



SYRIZA: Things will change but not as you expect

Written by

George Labrinidis

School of Public Administration and Local Government, Greece.

The potential for a SYRIZA-led government has led many commentators to argue that this will mean an essential turn in Greek politics resulting to the transformation of Greece into [communism](#), which is supposed to represent the worst nightmare of middle class westerners. Various things may indeed happen but any essential transformation of this kind is out of the question. Those who propagate it are fully aware of this fact and consciously try to manipulate people and policy makers in the member states of the European Union and the Atlantic. This is not without good reason; there is indeed something that will change, but it is not spelled out. What will follow is not based on inside information but on facts that are publicised broadly in Greece and internationally by mainstream news agencies. It is also based on the history of SYRIZA, its former and current social bases and its links to other political and social forces in Greece.

Starting from this latter point, nowadays SYRIZA is the outcome of the centralisation process of many small parties by SYNASPISMOS (SYN) and of a subsequent split of mainly the old SYNASPISMOS that resulted in DHMAR (Democratic Left). SYN as a separate party was the result of the split of the communist party (KKE) in its congress of 1991 when some members argued for eurocommunism and social democracy and were expelled. The story is even older than that, and its origins could be spotted in 1968 when, during the years of dictatorship, there was another split of KKE with roughly the same content and result.

The social base of both SYN and DHMAR was a small part of labour aristocracy, self-employed and small and medium business which, for European standards, is extremely small business. They also had considerable influence on academics and teachers. Their share in the working class and the students was always negligible. Ruling elites of the country used to despise SYN mostly because of its origin rather than its political positions, rhetoric and voting in the parliament. SYN

both. At the same time PASOK went down to 13% and 12% from 44% in 2009. This ballooning of SYRIZA and DHMAR was not supported only by voters but also by MPs, medium officials and trade-unionists of PASOK. The relation of these parties was built along the years when they shared common candidates in local government and trade unions. It is not an exaggeration to argue that [PASOK has moved to SYRIZA](#) and to a lesser extent DHMAR. Due to the participation of the latter in the



IMAGE 1: SYRIZA'S CAMPAIGN FOR 2014 EUROPEAN ELECTIONS (@EP)

voted for Maastricht in 1992, along with PASOK and ND and never regretted its vote. It also supported EU Amsterdam treaty in 1997 and all the subsequent strategic choices that accrued from both treaties. **When SYRIZA argues today that it supports the euro, this is well rooted in its history.**

Before 2012, SYNASPISMOS used to get around 4.5%. In 2012, there were two subsequent elections in one month's time in which SYRIZA got 17% in the first and 27% in the second, while DHMAR got 6% in

government that resulted after the elections of 2012, along with ND and PASOK, it suffered a split and a diminution of its electoral base and MPs both of which went either towards SYRIZA, POTAMI (The River) or back to PASOK.

In the period after the elections of 2012, SYRIZA followed a rapid transformation in order to convince the ruling elites that it is a reliable manager of the affairs of the state. Breaking ground in this field, it tried to re-enhance the bridges with the other side of the Atlantic.



SYRIZA has now an open line with the Levy Institute, while it seems to be consulting the Brookings and CSIS. As a matter of fact, Levy will have an MP in the next Greek parliament. Tsipras has repeatedly praised the Obama administration and supported various US policies. Lately, two major SYRIZA MPs visited the City of London and had meetings behind closed doors with bankers, financial managers and ship owners. Communists don't get that chance easily... It is reminded that the commercial fleet owned by Greeks is the biggest in the world in absolute terms and that the base of Greek ship owners is in the City and New York. **Rumors have it that SYRIZA has the approval of a good part of the ship owners.** In the interior, SYRIZA has opened lines of communication with parts of the industrialists and the president of the latter is publicly [supporting](#) the party. Tsipras is a regular in the meetings of SEB, which is the union of industrialists and politically the leading union of the Greek-based bourgeoisie. Lately, the Gianna Angelopoulos-Daskalaki [supported](#) SYRIZA publicly.

It is more than apparent that there will be a change in the administration, if SYRIZA wins the elections. It will become London and US led, rather than Germany led, as it is until now. It will favour capitalists with relatively immobile capital in Greece (steel, mines etc) and ship owners, rather than developers and bankers. The support of the euro will be given for a price. **SYRIZA, not only joins, but wishes to lead the "alternative" camp that argues for severe debt cuts in the countries of the south and fiscal easing:** a mixture that could be labelled mild Keynesianism and will represent a better negotiation of the south against the north and of the industrialists against the bankers, where the two are separate.

Yet, the benefits from this negotiation will not be enjoyed by people in Greece that has been devastated by the austerity policies of the last many years. Moreover, the working people have seen their rights and income falling consistently since the late 1980s as a share until the crisis and in absolute terms ever



IMAGE 2: SYRIZA'S LEADER, ALEXIS TSIPRAS (@EP)

since. Rather, the benefits will be enjoyed by financial corporations outside the Eurozone that will see their German competitors in worst position; Eurozone industrialists that had relatively worst access to money and recapitalisation processes; corporations that will manage and absorb the fiscal easing; and Anglo-Saxon corporations and ship firms that will be engaged, among other things, in the exploitation of the newly found gas fields of the SE Mediterranean Sea.

In this light, it is very easily explained why SYRIZA receives such an attack – huge contracts are at stake and the majority of the media of the continent are expressing interests that are related to the old regime of PASOK-ND. Hence enormous pressure unfolds on voters and policy makers to reject and oppose SYRIZA on the basis that it will "take our homes away". This pressure has already taken the form of economic attacks or inflammatory slogans from various sides.

Yet, SYRIZA has to win the elections first. And what winning means is not clear. If SYRIZA doesn't get at least 35-36% it will not get the magic number of 151 MPs and won't get the government. Even if it does, which is very unlikely today, it will be a very weak majority. **It seems unavoidable that a coalition will have to be formed and here SYRIZA has the biggest problem, not because there are no potential allies, but because an alliance with some will destroy the profile on which SYRIZA bases its social**

contract. In short, DHMAR will not get in the next parliament. ANEL, a recent split of ND and ally of SYRIZA in many occasions under the anti-memorandum umbrella, is also striving to enter the parliament and has a clear right-wing sign. PASOK had a split recently with the former PM Giorgos Panandreu forming a new party (KIDHSO). It is unknown whether both will enter the parliament; there is a case where none does. A change in the leadership of PASOK could give SYRIZA the alibi to accept it as a partner with many complications. POTAMI (THE RIVER) is a party led by the most well-known property developer (Bobolas) and big part of the media, both unreliable and non-established. KKE, the Communist Party doesn't have any illusion about SYRIZA and reasonably rejects any scenario that will have the workers' movement becoming SYRIZA's tail. The fascist party (Golden Dawn), ship owners most favourable, with most of its MPs in prison, will get in the Parliament but it is the last that SYRIZA would choose. Under this light, it is not improbable to see a government of SYRIZA – ND. Those who will stand yelling that this scenario is science fiction should remember that PASOK and ND were sworn enemies for at least 38 years.

In all cases, Tsipras is not the [Greek Che Guevara](#) and SYRIZA is hardly [dangerous](#) to capitalism and to the Euro project; recently, this is more and more receivable by the ruling elites in Europe, including the German ones.

