

Article

Government participation and populist discourse transformation of radical left SYRIZA and radical right ANEL

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Abstract

This study examines how the government participation within an EU country can affect the discourse of the left-wing and right-wing populist parties. We analyzed this question by tracing two Greek populist parties' discourse, the left-wing Syriza and the right-wing Independent Greeks (Anel), during the 2012-2019 period. We have split the examined period into two subperiods (2012 to July 2015, and August 2015 to 2019). The turning point was the Syriza-Anel government's signature of the third EU bailout program in August 2015. The first hypothesis was that the government accession within the EU context would slightly decrease the populist logic of the two parties. The next two hypotheses referred that the EU leverage emerged by the signing of the bailout agreement will decrease the populist rhetoric of the two parties towards the external elites (mainly the EU). However, the right-wing populists (Anel)- even after this decrease- will target the external elites to a larger extent than the left-wing populists. To examine the hypotheses in-depth, we applied a combination of quantitative content analysis with qualitative discourse analysis. The findings have corroborated our three initial hypotheses. Simultaneously, the qualitative discourse analysis offered us some additional findings concerning the two parties' use of topos of "History" to increase their populist appeal within the electorate.

In the last years an increase in the appeal of populist parties has been occurred all around Europe (Inglehart & Norris, 2016; Ibsen, 2019). In some countries, the populist parties have participated in the national governments (Mair, 2013).

According to the literature, populism's main feature is that it divides society along two sides: the people (general will) vs. the elites (Laclau, 2005; Mudde, 2004). However, many analysts have mentioned that significant differences between the left-wing and right-wing populism exist (Otjes & Louwerse, 2015; Katsambekis, 2017). The gradual decrease in mainstream parties' appeal had allowed right-wing populist parties to increase their electoral share participating in government cabinets in countries such as Austria, Italy, Norway, Finland, etc. (Mair 2013, p. 46). Furthermore, in Southern Europe, populist parties with left leanings have gained significant power after the 2008 Great Recession in Greece, Spain, and Portugal (Agustin, 2018; Bosco & Verney, 2012; Polavieja, 2013).

Given that populist parties have increased their power in many EU countries, often participating in governmental cabinets, it is -both academically and socially relevant- to investigate how these parties act when they assume governmental positions, and whether they adapt their discursive strategies (Kriesi 2014, p. 368; Albertazzi & Mueller, 2013). Following the Mair's (2009) thesis, in contemporary democracies, it is tough for a government to be both representative and responsible, thus leading to a division of labor between the mainstream parties (responsible government) and the populists (representative role in the opposition). In this rationale, it is critical to explore how the populist parties of the EU democracies change their discursive articulation from the opposition to the government.

Greece constitutes a distinct case of populism. Following the country's bankruptcy in 2010 the mainstream political parties faced an unprecedented electoral deterioration. Left-wing populist, *Syriza* (Coalition of Radical Left) and right-wing populist *Anel* (Independent Greeks) were the main newcomers that arose from the huge crisis of representation existed. The significant increase of their electoral power allowed them to form a government coalition in January 2015. However, the huge EU economic dependence that Greece had forced the two parties to sign a new bail-out agreement in August 2015 continuing the austerity policies implemented by the previous governments. Given that the two parties have articulated populist narratives targeting both domestic (mainstream parties, oligarchy, banking system, media) and external (EU bureaucracy, financial markets, globalization's system) elites it is significant to examine how their accession to government within a period that Greece was under a strict EU financial surveillance affected their discursive strategies. A combination of quantitative content analysis with a qualitative discourse analysis on the party leaders' pre-electoral public speeches -within the period 2012-2019- will take place to examine this question.

Theoretical Framework

Populism has gradually increased its presence in global politics. In the European continent, various types of populist rhetoric exist in a broad range of countries. According to Mudde (2004, p. 562):

populism is a thin ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the

pure people' vs. the 'corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people.

According to Laclau (2005), populist rhetoric frames a common enemy, that is, 'the elites', to unite heterogeneous social segments. This discursive strategy leads to the construction of two empty signifiers 'the people' and 'the elites'. The populist discourse is characterized by a Manichean perspective that presents the 'people' as 'pure' and 'noble', and the 'elites' as a priori 'corrupted' and 'evil' (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007; Hawkins, 2009). The populist actors perceive 'the people' as an active and constituent power (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012; Kalyvas, 2005) accusing either the internal (mainstream political parties, judiciary, media, banking system) or the external elites (EU, multinational companies, international institutions) of undermining the -legitimate- popular sovereignty (Rooduijn et. al., 2014). Kriesi (2014, p. 362) following the study of Meny and Surel (2000) mentions that 'we can identify at least three conceptions of the "people" – a political one (the people as sovereign), a cultural one (the people as a nation) and an economic one (the people as a class)'.

Huber and Schimpf (2017) underline that the host ideology within which each type of populism operates significantly affects its discursive strategy and its impact. Right-wing populism shares authoritarian and nativist ideological elements emphasizing on the cultural aspect of the 'people'. Populist right-wing narrative opposes the increase of supranational institutions' power, pursuing the preservation of the Nation-State's political dominance (Rooduijn et. al., 2014; De Cleen, 2017). Simultaneously, it perceives multiculturalism as a danger for the homogeneity of the 'people'; thus, it emphasizes the need for strict legal measures that will limit the migration's flows (Enyedi 2016; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2013). On the other hand, left-wing populism is inspired by the socialist ideology constructing a 'people' that no matter its ethnic differences opposes the powerful establishment pursuing to act as 'vox populi' (Mudde, 2004; Custodi, 2017). Left-wing populists focus more on the economic aspect of 'the people'. In this rationale, they tend to blame the internal and external economic elites for the difficulties that ordinary people face (Hawkins, 2009). Regarding the EU, left-wing populists criticize the Union as being a neoliberal project that it mainly favors the multinational companies and the rich northern countries (Börzel & Risse 2018; March 2017). No matter their critical differences, both left-wing and right-wing populism share Eurosceptic positions (Kriesi, 2014; Pirro et. al., 2018). In this rationale, EU elites are a common target of both types of populism being considered as opponents of popular sovereignty and national independence (Katsambekis, 2017). Apart from the right-wing and left-wing populism, the literature refers to an additional type, that is, the centrist populism¹.

¹ The centrist type of populism has emerged in Italy and some Central European countries such as the Czech Republic and Slovenia (Mosca & Tronconi 2019; Havlik 2019). The centrist populism has intensively opposed the political establishment accusing the mainstream parties of being unable to govern effectively. It favors technocracy to the current party politics to improve governmental efficiency (out-put oriented). At the same time, it has an eclectic element concerning the fundamental ideologies trying to find a middle ground between the left-wing and right-wing ideas (Mosca & Tronconi 2019, 1277).

Some analysts have examined whether populist parties' participation in EU countries' cabinets had a negative role in the quality of liberal democracy (Albertazzi & Mueller 2013). The findings demonstrated that the anti-liberal element of populist discourse (Pappas 2020) was expressed in these governments' policy priorities. In Italy and Poland, the populist governments tried to undermine horizontal checks and balances by increasing governmental control within the Judiciary and Media. While in Austria the populist right-wing FPÖ was constantly pushing for strict measures that will limit the legal rights of the migrants and refugees. Bobba & McDonnell (2016) examined whether the government participation affected the discursive strategies of populists. Political discourse is a critical component of the populist phenomenon (Kriesi 2014, p. 364; Schmidt, 2008) as it can frame a dichotomous political environment that will justify a gradual erosion of the liberal check and balances by naming and targeting the 'elites' (Stavrakakis et. al., 2018, pp. 5-6). In the Bobba & McDonnell's study (2016), the Italian populist parties *Lega Nord* and *Forza Italia* had slightly moderated their populist rhetoric when they assumed governmental positions in 2001-2006 and 2008-2011. This analysis demonstrated that no matter the difficulties they face within the mainstream parties' domestic cartel (Katz & Mair 1995), populist discourse does not have a fundamental change, and -albeit a slight moderation exists- populists continue to express their anti-system rhetoric while governing. Hence the hypothesis 1 is that a governmental accession within the EU framework will slightly affect the discursive strategies of the populist actors.

Following the Mair's thesis (2009), it arises that in the contemporary EU democracies a division of labor exists between the mainstream parties (responsible government) and the populist ones (representative role in the opposition). This development has happened as the power of supranational principals (e.g. EU) has increased within the last decades, making it difficult for the agents (governments) to be responsive both to supranational institutions and to their electoral constituencies. This growing tendency has led to the electoral power's increase of challenger parties that -most of the times- express a populist and eurosceptic discourse.

Supranational institutions such as the EU do have the leverage to significantly affect the governmental decisions of the Union's members even when they force them to implement unpopular policies (Hooghe & Marks, 2009). Theories of EU integration such as liberal intergovernmentalism and neofunctionalism (Schimmelfennig 2014) point out that the mutual interdependence between the EU countries can explain the deepening of European fiscal and financial integration following the significant 2010 euro-crisis. The deepening of EU economic integration makes it difficult for an anti-system party that has fundamental political differences with the mainstream parties to implement its economic policies while governing. Furthermore, given the asymmetrical interdependence of the EU states (Schimmelfennig 2015), the more -financially- weak a country is, the bigger its economic dependence on the EU. In this rationale, it appears that populist and eurosceptic parties within the eurozone countries will have less opportunities to be representative, as the increasing EU financial and fiscal integration renders necessary the

presence of a responsible -national- government (Mair, 2009; Aslanidis & Kaltwasser, 2016). Moreover, eurozone countries that signed bailout agreement with Troika (EU Commission, ECB and IMF) such as Greece, Portugal, Cyprus, and Ireland, would be even more obliged to follow the EU dictates, decreasing the representative capacity of their national governments (Polavieja, 2013). Thus, the hypothesis 2 is that populist parties within the Eurozone countries will decrease their populist discourse towards the EU bureaucracy when they are forced to implement the EU economic doctrines. This tendency will be even more strong when a Eurozone member has signed an EU bailout agreement.

However, EU integration has different efficiency and depth in each policy's field. 2015 Schengen Crisis has demonstrated that EU supranational role was limited during the border crisis. While in the eurozone crisis the politicization that occurred was mainly focused on the rules under which a country can receive financial assistance, in the refugee's crisis there was a stronger emphasis on the need to protect the borders from the "foreigners". According to Börzel & Risse (2018, p. 102):

The political controversy in the euro crisis has been, and still is, predominantly framed in terms of questions of order, i.e., what constitutes Europe as a community and how much solidarity members of the community owe to each other under which conditions. The influx of migrants and refugees changed identity politics, since populist forces framed the Schengen crisis in terms of 'us' vs 'them' and propagated an exclusionary 'fortress Europe'.

As we mentioned above, this type of discourse is mainly expressed by the right-wing populists that emphasize the cultural aspect of 'the people'. Given that EU integration has been more advanced in the economic field than in the migration one, it appears that an EU left-wing populist party that mainly focuses on the economic notion of 'the people' will have to adapt its policy and discourse towards its opponents more than an EU right-wing populist party. Simultaneously, right-wing populists emphasize the importance of national sovereignty, tending to construct external enemies and expressing a fierce opposition towards the supranational actors. In this rationale, the hypothesis 3 is that within the EU context, right-wing populists in government will be able to articulate a stronger populist discourse towards the external elites than the left-wing populists.

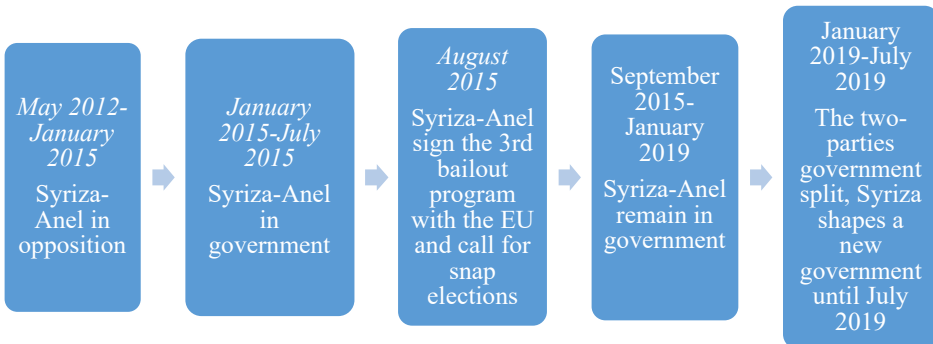
Case selection

Our study aims to analyze in-depth the phenomenon of left-wing and right-wing populism within the EU democracies. More specifically, we pursue to unveil how the government accession affects the discursive strategies of left-wing and right-wing populism. Looking at the recent EU political history, it arises that Greece constitutes the most proper case for our analysis, given that it is the only country that had a clearly populist government formed by a left-wing and right-wing party. In other possible cases (Austria, Finland, Slovakia, Norway, Spain, and Netherlands), populist parties have participated

in governmental coalitions along with mainstream parties. Thus, they had less freedom to express and implement their political ideas. Whereas countries such as Hungary, Poland and Italy that had powerful populist governments, they were solely comprised of parties with right-wing and centrist host ideology. Furthermore, Greece was the only case within the EU that the left-wing populism had the dominant role within a government coalition. Simultaneously, it was the case with the harshest economic crisis among the EU countries (Ladi & Tsagkroni, 2019; Vasilopoulou et. al., 2014), having the strongest dependence on the Eurozone financial institutions.

Greece faced a harsh economic crisis following the 2008 Great Recession. During the first six years of the crisis (2010-2015), the country had lost 22% of the national income, while the unemployment rate reached at 28% in 2013 (Hardouvelis & Gkionis, 2016). The political consequences of this crisis became -firstly- apparent with the emergence of the *Aganaktismenoi* (*Indignados*) movement (Prentoulis & Thomassen, 2013; Aslanidis & Marantzidis, 2016) in 2011 and were further demonstrated in the 2012 snap elections. In these elections, the two mainstream parties of the post-authoritarian (since 1974) political establishment, namely, the social-democratic *PASOK*, and the liberal-conservative *New Democracy*, accumulated -only- 32% of the votes. Conversely, in the previous elections (2009), their electoral support was 77.5%. Considering that the majority of the electorate chose either to vote for other parties or to abstain, it became obvious that the mainstream parties had been significantly delegitimized (Verney, 2014).

The downfall of the two mainstream parties followed the emergence of two new political powers, the populist left-wing, *Syriza* that gained 16.5% of the votes (in the 2009 elections had 4.5%) and the new populist right-wing party, *Anel* that got 10.5% of the vote shares. In the period 2012-2015 the two parties remained in the opposition. However, following the January 2015 elections, they shaped a government coalition that lasted until January 2019. The peculiarity of this government coalition (a populist left party formed a coalition with a populist right-wing party) and the populist discourse that both parties had expressed within their opposition period made this case proper for investigating our research puzzle (Aslanidis & Kaltwasser, 2016).



Timeline of the basic political events

Within the Greek case, based on the three different ‘people’ conceptions, specific elites have been discursively constructed and targeted by the populist parties. According to their narrative, a triangle was shaped comprised of the leading figures of the mainstream parties (*Pasok and New Democracy*), the rich owners of the private Media, and the private banks’ powerful shareholders (Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2014; Markou, 2017). These elites have been named as *διαπλεκόμενοι* (corrupted) by the populist parties, being blamed for the bankruptcy of the country (Verney, 2014; Andreadis & Stavrakakis, 2017). Both *Syriza* and *Anel* have targeted the corrupted mentioning that they significantly undermined the popular sovereignty. Simultaneously, the two parties have constructed an external enemy, that is, the EU bureaucracy represented by the Troika. According to their narrative, EU policies were systematically suppressing the popular sovereignty and national independence. With regard to the economic conception, certain categories of citizens such as the shipowners and the significant businessmen have been targeted mainly by *Syriza* as the ‘rich elites’ that exploit the people by paying low taxes (Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2014). On the other hand, *Anel* was focusing on the increasing influence of international institutions within domestic politics that limit the national independence of the country; while simultaneously it articulated conspiracy theories, relating the increasing presence of migrants with the promotion of multiculturalism by the *New World Order*.

In previous analyses, it has been mentioned that during the financial crisis, the Greek parties’ rhetoric has been significantly structured in line with their participation (or non-participation) in the government (Ladi & Tsagkroni, 2019). However, there was a distinction between the mainstream and protest parties’ discourse, as the latter were targeting many different enemies (mainstream political elites, international institutions, media, banks, rich businessmen, migrants, EU), while the former were limiting their critique to their main political opponent (Vasilopoulou et. al., 2014). This analysis will contribute to the existing literature on Greek politics by examining in-detail how two protest -populist- parties that assumed governmental power and implement the EU policies -that have strongly opposed when in opposition- have evolved their discursive strategies within an extended time-period (2012-2019).

Methodology

Given the importance of ideology and discourse within the democratic regimes, it is critical when we analyze the populist phenomenon in the EU countries, to trace the discursive mechanisms that made possible its emergence and appeal (Laclau 2005; Stavrakakis et al. 2018). Following Mudde’s minimal definition of populism, a discourse must contain two main elements to be considered populist. That is, a) its articulation towards a central point of reference ‘the people’, (people-centrism), and b) the extent to which it offers an antagonistic representation of the society ‘the homogeneous -pure- people’ vs. ‘the corrupted elites’ (anti-elitism). If one of these elements is missing, discourse cannot be characterized as populist. In our analysis, we will -at first- test whether those two crucial points existed within the discourse of the two parties in the opposition and government period. Following the Rooduijn and

Pauwels's (2011, p. 1274) operationalization of populism, people-centrism has been operationalized by the question 'does the party leader refer to the people during his public speech?'². Apart from the key words we mentioned, within the human-coded³ content analysis, it is always necessary to see the broader context to decide whether a reference is people-centric or not. The operationalization of anti-elitism will occur based on the question 'does the party leader criticize elites within his speech?'⁴ Again, the broader context's interpretation is necessary as reference to some certain figures can be considered anti-elitist only if those figures symbolize a broader elite-category. A simple criticism to a certain person cannot be coded as anti-elitism without the existence of a latent symbolization (Rooduijn et. al., 2014). We will analyze the pre-electoral public speeches of the party leaders. Each speech will be split to 'dummy' paragraphs (units of measurements). Each argument on a certain topic will be considered as a separate paragraph. Paragraphs that will express both 'people-centrism' and 'anti-elitism' will be considered as populist (1). If one of the two elements is missing, the paragraph is not populist (0). The percentage of populist paragraphs in each public speech will be computed. Furthermore, to further explore how frequent populist rhetoric is within the public speeches, we will also count the number of references to 'the people' and the 'elites' per minute. By combining these two quantitative measurements it will be able to demonstrate at first whether the public speeches have been articulated under a populist logic, while simultaneously by measuring the number of references to the 'people' and the 'elites' it will be possible to explore whether the government accession within the EU framework affects the intensity of the two leaders' populist rhetoric.

Within the populist paragraphs, we will trace the elites who have been accused by the party leaders each time. We identify two general targets for the anti-elitist discourse, namely, a) the internal elites, and b), the external elites (Vasilopoulou et. al., 2014). The subcategories of internal elites are a) the mainstream political parties, b) the media, c) the banking system, d) the oligarchy-rich businessmen, and e) the judiciary. The subcategories of external elites are a) the Creditors (EU bureaucracy-IMF) b) certain countries such as Germany, Turkey, France, etc. c) the international financial markets and multinational companies, and e) the *New World Order* (politico-economic actors that support the Globalization). The measurement will be twofold; At first, we will measure the percentage of the two general targets within the populist paragraphs of each speech to unveil the fundamental template of the anti-elitist blame-shifting. While secondly, we will examine the percentage of the specific elites' subcategories mentioned above.

² The reference to the people can include several words such as 'citizens', 'we', 'people', 'the society', 'our country', 'the many', 'the taxpayers', 'compatriots', 'everyone', 'electorate', 'public', 'community', etc.

³ We choose to make a human coded content analysis to increase the validity of the research (Rooduijn & Pauwels 2011).

⁴ Anti-elitism is present whether the party leader criticizes for instance: the EU bureaucracy, the political system as a whole, the mainstream political parties, the economic elites (multinational companies, rich entrepreneurs), the media, the judiciary, the international institutions etc.

To make our discourse analysis possible, this study will trace the main pre-electoral public speeches (within the period 2012-2019)⁵ of the *Syriza* leader, Alexis Tsipras, and of the *Anel* leader, Panos Kammenos. The main pre-electoral public speech always takes place in Athens and is perceived as the most important pre-electoral event of each political party. These speeches condense the party's discourse within each electoral period, aiming to reach the largest possible audiences⁶. We opted for the main pre-electoral public speeches perceiving that these events represent on a great scale the core identity of the party leader. Other political discourse genres such as journalistic interviews or the parliamentary speeches are not solely structured by the party leader. In these genres, the agenda-setting is often defined either from the journalist or from the political opponent. Conversely, in the main pre-electoral public speeches the party leader has prepared his speech emphasizing the discourse that perceives as critical and influential before an electoral battle. Regarding the party manifestos, albeit they clarify the party positions in various issues, they are too technocratic and analytical, blurring what a party leader perceives as a salient topic in each election.

Apart from the dual quantitative human-coded analysis of populism, it is also critical to look at certain argumentative strategies applied to constitute the antagonistic populist rhetoric. Following the discourse-historical approach (Wodak 2001), the process for the discursive construction of an antagonistic relation between different social segments, has three main steps a) the nomination of in-groups and out-groups, b) the positive or negative predication on these groups, and c) the argumentation phase justifying why positive or negative attributions have been made. We will trace this process within our discourse analysis focusing on the political leaders' use of 'topos' or 'History' to promote and justify their populist discourse. According to Reisigl & Wodak (2016, p. 12):

‘topoi’ or ‘loci’ are the content-related warrants or ‘conclusion rules’ which connect the argument or arguments with the conclusion, the claim. As such, they justify the transition from the argument or arguments to the conclusion.

⁵ Within the examined period, five national elections (May 2012, June 2012, January 2015, September 2015, July 2019), one referendum (July 2015) and two European elections (May 2014, May 2019) have held in Greece. In sum, ten public speeches of Alexis Tsipras (*Syriza*) and nine public speeches of Panos Kammenos (*Anel*) will be examined within the whole study. *Anel* did not participate in the 2019 national elections, so there was no pre-electoral public speech of Panos Kammenos. To have a more robust understanding of the two leaders' discourse and a more equivalent distribution of speeches between the two examined subperiods, we added the *Anel* pre-electoral speech of the September 2015 National elections in Patras (the third largest Greek city), the *Anel* pre-electoral speech of the 2019 Euroelections and the *Syriza* pre-electoral speech of the 2019 National elections in the second biggest city, Thessaloniki. Simultaneously, we examined the parliamentary speeches of the two leaders for the 2015 referendum. We did this as Panos Kammenos did not give a public speech for the referendum, while Alexis Tsipras had only a short -10 minutes- public speech in Syntagma square (Athens).

⁶ Always these significant pre-electoral speeches have been televised by the public broadcasting TV channel (in many cases private TV channels have broadcasted the speeches too).

The connection between populism and the ‘topos’ of ‘History’ has been often underestimated in the analyses of the populist phenomenon. However, there have been some studies that stressed the importance of collective memory for the populist emergence demonstrating how the political agents attempt to construct common ‘myths’ and collective identities about the past that fit their antagonistic populist rhetoric (Caramani & Manucci 2019; Cento Bull 2016; Kaya & Tecmen 2019). According to Chiantera-Stutte (as cited in Ribeiro, 2013, p. 226):

populism is about constructing and using a past {...} We could define this phenomenon as a sort of ‘selective memory’, {...} and it is very often directly decided by political agencies in order to consolidate the social bond. Populist movements use images of the past in order to cement the community

However, it has never been examined whether populist actors change their discourse about the ‘Past’ when they move from opposition to the government. Given that Greece had a turbulent post-war history, it is critical to explore in a qualitative way how the populist actors have represented this history and whether a change in their discourse occurred from period 1 to period 2.

Findings (Quantitative analysis)

Looking at Figure 1 (Appendix B), it arises that the populist logic of the two parties has slightly moderated through the second period. The capitulation with the EU economic doctrines in August 2015 seems to have an impact -albeit small- on the two parties’ general populist logic. For both parties, the less populist speech was the one (September 2015) that followed the memorandum agreement. The populist rhetoric peak for both parties was in the 2012 period and the pre-referendum one. After that, a small - but statistically significant - decrease occurred as the average populist rhetoric of both parties in period 2 has been lessened (from 98% to 82% for *Syriza*, and from 98% to 80% for *Anel*).

The slight decline that emerged from the findings, demonstrates that EU leverage played a role in the moderation of the populist logic. However, even in period 2 the percentage of populism was still high, showing that the dichotomous populist logic is resilient even in the extreme case that a populist party implements an economic program strongly opposed when it was in the opposition. We can explain this resilience, underlining the strong anti-establishment sentiment of populism (Mosca & Tronconi, 2019). In this rationale, even if a populist government implements unpopular austerity policies, it can articulate a historical blame-shifting (Ladi & Tsagkroni, 2019), that is, to continue accusing the mainstream parties of having bankrupted the country due to their previous corrupted governance (Tsipras, 2019a). Regarding the EU, they can persist that fight for the popular-national interests, blaming the mainstream parties again for not having adequately negotiated with the EU institutions in the past; Thus, forcing them to sign a new bailout program without having any other viable option (Tsipras, 2015d, Kammenos, 2015c). Hence, the *hypothesis* 1 (see annexe) has been corroborated, given that the two parties’ populist logic has been slightly reduced within period 2. The signature

of the third bailout agreement had small impact on their populist logic.

Tables 1 and 2 (Appendix B) demonstrate a gradual decrease in the intensity of the populist discourse. Tracing the timeline of the two leaders' frequency of populist references it seems that the turning point of decrease was not the capitulation with the EU but the January 2015 elections. In May 2014, Tsipras referred to the 'people' 1,73 per minute and the 'elites' 1,93, while in the next elections, a significant decrease occurred (1,59 people, and 1,04 elites). Something similar has happened in the Kammenos discourse, given that in May 2014, the references to the 'people' were 1,39, and 1,55 for the 'elites'; while in January 2015 it was 0,98 (people), and 0,80 (elites).

These findings support the Rooduijn, De Lange and Van der Brug (2014, p. 571) claim that populists tend to tone down the intensity of populism when they are close to assume a government position. In our case, it seems that, while the populist logic was always existent, following the January 2015 elections both parties decreased the high frequency of references to the 'people' and the 'elites'. Another useful element that emerged from the three tables is that *Syriza* has been steadily more people-centric than the *Anel*. This finding corroborates the claim that left-wing populism tends to focus more on a bottom-up process of popular mobilization (Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2014) emphasizing the need for active political participation. At the same time right-wing populism tends to be more paternalistic (Enyedi, 2016), focusing more on other signifiers, such as the 'Nation', rather than the 'people' (De Cleen, 2017).

The following figures (2-5) demonstrate that after the 2015 bailout program's signature with the EU, both *Syriza* and *Anel* targeting of the external elites have been moderated. While in the first period, 81% of the Tsipras speeches targeted the external elites, there was a rapid decrease to 38% in the second period. However, this tendency did not occur in the case of internal enemies. In period 1, 95% of the paragraphs targeted the internal elites, while in period 2, the percentage remained high, being 89%. A similar phenomenon took place in the *Anel* case. Within period 1, 74% of the paragraphs targeted the internal enemies, and 90% targeted the external ones. In period 2, the internal elites targeting remained high (even higher than it was in period 1), while there was an apparent decrease in the external enemies' percentage (from 90 to 52). Another important finding that emerged from the figures is a significant rise in the external elites' targeting from the two leaders within the pre-referendum speeches. This rise can be explained by the two parties' strong antagonistic rhetoric declaring that the EU blackmails violate the popular-national sovereignty (Tsipras, 2015b; Kammenos, 2015b).

By analyzing the graphs and taking into account the T test, it emerges that *hypothesis 2* has been corroborated. Following the memorandum agreement signing, both parties decreased their critique to the external enemies (EU-Creditors), focusing more on the internal politico-economic establishment⁷. Concerning *hypothesis 3*, we see that *Anel*, even if significantly decreased their external enemies targeting in period 2, still

⁷ Trying to delineate the mechanism that led to a decrease of external elites (mainly EU) targeting by both *Syriza* and *Anel*, it seems that while governing within the EU framework populist actors should adapt their dichotomous discourse to avoid any economic or geostrategic sanctions (Hooghe & Marks 2006). However, political parties are conservative organizations in the sense they try to avoid significant changes on their rhetoric, and ideology (March, 2012). This tendency applies even more to radical-populist parties that perceive their radical identity as a key distinctive element from mainstream parties. In this rationale, they tend to persist on their populist ideology (focusing more on internal elites, and in *Anel* Case on different external elites- non strictly related to EU, such as Turkey), while, at the same time, they reduce the EU targeting due to the institutional pressures of governance (given that EU has a strong influence on the national governments).

attack the foreign enemies at 52% of their -period 2- paragraphs. Comparing this percentage with the 38% of *Syriza* external elites targeting, it arises that -within the EU framework- right-wing populism in government does blame the external elites to a greater extent than the left-wing one⁸. Hence, *hypothesis 3* has been substantiated.

Findings (Qualitative analysis)

The *Syriza* Case

Tsipras discourse in period 1 referred to certain historical events to create the sentiment that his party represented the continuity of the heroic resistance of the Greek people during the Nazi's occupation era (1941-1944). In June 2012 speech, *Syriza* leader stated that On Monday

[the day after the election], we are starting a fundamental political project, we have a lot to offer to this country, that for the first time since the National Resistance (Εθνική Αντίσταση-the resistance to the Nazi's occupation) era experiences such a collective uplift.

To further fuel the anti-German and anti-imperialist sentiment Tsipras declared that Germany had to compensate Greece for an illegal loan taken by the Nazi occupation regime (Tsipras, 2014). Furthermore, Tsipras some days before the 2015 referendum emphasized the need to resist on the blackmails posed by the creditors referring to the democratic heritage of the Ancient Greece and alleging that (Tsipras, 2015b)

Greece is the place where Democracy has been founded and still exists after 2500 years, while he also stressed that (2015c) no one has the right to threaten that will kick out Greece from Europe, as Greece constitutes the birthplace of the European civilization.

Simultaneously, within the whole period 1, *Syriza* leader references the heroic democratic struggles of the leftist and Communist movement in Greece since the end of the Civil War (1949), pursuing to dominate the entire left-wing political spectrum (Tsipras, 2012a).

In period 2, the anti-occupation struggle allegations decreased, while there was no reference to Ancient Greece's cultural heritage. Following the signing of the bailout agreement (August 2015) Tsipras toned down the anti-German and anti- EU rhetoric reducing the references to the historical events that may trigger negative sentiments for the EU allies. He preferred to emphasize the heroic struggle of the left-wing and democratic citizens versus the oppressive

⁸ Looking at figure 5, we see that in period 2 Anel's main external enemy is the Turkish elites (not the EU creditors anymore). This change corroborates the idea that Anel has moderated their external enemies targeting in period 2 returning to the safety of their host ideology (nationalism). For Greek nationalist ideology Turkish elites are the eternal foreign enemy of the Greek people constantly aiming to violate the national territory. Lastly, following figure 5 we see how populist radical right can still target the external elites (even when it governs) to a greater extent than radical left due to its strong connection with nativist ideologies.

post-war, right-wing regime and its successor military dictatorship (1967-1974)⁹. Simultaneously, he consistently referred to the left-wing and social-democratic movements of the 80s and 90s. In September 2015 speech, Tsipras asked the young voters to honor the democratic struggles of the past, alleging that:

the young generations have always been in the heart of the democratic struggles; from the generation of the National Resistance; the generation of Lamprakis¹⁰; the generation of Polytechnio¹¹; the generation of the Change¹²; the generations of the political movements of 80's and 90's, to the generation that brought the electoral victory of January 2015, always the Youth has played a critical role on the significant progressive political changes.

In this rationale, when in the July 2019 speech in Thessaloniki the crowd chanted the old socialist slogan 'people do not forget what the Right-Wing means' Tsipras said that *Syriza expresses today the hopes of the people that had been inspired by the ideals of Pasok and Andreas Papandreou during '80s*.

Tracing the use of the 'topos' of 'History' by Tsipras, it arises that a significant change existed in period 2. *Syriza* leader reduced the allegations to the Greek anti-fascist resistance and focused his rhetoric on the diachronic -domestic-struggle of the democratic people versus the oppressive and conservative right-wing. Simultaneously, he tried to approach the social-democratic voters by frequently referring to the 80s period honoring the historic socialist leader's ideals, Andreas Papandreou. Thus, in period 2, Tsipras references to the 'Past' brought him closer to the thick socialist ideology, decreasing the all-encompassing patriotic and left-wing populist discourse of period 1.

The Anel Case

Anel leader has used the topos of 'History' in period 1 to demonstrate the Greek people's diachronic heroic spirit who have always resisted foreign exploitation. Kammenos, in the 2012 speech, mentioned an incident during the Nazi occupation era when a Greek citizen committed suicide jumping from Acropolis hill not to surrender to the German forces. Whereas, speaking about the possible difficulties that may arise from the anti-EU stance, *Anel's* leader stressed that (2012b)

we know how to rebuild Greece, as we did it after the World War II and after the end of the Ottoman Rule, we know how to do it,

⁹ Within the 1945-1974 era, citizens who supported left-wing political parties were facing discrimination in many aspects of their social life (Karamanolakis, 2019), while some of them had been exiled in remoted islands because of their democratic, left-wing or communist ideology (Liakos 2019)

¹⁰ Lamprakis was an MP of the Left, that was murdered by para-military forces of the right-wing deep state in 1963, in Thessaloniki.

¹¹ Polytechnio is the name of the Technical University of Athens, and it is the place where the most significant act of resistance to the Junta regime, occurred in 1973.

¹² By using the word Change, Tsipras refers to the electoral victory of the socialist Pasok, in 1981

because the History of this country is a History of Struggle and Freedom.

Simultaneously, Kammenos within the whole period 1, made references to historical events related to the Macedonian naming dispute and the Cyprus Issue to declare his anti- North Macedonian and anti-Turkish sentiment. Speaking about the current developments on Cyprus dispute, he alleged that (Kammenos, 2014)

we will not support any resolution of the Cyprus Issue that will be similar to the Annan Plan, as such a resolution would be a nightmare for Makarios and Tassos Papadopoulos , we will not allow Cyprus to convert from an independent State to a mere community.

Furthermore, *Anel* leader made positive claims for the historic leaders of the right-wing *ND*, Konstantinos Karamanlis and the socialist *Pasok*, Andreas Papandreou. He alleged that the two leaders were effectively promoting the national interests and should not be compared with the current leaders of these parties that have betrayed the Nation (Kammenos, 2014).

In Period 2, the narrative of *Anel* regarding the topos of ‘History’ has partially changed. A decrease occurred in the references to the World War II era. Simultaneously, there was a stronger emphasis on the Macedonian naming dispute and the historical events related to Greek-Turkish relations. To fuel the anti-Turkish sentiment, Kammenos in May 2019 speech in Thessaloniki called the Greek people *to always remember their ancestors that have been massacred by Kemal Ataturk during 10’s and 20’s*. While he continued reminding that *Erdogan has steadily honored the butcher of the People, Kemal Ataturk*. Concerning the Macedonian naming dispute Kammenos alleged that (2019b)

There is only one Macedonia, and is Greek, it is for this Macedonia that Konstantinos Karamanlis had teared, it is the Macedonia that Andreas Papandreou had denied negotiating its name.

By constantly mentioning the two historic leaders, Kammenos articulated a patriotic discourse trying to present himself as the continuity of the two leaders; and assert that he is the only current leader who defends the national rights over Turkey and North Macedonia.

Examining how *Anel* leader has articulated his narrative towards the topos of “History” it arises that within both periods, Kammenos has articulated a nationalistic populist discourse stressing the heroic historical struggles of Greek nation over various foreign powers. In period 2, following the capitulation with the EU in 2015, Kammenos lessened his references to the anti-Nazi resistance in World War II period. However, in both periods, he honored the patriotic actions of the two mainstream parties’ historic leaders, Karamanlis, and Papandreou. By doing this, *Anel*’s leader presented his party as the continuity of these two historical figures’ spirit. Kammenos alleged that left-wing and right-wing ideologies are not important anymore, as a political party’s critical aim must be to unite the ‘People’ under a common national will. In this rationale, by constantly cultivating the hatred towards -mainly- the Turks and

-secondly- the North Macedonians, he tried to construct a 'people' that is homogenous and always fights for the promotion of the national claims.

Conclusions and Discussion

Tracing our analysis findings, it arises they are in-line with the initial hypotheses framed by the theoretical framework. The quantitative analysis demonstrated the small impact that the government accession and EU leverage had on the dichotomous populist logic expressed by both left-wing and right-wing populist parties. The aggregate populist percentage of *Syriza* and *Anel* has been lessened in period 2, albeit it is still in a very high level (82% for *Syriza* and 80% for *Anel*). However, government accession and EU leverage did play a critical role in the change of blame-shifting strategies of the two parties. In the case of *Syriza* there was a clear decrease on the targeting of external elites, such as the Creditors and Germany. While in the *Anel* case, there was a similar decrease in the targeting of these foreign elites. Nevertheless, the aggregate percentage of the external elites' targeting in period 2 was higher than the *Syriza* one, corroborating the hypothesis that right-wing populists are fundamentally more intense to foreign elites' critique (even when they govern) than the left-wing populist parties. Kammenos had partially replaced Germany and EU institutions as his main external enemies, focusing -especially in 2019 speeches- on the potential Turkish threat.

Concerning the intensity of the populist references, the second quantitative measurement demonstrated that populist parties did reduce their overall numerical references to the 'people' and the 'elites' when they move from the margins to the center of the political spectrum. Following the parties' leaders temporal tracing it arose that the strongest indicator for the decrease of populist intensity was neither the government accession nor the signature of the bailout agreement. However, the strong possibility of government accession made the party leaders reduce the high frequency of populist references. Both leaders pursued within the January 2015 speech to show they had a viable political program to govern the country, thus limiting their populist numerical references. Another useful finding was that Tsipras did have more people-centric rhetoric than Kammenos within both periods. This finding corroborates the literature suggesting that left-wing populism has emphasized to a greater extent the notion of 'people', while right-wing one tends to be more paternalistic and nation-oriented (Enyedi, 2016; De Cleen, 2017).

The qualitative findings demonstrated the selective use of historical events from the populist actors to appeal in large social segments and to construct an imagined homogenous 'people' that has historically opposed certain internal and external enemies. Within period 1, both parties frequently referred to the Greek people's historical struggles versus the fascist occupying forces in the 40s to fuel their supporters' patriotic sentiment. The references to the Greek people's heroic resistance within the World War II-era allowed both parties to present themselves as the representatives of this heroic spirit during the negotiations with the EU institutions. However, after signing the third bailout program with the Creditors, such references had been significantly decreased. In period 2, we see that both parties have connected the historical

references with their thick ideology. *Syriza* leader increases his mentions to the socialist policies of the 80s, implemented by the historic *Pasok* leader, Andreas Papandreou. By doing this, he pursued to dominate within the entire center-left and left-wing electoral audience, constructing a democratic and progressive ‘people’ that opposes the conservatism and neoliberalism of the right-wing forces. On the other hand, *Anel* leader in period 2 had further adhered to the thick nativist ideology. Kammenos referred to historical events to persuade the ‘people’ that the national sovereignty is threatened from the neighboring countries, mainly Turkey. He tried to persuade the ‘people’ that left and right-wing ideologies are not important, given that a common national will exists that has to be accepted by the whole citizenry. Thus, a political leader should always promote this national will representing the homogenous nativist ‘people’.

This study has demonstrated the significance of the EU leverage on shifting the elites’ targeting strategies of left-wing and right-wing populist parties. It also showed that the dichotomous populist logic cannot be strongly affected, even in cases where populists govern in a country with substantial EU economic dependence. Furthermore, it brought into surface how populists can instrumentalize the historical memory to construct their homogenous people, and how government accession compels them to moderate their all-embracing populist rhetoric adapting the historical references made to their thick ideology.

Given the generalizability’s limitations that emerge from a study that focuses only on one country, these findings have to be further tested in other EU countries that populists have governed. Especially in countries with strong EU economic dependence (mainly the eurozone members), it seems possible that a common pattern would exist whether populists assume governmental positions. In this rationale, it will be useful to conduct similar studies for the Spanish and Portuguese cases where left-wing populists either participate (*Podemos* in Spain) or support (*Left Bloc* in Portugal) the cabinets. Future research could also trace in-detail the *Syriza-Anel* coalition government’s overall impact on the function of Greece’s liberal democracy. Such a study could demonstrate whether the two parties’ discourse fits their entire political decisions during their four governmental years.

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²⁰ Ntaflos

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APPENDIX A

A test to statistically prove the robustness of the hypotheses 1 and 2, taking its limitations into account, would be a "Small sample Mean Difference T test of a normal IID population with "unknown and unequal variances". The formulation of the hypotheses is the following:

$$H_0: \text{mean}_{\text{first period}}^{\text{Party}} - \text{mean}_{\text{second period}}^{\text{Party}} = 0$$

$$H_1: \text{mean}_{\text{first period}}^{\text{Party}} - \text{mean}_{\text{second period}}^{\text{Party}} \neq 0$$

The formula for the T test is the following:

$$t^* = \frac{\text{mean}_{\text{first period}}^{\text{Party}} - \text{mean}_{\text{second period}}^{\text{Party}} - 0}{\sqrt{\frac{S_{\text{First Period}}^2}{n_{\text{First Period}}} + \frac{S_{\text{Second Period}}^2}{n_{\text{Second Period}}}}}$$

where

$$\text{mean}_{\text{period}}^{\text{Party}} = \frac{1}{n_{\text{Period}}} \sum_{i=1}^{n_{\text{Period}}} x_i$$

$$S_{\text{period}}^2 = \frac{1}{n_{\text{period}} - 1} \sum_{i=1}^{n_{\text{period}}} (x_i - \text{mean}_{\text{period}}^{\text{Party}})^2$$

After the calculations of the statistics, we construct the P-Values using the formula:

$$P \text{ value} = 2 \cdot P(t > |t^*|) \text{ due to the symmetry of the } t \text{ distribution}$$

This test follows approximately the T distribution with degrees of freedom given by the following formula:

$$df = \frac{\left(\frac{S_{\text{First Period}}^2}{n_{\text{First Period}}} + \frac{S_{\text{Second Period}}^2}{n_{\text{Second Period}}}\right)^2}{\left(\frac{1}{n_{\text{First Period}} - 1}\right) \cdot \left(\frac{S_{\text{First Period}}^2}{n_{\text{First Period}}}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{1}{n_{\text{Second Period}} - 1}\right) \cdot \left(\frac{S_{\text{Second Period}}^2}{n_{\text{Second Period}}}\right)^2}$$

The rejection rule is the following:

$$\text{Reject the null if } P \text{ value} < 0.05 \text{ since } \alpha = 5\%.$$

	T results	P value
Syriza populism	3.19	0.024
Anel populism	4.95	0.002
Syriza internal enemies	1.10	0.32
Syriza external enemies	4.58	0.002
Anel internal enemies	-0.65	0.53
Anel external enemies	4.06	0.004

APPENDIX B

	<i>Reference per minute timeline</i>	May 12	June 12	May 14	January 15	June (parliament)- July 15
<i>SYRIZA</i>	People	1.87	2.47	1.73	1.59	1.42
<i>SYRIZA</i>	Elites	1.26	1.33	1.93	1.04	1.07
<i>SYRIZA</i>	Aggregate	3.13	3.80	3.66	2.63	2.49
<i>Anel</i>	People	1.11	2.23	1.39	0.98	0.95
<i>Anel</i>	Elites	1.44	1.10	1.55	0.80	1.25
<i>Anel</i>	Aggregate	2.55	3.33	2.94	1.78	2.20

Table 1: People and Elites' References per minute - Period 1

	<i>Reference per minute timeline</i>	September 15 I	September 15 II	May 19	July 19 I/ May 19II	July 19 II
<i>SYRIZA</i>	People	-	1.44	1.73	0.43	1.51
<i>SYRIZA</i>	Elites	-	1.41	1.10	1.13	1.09
<i>SYRIZA</i>	Aggregate	-	2.85	2.83	1.53	2.60
<i>Anel</i>	People	0.67	0.58	0.94	0.70	-
<i>Anel</i>	Elites	0.58	1.05	1.38	1.42	-
<i>Anel</i>	Aggregate	1.25	1.63	2.32	2.12	-

Table 2: People and Elites' References per minute - Period 2

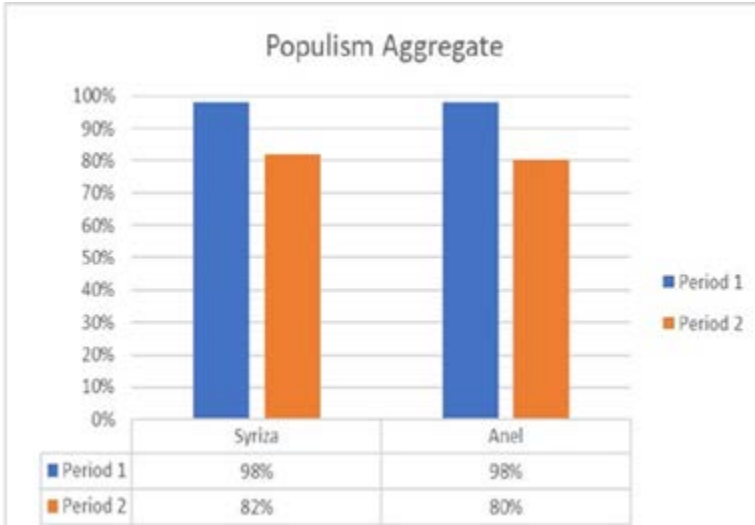


Figure 1: This graph demonstrates the average populist discourse of the two parties within the two examined periods

Note: From May 2012 to July 2015, it is the period 1. Whereas from September 2015 to July 2019, we have the period 2. In accordance with the theoretical framework that focuses on how the EU economic doctrines can affect the discourse of the populists in government, the dividing line between the two periods is the signature of the third bailout program with the EU institutions, in August 2015.

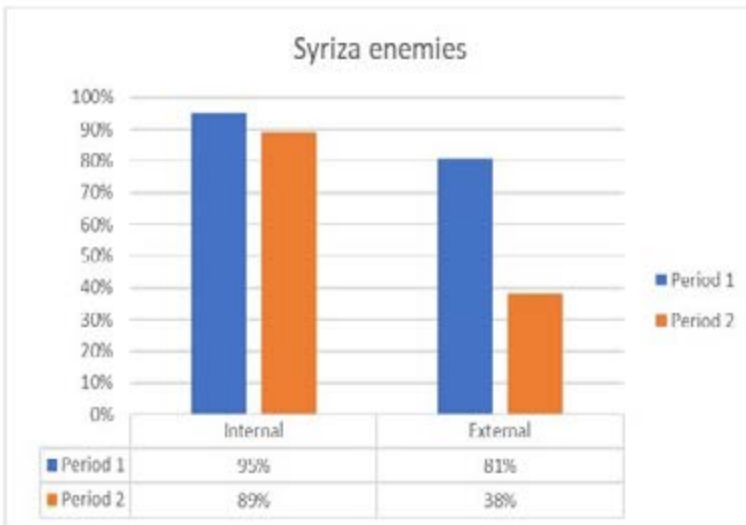


Figure 2: This figure shows the fundamental (internal-external) enemies of Syriza in period 1 and 2.

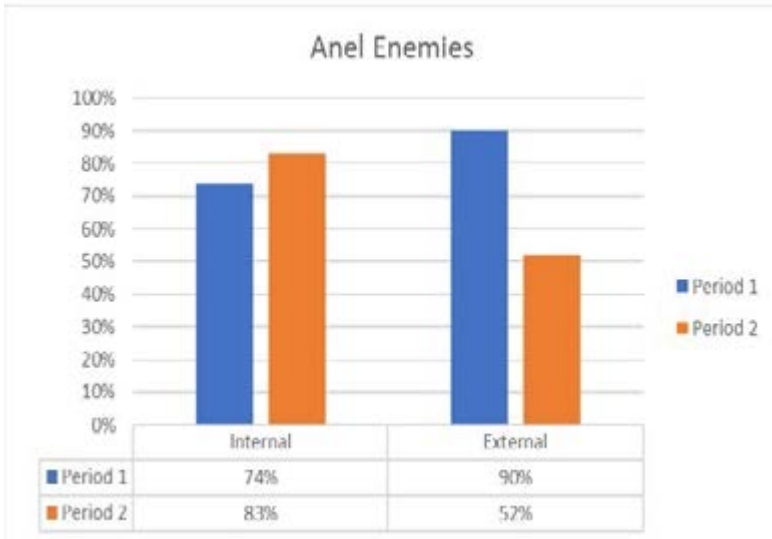


Figure 3. This figure demonstrates the fundamental enemies (internal-external) of Anel within the period 1 and 2.

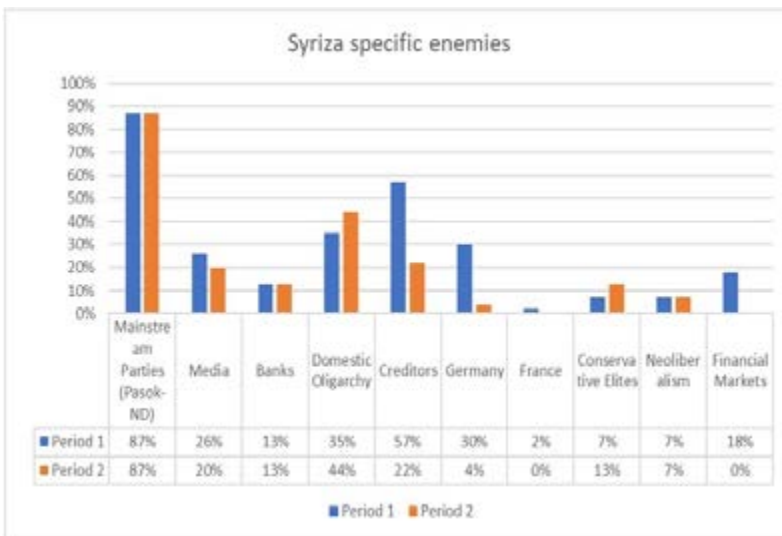


Figure 4. This graph traces the specific elites that Syriza has targeted during the two periods

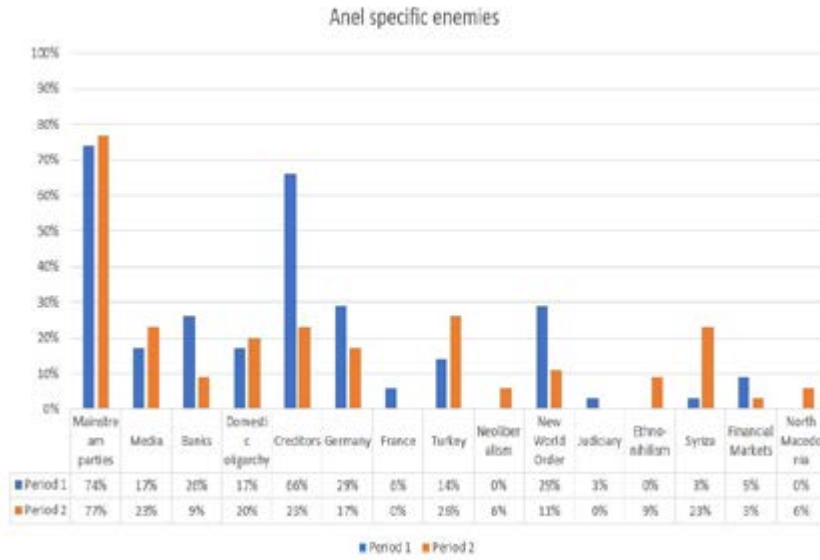


Figure 5. This figure analyzes the specific elites that Anel has targeted within the two periods.