

# THE CONVERSATION

## With Greece backing euro but Syriza in government, another election may beckon

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Syriza supporters celebrate for now, but will it last? Michael Kappeler/EPA

Thousands of Greeks poured into the streets of Athens to rejoice Syriza's win and to crown its leader, Alexis Tsipras, as Greece's next prime minister. Most of them were the same people who, five years ago, spilled out into the streets celebrating PASOK's triumph, applauding its leader, George Papandreou, who was prime minister from 2009-2011.

This time the supporters were fewer and looked older, but sadly not wiser. Some Greeks never learn, despite the warning of Athenian poet Menander, who wrote in the fourth century BC: "The wise man does not make the same mistake twice."

In one way, the results do not look much different from the previous elections of 2012. Syriza moved to first place with 36% of the total votes from its second place in 2012. It will govern in coalition with right-wing, anti-austerity party Independent Greeks, which won 13 seats.

However, the party won fewer votes than the political parties which formed the coalition governments in 2012. These represent what Tsipras calls “austerity” parties (New Democracy, LAOS, PASOK, Democratic Left, KIDISO, and POTAMI). These parties won 43% of the total votes. Under a different electoral system, they would have more seats in the Greek parliament than Syriza. And this despite the three years of very unpopular economic policies and cutbacks. These political parties now have the right to question Syriza’s political legitimacy.

In 2012, coalition parties had the support of 48% of Greeks. The percentage of Syriza and Independent Greeks is 41%.

Syriza’s government will be a minority with no political legitimacy right from the start. It will be the figment of the electorate rule which gives the first political party a boon of 16.7% seats of the 300 seats of the Greek parliament. Tsipras promised to scrap it. Regardless, Tsipras’ governing party will be the first since the collapse of the dictatorship in 1974 to be formed with less than 40% of votes.

Election	Government Support	Election	Government Support
2015*	36.35%	1990	46.89%
2012*	48.05%	1989 (Nov)**	97.83%
2009*	43.92%	1989 (June)*	57.40%
2007	41.84%	1985	45.82%
2004*	45.36%	1981*	48.06%
2000	43.79%	1977	41.84%
1996	41.49%	1974*	54.37%
1993*	46.88%		

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\* *The incumbent government was voted down.*

\*\* *Interim government*

But this is not the only difficulty. Syriza would not have the support of the majority of Greeks to implement its very controversial and cloudy program.

## The key issues

Since 2009, three issues have been debated in election campaigns: the traditional ideological separation between right and left; the split between those who want to stay in the eurozone and those who want to pull out; and the division between those who are against the fiscal consolidation measures and those who believe they are necessary, if Greece is to stay in the eurozone. The main difference between the “triumphant” Syriza and the three-party coalition government of June 2012 was austerity.

The following table shows the voting distribution of the 2015 and 2012 elections on these three issues. This year, 22 political parties were competing for the votes of 9.9 million Greeks.

		January 2015	June 2012
<b>Ideology</b>	Right to Center	41.81%	48.26%
	Left to Center	58.19%	51.47%
<b>Eurozone</b>	Stay in	87.30%	88.04%
	Exit	12.70%	11.96%
<b>Austerity Measures Necessary</b>	Yes	46.19%	52.96%
	No	41.09%	35.08%

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*Note: The percentages of the austerity measures do not add up to 100% because the political parties which are against Greece’s participation in the European Union and the eurozone are not included.*

The first thing to note is that 58.2% voted for left-wing political parties. This represents an increase in popularity for the left in Greece. The division between right and left is important because Syriza has a mass nationalisation program of airlines, ports and telecommunications. Even social democratic parties, which in the table are included in the left side of the political spectrum, do not support such a response in an era of massive

sovereign debt.

Second, the great majority of Greeks voted for political parties which support staying in the eurozone. More than 87.3% of Greeks voted for the euro. This is important because a minority of Syriza's party members support a Grexit. These results confirm what all polls have indicated: more than 80% of Greeks want to stay in the eurozone. The question is how?



Good night Angela, goodbye Europe? Orestis Panagioutou/EPA

On the lethal issue of the necessity of austerity measures to stay in the eurozone, 46% of Greeks voted for political parties which claim that fiscal consolidation and cutbacks are necessary because other eurozone countries would not accept a write-off of Greek debt. On the other hand, 41% of Greeks voted for parties that claim this is not necessary. Syriza is an enthusiast supporter of this idea, at least officially. But what if eurozone partners do not accept it? Syriza is mute on that.

Greeks will find out in a few days how far is Syriza willing to go on this issue. In any case, Syriza lacks the political legitimacy to get Greece out of the eurozone with or without austerity measures.

Is Greece heading for another election pretty soon? Probably. Further elections can only be avoided if Syriza does a u-turn, which is very common in Greek politics, or the eurozone countries yield to Tsipras' charm. His charm was very important in winning votes in Greece but it is unlikely that will have any affect in solving Greece's problem with its eurozone partners.



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