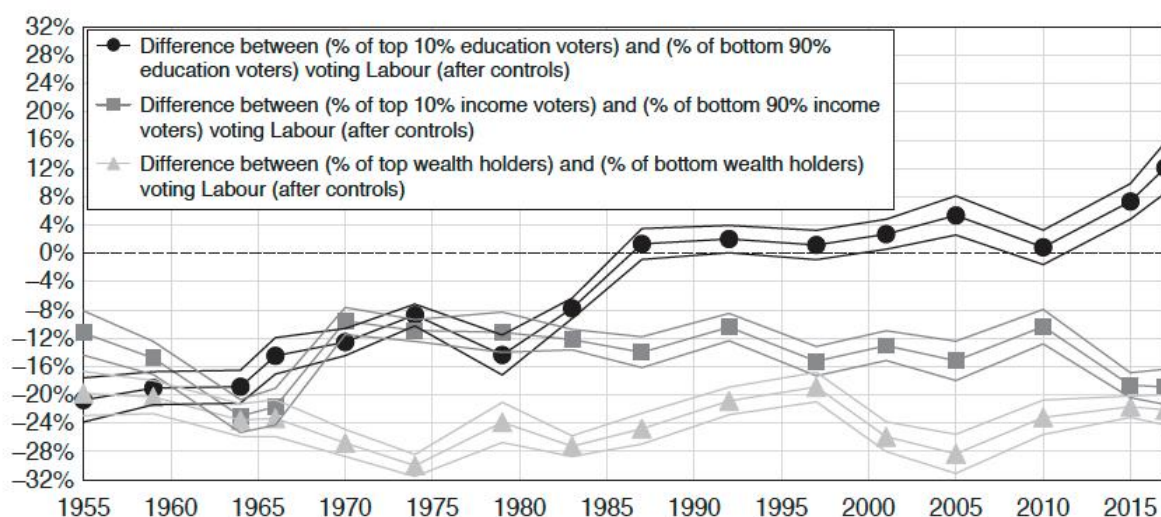Figure A.6 – Political Cleavages in Britain, 1955-2017 from Gethin et al. (2021)

Figure A.7 – The income cleavage for selected left-wing parties in Germany, 1949-2017 from Gethin et al. (2021)
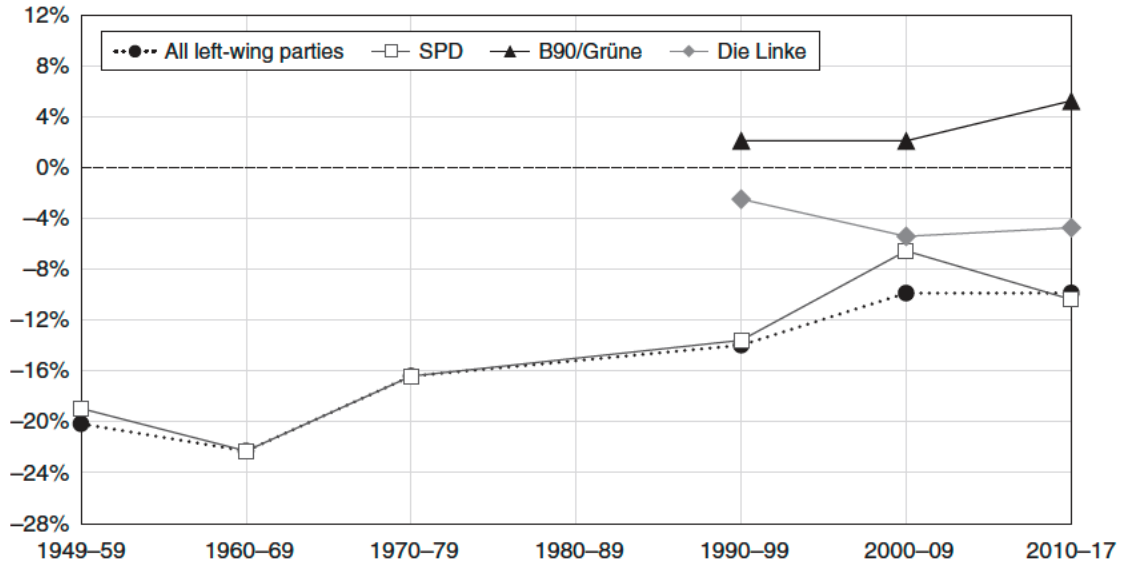

Figure A.8 – The education cleavage for selected left-wing parties in Germany, 1949-2017 from Gethin et al. (2021)