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The End of Socialist Hegemony: Europe and the Greek Parliamentary Election of 7th March 2004

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Abstract

Investigating the apparent paradox of European success followed by domestic electoral failure, the article suggests the key to the 2004 Greek parliamentary election was popular fatigue with a party that had dominated government for the previous two decades. While the unpopularity of the euro undoubtedly aggravated popular discontent, Europe was essentially a 'missing issue' from the campaign. A landmark election, inaugurating a new phase in Greek political life, 2004 may also open new prospects for Greek Euroscepticism.

THE END OF SOCIALIST HEGEMONY: EUROPE AND THE GREEK PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION OF 7 MARCH 2004

The Puzzle

The Greek parliamentary election of 7 March 2004 resulted in a resounding defeat for the incumbent socialist party (PASOK). This was a particularly significant outcome, as it apparently signalled the end of socialist hegemony within the national party system. Meanwhile, for many external observers, the election result seemed surprising, as the socialists' defeat occurred despite a record of success at the European level.

The era since Kostas Simitis became Prime Minister in 1996 had seen the transformation of Greece's image within the European Union. In the early 1990s, the *"Wall Street Journal"* had labelled Greece 'the sick man of Europe', due to its record of economic malaise, foreign policy intransigence and non-communautaire positions. A decade later, Greek exceptionalism seemed to be a thing of the past and the country had apparently metamorphosed into a 'normal' EU member.

Its management of the EU presidency in the first half of 2003 had earned Greece praise for its European leadership in a difficult period when the Union was split over the Iraq war. The Greek presidency also played a key role in ensuring that the draft document produced by the EU's Constitutional Convention would form the basis for discussion in the forthcoming Intergovernmental Conference.

Moreover, since its last electoral victory in April 2000, the socialist government had fulfilled the two fundamental national goals of the previous decade. Entry to the Eurozone had seemed an impossible dream in the early 1990s when Greece, with double-digit inflation and the highest budget deficit in the European Union, had been the member-state furthest from meeting the Maastricht criteria. Against all odds, it was achieved in 2001, in time for Greece to introduce the euro along with its partners in 2002.

Meanwhile, after a diplomatic marathon lasting throughout the 1990s, the European Council at the 2002 Copenhagen summit approved the accession of the Republic of Cyprus, marking the de facto "Europeanisation" of Greece's leading "national issue". The Cypriot accession treaty, along with those of the other nine states due to join the EU on 1 May 2004, was signed in April 2003 at a high profile ceremony held in the shadow of the Acropolis and stage managed by the Greek presidency.

This does not, of course, suggest an unblemished European record. The handling of Structural Funds, for example, has long been a problem area. Notably, in 2001, the Greek government was humiliatingly required to return funding received for the national Land Registry project, which had become a byword for financial mismanagement. But this was a government which had significantly upgraded the country's European prestige, avoided Greece's long-feared relegation to a 'second speed' outside the EU's institutional core and – through Cypriot accession – alleviated a major source of external insecurity. Its rejection by the electorate seems to confirm the finding of other studies in this working paper series, i.e. that governments in EU member-states do not usually stand or fall on their European records.

The scale of the socialists' defeat was particularly striking in the light of the party leadership takeover by George Papandreou just a few weeks before the election. As the son of the party's founder and long-time leader, Andreas, and grandson of the 1960s Prime Minister, George Papandreou, the new leader was endowed with powerful symbolic appeal. Moreover, as Foreign Minister since 1999, Papandreou, with his mild-mannered style and bold policy of Greek-Turkish rapprochement, had played a key role in improving Greece's European and international image. But Papandreou's international credentials proved ineffective domestic vote-winners. In an electoral contest focused on a wide-felt need for domestic change, the last-minute leadership succession, while initially giving the socialists' campaign a new dynamism, seems ultimately to have increased the scale of their defeat.

A Landmark Election

The key to the 2004 election was popular fatigue with a party that had dominated government for the previous two decades. The climate was perhaps analogous to the UK in 1997, when after almost a generation of domination by one party, there was a widespread longing for change. By the spring of 2004, the Greek socialists had served three consecutive terms and been in power continually for more than 11 years. Moreover, in the 22 years since their first election victory in October 1981, there had only been brief periods (June-November 1989, April 1990-October 1993) when PASOK was in opposition.

The resulting close identification of the governing party with the state machine contributed to a climate of endemic corruption.[1] This inevitably resulted in political scandals, such as the revelations in spring 2003 of mass-scale share trading by two leading socialist party cadres shortly before the 1999 Stock Exchange crash. The latter was believed to have resulted in serious financial losses for over one million investors, many of them speculating with the family savings.

Another major source of discontent was the dysfunctional nature of the state, whose notoriously sclerotic bureaucratic procedures were inefficient, unjust and frequently irrational.[2] The traditional prevalence of clientelism in the distribution of public sector jobs and its systematization during the socialist era led to a public perception of the state sector as staffed by card-carrying PASOK members. Typically, a major issue during the 2004 campaign was the fate of an estimated 250,000 short-term contract workers employed by the public sector to cover permanent (rather than seasonal) needs. This practice was eminently functional from the viewpoint of the clientelist system, as it kept the employees permanently dependent on the governing party. However, it was deemed to be in violation of EU law by the European Commission, which sent a warning letter to the Greek government shortly before the election.

[1] On Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index for 2003, in which a higher ranking indicates less corruption, Greece emerged joint 50th with South Korea and Costa Rica and was classified as the most corrupt of the then 15 EU member states, well below the next contender, Italy, which was placed 35th. The fact that Greece had been ranked 36th in 1998 and 42nd in 2001 indicates a marked deterioration during the socialists' last two terms in office.

[2] A point that emerges clearly from the case histories in the *Annual Reports* published by the Greek Ombudsman since 1998 (www.synigoros.gr).

Besides discontent with the entrenched incumbents, with the passage of time the historical factors that had facilitated socialist hegemony had ceased to be so influential. PASOK's emergence as an almost permanent party of power had derived from the particular electoral dynamics of the post-dictatorship era. After an initial period of restructuring (1974-81), the party system essentially stabilised with two fundamental characteristics.

Firstly, an electoral law designed to produce absolute parliamentary majorities encouraged the presence of two major parties, PASOK and the rightwing New Democracy. As can be seen from table 1, in the eight parliamentary elections that took place from 1981 to 2000, the joint vote share of these two parties only once fell below 83%.[3] Thus, under normal circumstances, Greek elections have resulted in single-party governments, with only the socialists and New Democracy as credible contenders for power. The only divergence from this rule occurred in 1989. Then, a temporary change in the electoral law towards a more proportional system resulted in two short-lived coalition governments, both including the Coalition of the Forces of the Left and Progress, an electoral alliance of parties and personalities from the traditional communist-dominated left.

Table 1: Combined Vote Share of the Two Major Parties (PASOK-ND) in National Elections, 1981-2000

Year	1981	1985	June 1989	Oct 1989	1990	1993	1996	2000
% Vote	84.0%	86.7%	83.4%	86.9%	85.5%	86.2%	79.6%	86.5%

The second characteristic – and one that makes Greece rather unusual in comparative West European terms – was that, in every post-1981 election but one, an absolute majority of voters opted for the socialists and the parties further to the left (see table

[3] The 1996 fall in their combined vote to 79.6% was due to the presence of the socialist breakaway party DIKKI (see below) which attracted 4.4% of the vote.

2). Dividing the parties into two ideological camps reveals the numerical superiority which the left\centre-left bloc has always enjoyed in relation to the right\centre-right. Again with the single exception of the 1990 election, this difference has ranged from 5.5% of the vote to over 24%. In contrast, the right\centre-right has not achieved an absolute majority in any national election. As a result, Greece has had a two-party system in which the dice appeared to be permanently loaded in favour of one party, with the left\centre-left popular majority acting as a constraint on a regular alternation in power.

Table 2: Vote Shares of the Left\Centre-Left and Right\Centre-Right in National Elections, 1981-2000

Year	1981	1985	June 1989	Nov 1989	1990	1993	1996	2000
Left\Centre-Left	60.4%	57.1%	52.3%	51.7%	48.9%	54.4%	56.7%	55.2%
Right\Centre-Right	35.9%	40.8%	45.3%	46.2%	46.9%	44.2%	41.1%	42.7%
Difference	24.4%	16.3%	7.0%	5.5%	2.0%	10.2%	15.6%	12.5%

Note: The first row includes all parliamentary forces from the socialist\communist\post-communist area of the political spectrum (PASOK, KKE, KKE-Es., SYN, DIKKI), regardless of whether they succeeded in electing representatives to Parliament in the particular election concerned. It does not include the extra-parliamentary left. The second row includes New Democracy and the other parliamentary forces of the Right (Democratic Renewal, Political Spring), again regardless of whether they succeeded in electing MPs on that particular occasion. Together, these two rows comprise all the parties which can be regarded as significant contenders for national parliamentary seats.

The Greek electorate's leftward tilt is usually attributed to the delegitimation of the Right as a result of the experience of military rule (1967-74). Certainly, Greece's historical traumas, from the 1940s civil war to the 1970s Junta, provided fertile terrain for a strategy of electoral polarisation in which the socialists consistently associated their main opponent, ND, with the "sinful past" of the dictatorship and the earlier period of repressive parliamentarism that had preceded it. The rhetorical apogee was probably reached in the 1984 European Parliament elections, which one socialist government minister memorably described as 'the final confrontation between the forces of darkness and the forces of light'. However, a similar strategy had been employed in almost all subsequent elections, allowing the socialists to achieve an

almost permanent electoral predominance based on rallying the centre\left majority against the fear of 'the return of the right'.

Of course, the anti-right strategy was not the sole explanation for the socialists' string of electoral victories. On becoming Prime Minister in 1996, Kostas Simitis had proclaimed a new government project of "modernisation", presented as more or less synonymous with "Europeanisation" and closely identified with EMU entry. In both the 1996 and 2000 elections, the image of Prime Minister Simitis as the leader of the "Europeanising" and "modernising" forces in Greece seems to have been significant in rallying support. But the anti-right reflex remains fundamental to understanding the dynamics of Greek electoral politics.

Characteristically, the only previous New Democracy election victory in the past 23 years occurred under the exceptional circumstances of 1990, when the socialists were not only tainted by corruption scandals, but had also undermined this confrontational strategy by serving in a governing coalition which included New Democracy. The subsequent failure of the 1990-93 ND government - left congenitally unstable by its one-seat majority and inextricably associated in the public mind with the unpopular austerity measures implemented to meet the Maastricht criteria - left the Greek right with a lack of government credibility for the following decade.

However, in 2004 - over 40 years since the end of the civil war, 30 years since the fall of the dictatorship and 11 years since the last New Democracy government - it seemed that government change was on the agenda. Since his election as leader of New Democracy in 1997, Kostas Karamanlis, nephew of the party's founder, had revitalised ND. Karamanlis aimed to overcome the anti-right syndrome by repositioning ND in the centre of the political spectrum. This included restraining the extreme rightwing elements and making gestures to reassure the communist Left that his party was no longer the repressive right of the post-civil war era. This strategy appeared to be rewarded when ND emerged as first party in the 1999 European Parliament election.

The following year's general election was close-run, with the socialists achieving victory with a lead of less than 1.1% over ND. Indeed, the exit polls had initially

suggested a victory for New Democracy, whose supporters' noisy public celebrations had been abruptly aborted when the actual results began to come in. However disappointed ND was with this near miss, the election result indicated that the party had once again become electable. Meanwhile, the socialists' triumph proved short-lived, as within a few months the opinion polls were already suggesting that PASOK had lost the next election. Local government elections in autumn 2002 confirmed the shift towards New Democracy, which gained three prefectures and a number of significant municipalities from PASOK.

But after the previous experience with the 2000 election, it remained to be seen whether the shift to the right was substantive or whether the socialists would once again be able to rally a last minute left\centre-left popular majority. It was this question – whether the systemic bias of the last quarter century would actually be overcome - that made 2004 the most interesting Greek election since the dramatic contests of 1989-90.

Prelude to the Election

In reality, the campaign began many months before the elections, with politicians from both major parties electioneering all over Greece throughout the summer of 2003. Early election scenarios had been rife from late 2002, with a particular favourite suggesting the socialists could reverse the tide of public opinion by holding a successful Presidency of the EU Council of Ministers and then calling a snap election to capitalise on it. Such predictions were confounded when opinion polls showed that, although an overwhelming majority of Greek voters considered the presidency to have been a success, they did not intend to vote for the governing party. Once again, the Greek case seems to provide striking confirmation of the low salience of European integration in the domestic political arena.

Indeed, ironically the opinion polls indicated that the socialists' greatest European achievement - Eurozone entry - had become a major electoral liability. Throughout the 1990s, the EU's own "Eurobarometer" surveys had consistently found the Greeks to be among the most enthusiastic supporters of the euro – apparently due to a lack of confidence in the notoriously weak national currency. But once the euro began to

circulate, it rapidly became associated with uncontrolled price rises. By the summer of 2003, opinion polls suggested that the latter had become the most important electoral issue. In response, the government launched a populist campaign in July, essentially entailing the Deputy Minister for Trade visiting shops and street markets, accompanied by the television cameras, to exhort vendors to keep prices down.

In a new scenario, analysts suggested that a post-presidency government reshuffle, bringing an air of renewal, might be followed by an autumn election. After the July cabinet change proved a damp squib, the government changed tack and in September announced a package of pre-election benefits. Besides pay rises for civil servants and pensioners, these included tax cuts on car purchases, an extensive legalisation of illegally constructed housing and a large-scale de-characterisation of forestland, allowing building in previously forbidden areas. The latter measures did nothing to enhance the Simitis government's "Europeanising" and "modernising" image.

Meanwhile, far from pleasing the voters, the package seems to have sparked an outburst of discontent. The country was swept by an autumn strike wave, embracing diverse groups with different demands, ranging from university and schoolteachers to petrol station owners and taxi drivers. In October, the suicide of an official dealing with illegal housing threatened another scandal. The level of government desperation was suggested when TV cameras accidentally captured Simitis at an EU summit asking UK Prime Minister Tony Blair to return the Elgin Marbles before the election.

The degree of demoralization and dissatisfaction within the governing party was indicated when a meeting of the National Council had to be called off because of low attendance. In November, 18 PASOK MPs, including government ministers, announced they would not be running with the party again. As a result, plans for an early election were shelved and in the end, the socialists all but exhausted their mandate, with the elections held only a few weeks before the end of the four-year term.

By the end of 2003, intraparty discontent was focused on the Prime Minister himself, even though in both previous elections his presence had been regarded as one of the party's trump cards. This change of heart may be partially explained by the fact that

by March 2004, Simitis held the record as the Prime Minister with the longest consecutive term in office since the foundation of the Greek state.[4] In a final attempt to alter the public mood, on 7 January Simitis announced his resignation as leader of PASOK, designating Papandreou as his heir apparent.

With this bold move, the socialists seemed once again to have seized the initiative. Papandreou became the immediate focus of media attention, with the TV cameras following his every move. In a procedure of dubious democratic legitimacy, the anointed leader decided not to submit his candidacy to the party base, but to invite anyone who wanted – whether a party member or not – to vote for him in an uncontested election held on 8 February. As a public relations exercise, this proved strikingly successful. Over one million citizens took part in the leadership election - more than five times the number of registered party members and over one-third of the number who had voted for the socialists in 2000.

An impression of unstoppable dynamism was reflected in the new enthusiasm displayed at the party's rallies. Despite the evidence of the opinion polls, which suggested a reduced but convincing New Democracy lead, PASOK's supporters began to claim that as in 2000, the election would be a photo-finish with their party having a good chance of pulling ahead. Thus, after a protracted pre-election period, which had failed to generate much public interest, the election was transformed overnight into an exciting contest.

The Duel

PASOK's leadership succession turned the election into a charismatic contest between two of the most symbolically charged names in twentieth century Greek politics, Karamanlis and Papandreou. Inevitably, the media coverage focused on the duel between these two leaders, resulting in a relative presidentialisation of the campaign[5] at the expense of the smaller parties. This was reinforced by the way in which both

[4] Eight years, one month and 18 days.
[5] Although not of the results, as Papandreou regularly emerged ahead of Karamanlis in opinion poll questions about which of the two candidates was most suitable to be Prime Minister.

PASOK and ND ran their campaigns, based on impressively organised mass rallies addressed by the leader and timed and packaged for the main evening news on TV.

This was a very different contest from the expected Karamanlis-Simitis confrontation. Rather than competing with the Prime Minister, now in his sixties, Karamanlis, aged 47, found himself matched against a candidate only four years his senior, whose casual clothes and informal style made the ND leader appear comparatively stiff and formal. The overall electoral dynamics also changed completely. Instead of a confrontation with a tired government defending its record, the opposition suddenly found itself facing an apparently regenerated PASOK advocating "Revolution Everywhere" (*"Anatropes Pantou"*) and calling on the new leader to "Change Everything" (*"Georgio, allakse ta ola"*).

Papandreou was of course the ultimate PASOK insider – and not just because he was the son of the party's founder. A leading member of the governments of the 1990s, he had been an MP since 1981, a Central Committee member since 1984 and first held a deputy ministerial position in 1985. Despite this, his initial strategy was to distance himself from the party's past and repackage it as something new.

The central theme of the Papandreou campaign concerned the need for the socialist party to find a new relationship with the citizen, to be based on "participatory democracy". The prototype for the latter was apparently the party leadership contest, in which over 99% of the participants had endorsed the single candidate on offer. In his first public appearances as leader, Papandreou did not even mention the words "PASOK" or "socialist", but referred instead to the need to regenerate "the major democratic camp". In highly symbolic moves, new headquarters were set up in separate premises from the party offices and a new party emblem appeared, in which the traditional dark green rising sun had metamorphosed into a schematic sun shape in bright spring colours.

The "new look" was by no means cosmetic. Behind the deliberately vague label of "the major democratic camp" lay an attempt to extend the party's appeal to a broader section of the political spectrum. Without consultation with the party organs or government ministers, Papandreou announced major policy changes that seemed to

signal a spectacular shift to the right. Thus, his opening campaign move was a declaration of support for "non-state universities" - in a country where the public nature of higher education is enshrined in the Constitution.[6] Equally out of line with past socialist policy was his proposal for employers to hire young people for up to four years without paying social insurance contributions.

Particularly controversial were the selections for the party's State List. Of the 300 MPs, 288 are elected in geographical constituencies, while the remaining 12 seats are distributed among the parties on a proportional basis. For the two major parties, the five or six highest-placed names on the State List are certain of election. The choices for the State List are thus regarded as highly symbolic and usually include some of the party's most distinguished cadres. Papandreou opted instead for a policy of high-profile transfers, placing non-party members in four of the five top positions.

Continuing a PASOK tradition of appealing to the left, the second and fourth places went to the former president of the Left Coalition, Maria Damanaki, and to Mimis Androulakis, a prominent figure in the Coalition a decade earlier. But the choice of former ND cadres Stephanos Manos and Andreas Andrianopoulos caused uproar. These were the two most prominent neoliberals on the Greek political scene. Former ministers in the 1990-93 government and closely associated with the latter's unpopular austerity policies, both later left New Democracy, accusing the Greek right of insufficient commitment to neoliberal economics. Their adoption as socialist party candidates – especially in guaranteed safe seats on the State List - suggested that PASOK was metamorphosing into a party with no ideological limits.

The intraparty reaction and indications that PASOK was not winning the battle for hearts and minds resulted in the party reverting to its traditional electoral tools in the last fortnight of the campaign. On the one hand were the increasingly generous pre-election promises targeted at particular groups. Indeed, this was an area where the two main parties appeared to be engaged in a bidding war. For instance, when ND pledged a substantive increase in agricultural pensions, PASOK promised to double them.

[6] Moreover, his pronouncement came just a month after PASOK and the parties further to the left headed a public outcry against a European Parliament amendment (promoted by a New Democracy EuroMP) to recognise the annexes of foreign universities operating in Greece. Those denouncing the amendment had included the PASOK Minister for Education and the party's student movement.

Other socialist pledges included state-funded nursery provision for all by Christmas 2004, a guaranteed state sector job for one person from every family with four or more children, and Internet for the elderly.

Alongside the promise of material benefits was an attempt to reactivate the anti-right syndrome with rousing speeches posing manicheistic dilemmas between progress and conservatism. In the closing days before the polls, Papandreou repeatedly identified ND with the traditional revanchist right, claiming it would divide citizens on the basis of their political convictions and rebuild a rightwing clientelist state. The attempt to raise the electoral temperature and evoke memories of the "sinful past" culminated with the curious "Yellow Envelopes" saga[7] when PASOK representatives, attempting to identify ND with the obscurantist and religious right, presented photographs allegedly showing ND employees posting 'black propaganda' anti-Papandreou pamphlets.

In contrast, the New Democracy campaign stressed the anachronistic nature of PASOK's historical references. A constant refrain of Karamanlis' speeches was that all sides bore a share of the blame for the historical splits of the twentieth century, but these were now in the past. Thus, ND countered the socialists' attempts to evoke memories of old divisions with a discourse of national unity and promises to operate on a meritocratic basis. Karamanlis constantly emphasised that he was against extremes and party supporters were urged to remain low key, promoting an image of ND as a "peaceful force".

In a further attempt to reduce reminders of the past and present a picture of modernity and renewal, Karamanlis tried to persuade the older generation of cadres not to stand as parliamentary candidates. He had only a moderate degree of success, as many of the old guard, including his own uncle, insisted on running for re-election. Another high profile case concerned Yannis Varvitsiotis, an MP since the 1960s who had first served as a government minister in the 1970s and was only persuaded to stand down with the promise of first place on the party's Euro-election list in June. However,

[7] The Greek word for "envelope" is the same as that for "file". Thus, the reference to "yellow envelopes" had a particular resonance in Greece, as a reminder of the infamous state security files held on Greek citizens of non-rightwing convictions during the post-civil war decades.

Karamanlis made it known that these party barons could not expect ministerial posts and that he would be forming a government of new faces.

For ND to become electable, it was essential for the party not only to overcome the historical psychoses of the Cold War era, but also to dispel folk memories of the government of the early 1990s. The latter had been associated with the Maastricht era incursions into the welfare state and especially with a highly unpopular pension reform. Thus, while proclaiming its support for the market and for the reduction of the state's role as an economic actor, another key theme of New Democracy's campaign was its emphasis on the social state. Indeed, as indicated above, ND's wide-ranging promises of pension increases and other benefits put the socialists on the defensive.

Signalling the party's social sensitivities was also a theme of the candidate choice for the State List. Two of the six safe seats went to a blind professor and the president of the Special Olympics - both women - while further down the list was a mother of four children (a special category under Greek welfare rules). Compared to the neoliberal infusions on the PASOK list, ND thus appeared with a distinctly social face.

Unlike PASOK, which shifted ground as the elections approached, ND consistently pursued its chosen strategy of moderation and appeals to the centre. The party's campaign focus was not on traditional rightwing themes like law and order. Rather, its central plank – continuing a strategy employed over the last few years - was denunciations of corruption and state inefficiency, with particular emphasis on the excessive cost of public works projects and national defence procurement. The theme of good governance of course has no ideological label and can appeal across the political spectrum.

Developments during the campaign to a certain extent played into ND's hands. The dysfunctional state, for example, was highlighted one month before the elections when extreme weather conditions left major roads impassable, areas close to Athens remained without water for several days and even the brand new airport closed for some hours, just a few months before the 2004 Olympic Games.

In the same period, a major scandal erupted after Parliament passed an amendment permitting a large-scale luxury development in an area of particular natural beauty around Porto Carras, the resort used for the EU summit in June 2003. Papandreou's attempt to show decisive leadership by barring the ten MPs behind the amendment from participation in the elections backfired when several of the culprits showed they had not actually signed the legislative proposal. This episode thus ended up highlighting the undesirable parliamentary practices that had developed under the socialist government as well as the extensive corruption associated with major development projects.

However, the New Democracy campaign had its bad moments too. Most notable were the statements by a leading party cadre[8] and a candidate MP just days before the polls, apparently confirming PASOK's claim that the right was impatient to return to power in order to pack the state machine with its own supporters.

The Small Parties

Although the election was contested by 17 parties, apart from PASOK and ND there were only three others which could be considered serious contenders for parliamentary seats (of which only one was certain to enter Parliament). There was also a sixth party worth watching.

Apart from PASOK and ND, the three other parties expected to count in this election were all to the left of the socialists. Of these, the two represented in the national Parliament after the 2000 election both originated from the traditional communist left.

The Communist Party of Greece (KKE) is an anti-system party, wedded to the classical tenets of Marxism-Leninism and pursuing a strategy based on hard-line opposition to imperialism, globalisation and European integration. It has consistently voted against every treaty on European integration from the 1960s Association Agreement to the present and opposes Greek participation with fundamentalist zeal.

[8] The statements by Vyron Polydoros had a particular weight given his position as the equivalent of Shadow Minister for Public Administration.

The Coalition of the Left and Progress (Left Coalition or SYN) was founded in 1992, after the break-up of the earlier electoral coalition with the same name, as the main current manifestation of the so-called "renewal left". This political tendency emerged from the 1968 division of the communist party and subsequently travelled the road from Eurocommunism to post-communism, undergoing a series of incarnations and splits as it did so. Since the mid-1990s, its traditional stance of critical support for European integration has acquired a more eurosceptic hue.

The fifth party, the socialist breakaway Democratic Social Movement, which held two seats in the European Parliament, was founded in 1995 in an attempt to capture the political space opened up by PASOK's metamorphosis into a mainstream European socialist party. Like PASOK in its early radical phase, the party has a marked nationalist\Eurosceptic dimension. Thus, DIKKI has declared itself in favour of the European Union but against the Treaties of Maastricht and Amsterdam and called for a Europe of the Nations from the Atlantic to the Urals.[9]

Between them, these three parties had picked up 15% of the vote in 1996 and 11% in 2000. One of the questions in the 2004 election was whether KKE, SYN and DIKKI would be beneficiaries of the popular discontent with the socialists or whether the electorate would instead opt for New Democracy as a more effective way of casting an anti-PASOK vote. Meanwhile, the socialists' leadership change also put the left parties on the defensive, arousing fears their supporters might once again vote for PASOK to avert a government of the right.

Perhaps not surprisingly, therefore, the Communist Party, the Left Coalition and DIKKI all followed a similar strategy of claiming there was nothing to choose between PASOK and ND. The left denounced both major parties as equally rightwing, and called on the voters to strengthen the leftwing opposition to "neoliberalism". Another key theme of the small parties was anti-imperialism. In this respect, it is interesting to note the way in which the issue of the Iraq war played out in this election, which took place almost exactly a year after the war's outbreak.

[9] See "He Theses mas gia tin Enomeni Evropi (Our Positions on United Europe)" on the party's website, www.dikki.gr.

Greek society, traditionally anti-American as a legacy of US post-war intervention in Greece, was firmly against the Iraq war – just as it had been against the first Gulf War and the Kosovo campaign in the 1990s. In the spring of 2003, Greece was swept by an impressive wave of popular protest. Athens experienced its biggest demonstrations of recent years, while marches and happenings took place even in quite small towns.

Official policy did not reflect popular feeling. Although Greek troops were not sent to Iraq, the Greek contribution was significant as the US continued to use the Souda Bay naval base in Crete to support the Iraq invasion. That the government-society contradiction over Iraq did not become more intense was largely due to the government's adroit citation of its mediating rule as EU president, which allowed it to avoid openly taking sides in the "Old Europe\New Europe" split between supporters and opponents of US intervention in Iraq. It also helped that some leading socialist party cadres - notably the party General Secretary - took part in anti-war demonstrations.

However, in the Greek election – unlike the Spanish campaign that was taking place concurrently - Iraq did not emerge as a central issue. Nor does it seem to have played a decisive role in defining the outcome. The reason for this, again in contrast to Spain, appears to have been that policy on the war was not a cause of contention between the two main parties. Those opposed to the Greek role in the war had no reason to assume that an ND government would have pursued a different policy. On the other hand, this issue offered considerable scope for the three small parties of the left to tar both PASOK and ND with the same pro-Atlanticist brush.

Besides trying to ensure their role in a system dominated by the two major parties, the communists, the Left Coalition and DIKKI were also competing with each other for the political space to the left of the socialists. In 1996, the three parties had appeared fairly evenly matched, winning 5.6%, 5.1% and 4.4% of the vote and eleven, ten and nine parliamentary seats respectively. But in 2000, while the KKE had stabilised its support at 5.5% of the vote and 11 seats, SYN had barely scraped into Parliament with 3.2%, electing six MPs. Meanwhile, DIKKI had failed to meet the 3% threshold of the national vote required for parliamentary representation.

Following this electoral failure, DIKKI moved closer to the KKE, with whom it formed a series of alliances in the 2002 local government elections. In the national election, however, the party decided to go it alone, believing it would be the natural resort of disappointed socialists. By the beginning of the campaign, the opinion polls were already indicating that DIKKI was unlikely to return to Parliament. The other two parties, not seeing DIKKI as a threat, essentially reserved their fire for each other.

In spring 2003 SYN, hoping to build on the dynamic of the anti-war, anti-globalisation and environmentalist movements, amended its name to "Coalition of the Left Movements and Ecology" (still known as SYN). Then in December it formed an electoral alliance, the "Coalition of the Radical Left" (SYRIZA), with a handful of small groups which had participated in recent movement politics but originated from splits in the traditional communist, Trotsykist and Maoist left and were all more eurosceptical than SYN itself. Inspired by the successful 2002 Athens prefecture election performance of a non-party candidate symbolising the historical left,[10] SYRIZA fought the 2004 election on a left unity platform, allowing it to attack the KKE as a major obstacle to this aim.

The communist party essentially continued the same line it had followed throughout the previous decade, which had been neatly summed up in the early 1990s slogan of "Five parties, two policies". Maintaining that all the other parties, including the socialists and the Left Coalition, in practice pursued a similar pro-imperialist line, the KKE claimed to be the only effective party of protest. In most elections since the 1968 split in the communist party, attacking the heretics of the renewal left has been a significant strand in the communist campaign.[11] But in 2004, as a response to SYRIZA's left unity calls, it became a central theme.

[10] As a teenager during the Nazi occupation, Manolis Glezos had earned international fame by his daring exploit in stealing the swastika that was flying over the Acropolis and replacing it with the Greek flag. He was thus a living reminder of the Greek left's "glorious period" of national resistance and of its subsequent travails during the Cold War. He was also a former MP elected with the socialist ticket and a former mayor on his native island of Naxos – an unusual combination of qualifications, which suggested that the ingredients of the successful recipe of 2002 might be difficult to repeat.

[11] Except, of course, in the case of those elections in which the CP and the renewal left had formed an electoral alliance (1974 and the three elections of 1989-90).

Finally, among the minor parties not expected to win seats, 'one to watch' was the Popular Orthodox Rally (whose acronym is the word for "the People" in Greek). LAOS was founded by a former ND MP in 2000, at the height of a major church-state conflict over the inclusion of religious affiliation on identity cards. A nationalist party emphasising the identification of Hellenism with the Greek Orthodox religion and opposing immigration and multiculturalism, LAOS is also against the cession of sovereignty to the EU and supports a confederal United Europe of the Nations.

LAOS had been the surprise of the 2002 local government elections, when it confounded all expectations by picking up a protest vote of 13.6% in the Athens prefecture. This was generally regarded as a one-off result, due to New Democracy's support for a candidate who came from the traditional left and was well known for his secular stance on the identity cards issue. Nevertheless, there was considerable interest in how this party might fare in a national contest, especially as ND's move to the centre seemed to open up new prospects for the far right. While Greece to date has not followed other EU members in the development of a significant racist politics, the presence of an immigrant population of around 10% suggests potential political space for this type of party.

LAOS' leader Georgios Karatzaferis proclaimed his goal was to repeat the Athens prefecture percentage, making LAOS third party. His strategy was to appeal to the discontented of all parties, presenting LAOS as an anti-Establishment voice and himself as a man of the people, in contrast to the elites who allegedly dominated political life.

The European Dimension

A striking aspect of the 2004 election was the virtual disappearance of European integration as a political issue. Regardless of the salience of European issues in determining voter choice, the question of relations with Europe has been a visible issue in most Greek elections since the fall of the dictatorship in 1974.

Firstly, stands on Europe have been significant in intraparty competition. In the 1970s, the question of accession to the then European Community was one of the

major themes used by the political forces in a restructuring party system to signal their placement on the ideological spectrum. Subsequently, shifting party stands on Europe have served as a 'barometer' of ideological change, most notably in the case of the socialists but also for the smaller parties of the communist and so-called 'renewal' Left. Secondly, the management of European integration also provided considerable scope for party scoring. In the mid-1980s, for example, the two main parties argued over which had been better able to get a better deal for Greece in terms of inflows of Community funding.

But beyond this, in two separate eras and for two different governing parties, ensuring 'entry to Europe' provided the fundamental plank of the government project. For New Democracy in 1974-80, EC accession was a major national mission. In 1996, Simitis called on the electorate to renew PASOK's mandate – among other reasons – in order to implement the policies necessary for Greece to meet the EMU convergence criteria. During the early years of the Simitis government, "EMU" – which developed into a kind of shorthand for modernisation and ensuring Greece's place at the heart of the European Union – was promoted as a symbolic national goal.

Hence, in the two previous elections of 1996 and 2000, the European issue had a reasonably high visibility due to its centrality in the government's modernization project. In contrast, in the 2004 election campaign, European integration all but disappeared from the discourse of the two main parties.

The March 2004 election took place less than three months before the EU's fifth Enlargement. At the time, Europe's leaders were negotiating the European Constitution while intense discussion was taking place over the future of the Stability Pact. But none of these key questions on the European agenda became issues in the Greek election campaign. Even when Parliament ratified the new member-states' accession treaties in early February, with the election campaign already in full swing, this did not spark any kind of public debate.

Of course, Enlargement may be regarded as a special case. It had acquired a particular content in Greece, where it became synonymous with Cypriot accession and therefore

not to be questioned. Typically, parliamentary ratification took place in a panegyric atmosphere in the presence of Greek Cypriot party leaders, with only the communist party voting against. However, the absence of discussion about Europe did not only apply to Enlargement. It is fair to say that in the 2004 election, the only party talking about Europe was the hard-line eurosceptic KKE.

For the Communist Party, Europe was a basic element of its strategy, the major flagship issue that differentiated it from all the political forces and lent some credence to its claim of "Five parties, two policies". In particular, citing their support for European integration was used as a way of challenging the left-wing credentials of the socialists and especially the Left Coalition. Characteristically, the Communist Party persisted in referring to the EU as "Maastricht", identifying all the evils of European integration with a treaty which SYN had voted to ratify - as opposed to the Treaties of Amsterdam and Nice on which it had abstained.

In 2004, the prominence given by the Communist Party to its attacks on the Left Coalition meant that European policy – always a significant element of KKE discourse – became a central theme of its campaign. In contrast, the Left Coalition had every reason to avoid dwelling on Europe, an issue with the potential to bring about the implosion of the SYRIZA alliance. The hardline Eurosceptic views of some of the SYRIZA allies were also likely to alienate traditional renewal left voters.

Europe was also a theme missing from the duel between PASOK and ND. During the previous generation of Karamanlis-Papandreou confrontation in the 1970s, accession to the EC had been a significant marker of difference between the two main parties. Twenty-three years after accession, this was no longer the case. Both PASOK and ND have proclaimed a federal Europe as their goal and, as their representatives' performance in the 2003 Constitutional Convention suggested, often have quite similar ideas about the direction in which Europe should be moving. Hence, to a certain extent, the absence of discussion about Europe can be interpreted as reflecting the broad strategic consensus between the two parties. It was also a rational choice, in the sense that the opinion polls indicated the voters' interests lay elsewhere.

It was characteristic that one of the few occasions on which Karamanlis talked about Europe was during a visit to Cyprus early in the campaign, when he referred to the benefits the Greek Cypriots could expect from EU entry. Meanwhile, the socialists' choice not to promote their European achievements was striking, even in the context of a campaign which focused on the promised new start in the party-citizen relationship rather than on defending the record of the outgoing government.

Even the tactical use of European integration by the two main parties was limited. For instance, in its attacks on socialist corruption and the dysfunctional state, New Democracy cited the implementation of the Third Community Support Framework. However, despite this topic's considerable opposition potential, it did not become a major electoral theme.

Europe was not the only question conspicuous by its absence. Perhaps equally notable was the almost complete lack of discussion of Cyprus, despite the fact that the talks on the Annan Plan were already in their crucial final phase before the 31 March deadline set for their completion. Of course, all post-dictatorship Greek elections have essentially been fought and won on domestic issues. But on previous occasions, foreign policy issues, while not at the epicentre of electoral confrontation, have figured in campaigns, an example being the Imia episode between Greece and Turkey in 1996. In contrast, the 2004 election appeared particularly introverted.

PASOK's campaign did acquire an indirect European colour through the choice of the incumbent Greek Commissioner to head the party's State List. Anna Diamantopoulou played a prominent role in the campaign after being appointed as the party's public representative. However - perhaps partly because her resignation, leaving Greece for several weeks without a Commissioner, subsequently became rather controversial - her European role and experience did not feature in the campaign except by implication.

Interestingly enough, however, three of the significant parties chose to stress their European credentials by seeking testimonials from fraternal parties in the EU. For example, Swedish Prime Minister, Goran Persson, addressed a Papandreou rally in

Crete, while former French Culture Minister, Jack Lang, accompanied the PASOK leader on a visit to an election centre in Piraeus.

More formally, both ND and SYN sought support from their respective European groups. Thus, ND organised an Athens meeting of the Enlarged Praesidium of the European People's Party two weeks before the election, attended by six Prime Ministers[12] and Spanish Commissioner, Loyala de Palacio, who all declared their support for Karamanlis. Meanwhile, the Left Coalition hosted a meeting of the parties planning to form a new party of the European Left (which in contrast to the existing European Left\Nordic Greens Group did not include the KKE).

Finally, in the last days of the campaign, a number of Italian politicians, including Elia leader, Francesco Rutelli and former European Commissioner, Emma Bonino, issued a testimonial in support of Papandreou. SYN riposted with a declaration signed by 22 personalities from the Italian left, including Fausto Bertinotti, leader of Rifondazione Communista and playwright, Dario Fo.

Thus, it is an intriguing footnote to this election that, while ND, PASOK and SYN chose not to talk about Europe, they apparently believed that utilising their European transnational party links would enhance their legitimacy and appeal.

Results

The first message of the 2004 election was the clear demand for change. This was not limited to the replacement of the governing party. It also concerned the composition of Parliament, which included 83 first time MPs (28% of the total).[13] The turnover was most apparent in PASOK. Two ministers and ten deputy ministers from the incumbent government were not returned to Parliament as well as a whole list of other luminaries, most notably Gerassimos Arsenis, a former contender for the leadership. In the case of ND, the biggest surprise concerned Achilleas Karamanlis, brother of the

[12] The six were Berlusconi (Italy), Aznar (Spain), Balkenende (Netherlands), Barrao Duroso (Portugal), Fenech Adami (Malta) and Dzurinda (Slovakia).
[13] Ilias Nikolakopoulos, 'Mia proti proseggisi tis psiphou tis 7 Martiou', *Fileleftheri Emphasi*, 18, January-March 2004, 33-39.

party's founder and uncle of its present leader, who failed to be elected after 41 years. This election therefore entailed a 'changing of the guard' in more ways than one.

The second message was that the predominance of the two major parties was as marked as ever. The combined PASOK-ND vote of 85.9% was very much in the usual range, as can be seen from comparison with the eight previous elections shown in table 1. The long-held hopes of the smaller parties that the decline of PASOK would lead to a parallel decline in the two-party system, opening up new prospects for them, were not fulfilled. Rather than systemic change, the election resulted in a normal alternation in power. But as we have seen, in the context of post-1981 Greek politics, this was in itself unusual.

The third message was that the old assumptions about the ideological preferences of Greek society no longer applied. As indicated in table 2, in the previous three elections, the left\centre-left bloc had enjoyed a lead over the right\centre-right ranging from 10.2% to 15.6%. In 2004, this dropped to 4.3%, with a combined PASOK-KKE-SYRIZA-DIKKI vote of 51.9% compared to a combined ND-LAOS vote of 47.6%. The relative equalisation of the balance between the two blocs indicated that the fear of 'the return of the right' could no longer be relied on to determine electoral outcomes.

Table 3: 2004 Election Results in Comparison with 2000

	2004		2000	
PARTY	Vote Share	Seats	Vote Share	Seats
ND (Centre-Right)	45.4%	165	42.7%	125
PASOK (Socialist)	40.6%	117	43.8%	158
KKE (Communist)	5.9%	12	5.5%	11
SYN\SYRIZA (Left Coalition)	3.3%*	6	3.2%	6
LAOS (Far Right)	2.2%	-	-	-
DIKKI (Socialist breakaway)	1.8%	-	2.7%	-
Other	1.0%	-	2.1%	-

As in 2000, the election resulted in a four-party Parliament, with the same parties represented. ND was the clear winner of the election in every sense, emerging as first party with a convincing 4.8% lead over PASOK and a safe 15-seat majority (165 out of 300 parliamentary seats). The extent of ND's success was underlined by the fact that it came first in 45 prefectures compared to PASOK's 11. In the case of the single-member constituencies, where the first-past-the-post system applies and which therefore serve as a general gauge of the electoral climate, New Democracy won seven and PASOK only one.

The extent of this victory indicated that the electoral outcome was not just a negative vote against the incumbent socialists. It was also a victory for Karamanlis and his chosen strategy of repositioning ND as a centre party with a social face. As a result, ND formed a government with a stable majority for the first time in 23 years.[14] The size of ND's victory also put a swift end to socialist scenarios about a brief opposition interlude, with the election of the President of the Republic in spring 2005 used to provoke a new general election and an early return to power.[15] With the socialists in disarray, it appears that Greece's European Union partners, as well as the Greek public, are likely to be dealing with a New Democracy government for some time to come.

For PASOK did not only lose the election. With the decline of the left\centre-left popular majority and the corresponding rise of the right\centre-right, it also lost its hegemonic position within the party system. As a result, the former 'natural party of power' now finds itself in opposition, with the prospect of staying there for some time. PASOK emerged from the election with the lowest number of parliamentary

[14] In 1990, ND had won a higher vote share (46.9%) but the electoral law in force had left it with only 151 seats, leading to a weak government whose downfall came rapidly.

[15] The President is elected by a three-fifths parliamentary majority, requiring a consensus candidate and usually one supported by the two main parties. If the necessary 180 votes cannot be mustered after three attempts, then a general election is called, after which the new Parliament can elect a President with a simple majority (151 votes). This creates a temptation for a major party that thinks it might benefit from a general election to block the election of the President. The size of ND's lead suggests this would not be a sensible option for PASOK, while the new Parliament could, theoretically at least, elect a President without PASOK's support (165 ND + 12 KKE + 6 SYN = 183 votes). The KKE's declaration that it will not support any candidate for the presidency, even one from the Left, has left a question mark over the possibility of a new election. But even if a new election were to occur, the possibility of a PASOK victory seems very remote.

seats (119) since its first electoral victory in 1981, as well as its lowest post-1981 vote share apart from the 1989-90 period.

Of course, its 40.6% vote share was more than respectable for a second party. This was not the apparent annihilation of 1990, when PASOK had been a striking 7.5 percentage points behind ND – a defeat from which, in an astonishing reversal of fortune, the party had bounced back with a 7.6% lead only three and a half years later. But in the early 1990s, PASOK had been facing a government with a marginal majority, whereas in 2004 there appeared to be no prospect of an early return to power.

Ironically, the media hype around the Papandreou campaign magnified the socialists' defeat, as the leadership change raised expectations that were not met. When the last opinion polls were published two weeks before polling day, they indicated an ND lead of 3% - a gap which the socialists claimed they were closing. The actual outcome, with ND ahead by almost 5%, therefore came as a particular shock. The fact PASOK appeared to have lost votes during the course of the campaign meant the election result could not be attributed solely to the natural attrition of a party in power for so long. It was also a verdict on the new leadership and its contradictory campaign strategy.

In his pre-election TV interviews, the experienced Foreign Minister had proved a surprisingly weak domestic performer, preferring academic theorising about rebuilding the party to discussing the country's problems. But for most citizens, establishing a new relationship with PASOK – particularly in the context of the 'participatory democracy' propagated by Papandreou - was not central to their concerns. Meanwhile, the party's ideological shifts, especially the neoliberal opening, had been confusing and alienating for many voters.

While PASOK was clearly a major loser from the election, the communist party claimed to be a winner. The KKE achieved a small increase in its vote share, from 5.5% to 5.9%, and won an extra parliamentary seat, thus achieving its best result since the end of the Cold War. It also confirmed both the position as third party which it had held for most of the post-dictatorship period and its pre-eminence in the political

space to the left of the socialists. However, the fact the socialists' decline led to such small gains for the KKE[16] also confirmed the party's post-Cold War marginality and indicated that its appeal as a protest party had probably reached its natural limits.

Just as in 2000, the fate of the Left Coalition provided an election night thriller with implications for the overall distribution of parliamentary seats.[17] When it became apparent that, once again, the Coalition had just managed to cross the electoral threshold, its leader Nikos Konstandopoulos gave a triumphal press conference. But the reality was that the Coalition remained at the margin of parliamentary survival. The confusing name changes, indicating a problem of identity, did not enhance its appeal. Meanwhile, in an election in which the voters moved to the right, the Coalition's call for unity of the traditional communist and post-communist left did not resonate with the electorate. The Coalition did not even succeed in detaching voters from the communist party.[18] Meanwhile, within days of the election, the SYRIZA alliance was riven with acrimony over the distribution of seats among its constituent parties.

As expected, DIKKI and LAOS were the only non-parliamentary parties of any significance in this election, as all the other mini-parties together received less than 1% of the vote. While the communist and post-communist left essentially maintained its 2000 support levels, DIKKI, like its parent socialist party, was a clear loser from the election, seeing its 2000 vote reduced by one-third and failing to enter Parliament for the second time. As a result, DIKKI's leader, Dimitris Tsovolas, announced that he would dissolve the party. Although DIKKI's fate reflects the overall decline of Greek socialism, it also confirms the rule whereby small breakaway parties from

[16] According to an exit poll conducted by the reliable VPRC opinion research company, 12% of the KKE's 2004 voters (i.e. 0.7% of the total electorate) had voted for PASOK in 2000. See Christos Vernardakis, "He Ekloges kai he Aristera", newspaper Avghi, 14 March 2004.

[17] If a party passes the 3% threshold, it is guaranteed a minimum of six seats, which are usually subtracted from the share of the second party. The small party is allocated its seats in the constituencies in which it gained its highest vote share. As a result, within a particular constituency, an MP from a small party may be elected with a lower percentage of the vote than a candidate from one of the two larger parties. There is a "knock-on" effect, as a party which has been deprived of a seat in this way may be allocated a replacement seat in another constituency, if this is necessary to ensure the appropriate final distribution of seats.

[18] Again according to the VPRC exit poll, only 3% of SYN's 2004 voters (which means less than 0.1% of the total electorate, had voted for the KKE in 2000. For reference, see the previous note.

PASOK or ND have been 'one-hit wonders', disappearing from the scene after one parliamentary term.[19]

Finally, unlike the 2002 local government elections, LAOS did not provide the surprise this time. The new far right party did not make a particularly impressive national electoral debut – especially given the comparative advantage provided by its leader's personal TV station, which provided extensive coverage of his campaign. However, with its 2.2% vote share, LAOS replaced DIKKI as fifth party and looked likely to win a seat in the European Parliament elections in June. In contrast to other EU member-states in recent years, the emergence of this new populist protest party did not succeed in turning immigration into an important electoral issue – although it remains to be seen whether this will change in future.

New Prospects for Euroscepticism?

2004 was a landmark election, which has inaugurated a new phase in Greek political life, likely to entail a more regular alternation in power. The decline of the anti-right syndrome suggests that thirty years after the establishment of democracy, Greek party politics has finally overcome the traumatic legacies of civil war and dictatorship. This has many implications for future party strategies, including the prospect of a normalisation of political competition between the two major parties, in which emotive references to the historical events of the mid-twentieth century will no longer have a pre-eminent place.

In this significant contest, Europe does not appear to have been salient to the electoral outcome. The unpopularity of the euro certainly aggravated popular discontent. But this was only one reason for the overwhelming dissatisfaction with the incumbent government. Meanwhile, it would be hard to claim that the election result constituted a verdict on Simitis' Europeanisation/modernisation project, given PASOK's choice not to defend its governing record in the campaign.

[19] Apart from DIKKI, the other examples are the ND breakaways, Democratic Renewal in the 1980s and Political Spring in the 1990s.

It was intriguing, however, that history seemed to be repeating itself, with the pattern of European success followed by domestic electoral failure. In 1981 ND, shortly after fulfilling its central aim of EC accession, lost the election and the position as 'natural' party of power that it had enjoyed in the initial post-dictatorship period. In 2004 PASOK, having succeeded in the apparently impossible dream of taking Greece into the Eurozone, suffered a similar fate. In both cases, once the governing party had achieved its European goal, the electorate chose not to return it to power.

Meanwhile, given the domestic significance of this election, it might not appear surprising that the parties did not really talk about Europe. But actually, the absence of Europe, even as a minor theme or side issue, was rather striking. Arguably, this was the first national election since the application for accession in 1975 in which the parties made so little reference to European integration. Only the eurosceptic Communist Party, reduced to a shadow of its Cold War self, made Europe a central element of its electoral strategy.

One reason for the lack of reference to Europe was that by 2004, the latter had long ceased to be a marker of difference between the parties of power. Notably, while both major parties were to a certain extent redefining themselves in this election, in contrast to the past neither used an amended stand on Europe as a way of signalling ideological change.

In addition, with the goal of Eurozone entry now achieved, it could be argued that relations with the European Union, so troubled in the past, were no longer in crisis. Ever since the Tindemans Report of 1976, the Greeks had feared the prospect of relegation to a "second speed" of integration – a prospect which seemed immediate when the EMU criteria were drawn up in the early 1990s. With this danger averted, arguably "Europe" has now become a matter of routine business and hence a less visible issue.

However, playing down the European dimension also seems to have been a conscious choice by the two main parties and their leaders. This stood in marked contrast to the policy pursued by Simitis. Neither Karamanlis, Simitis' successor as Prime Minister, nor Papandreou, who replaced him as party leader, put Europe at the centre of their

governing projects. As a result, the issue of Europe has lost the symbolic dimension it had in Greek politics during both the 1970s and the 1990s, when it was promoted as a positive national goal.

At the same time, European integration, which for the past twenty years has been inextricably linked in the public consciousness with inflows of Community funding, has now become associated with euro-fuelled inflation. Of course, this may be just a passing phase. If it is not, then it is possible - particularly given the expected reduction in EU financial inflows following the Fifth Enlargement - that there may be repercussions in the form of rising euroscepticism.

In the 2004 election, Europe was essentially a "missing issue". With the pro-integrationist forces apparently "forgetting" about integration, by default the only Europe systematically referred to in the campaign was the malevolent "Maastricht" of the communist party. It remains to be seen whether this was just an aberration or a portent of things to come.

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