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# Crisis Management within Government: Papandreou and Tsipras compared

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# Do crises centralise decision-making?

- Featherstone & Papadimitriou (2015) noted that, internally, **government in Greece suffered from poor coordination and control from the centre** – it was a ‘segmented’ core executive.
- **Crisis management** literature often suggests **crises centralise decision-making, empowering the leader.**

So: did the debt crisis **change** the inherited format of the Greek ‘core executive’?

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# Conceptual frame: comparative politics & crisis management studies

The **'core executive'** (Dunleavy & Rhodes): a fluid conception of PM/Cabinet government – who is 'determinant in conflicts between different elements of the government machine'?

Greece: 'segmentary', **a fragmented problem-solving capacity**. Can this be overcome?

**'Crisis Response Network'** (CRN) [Boin et al, 2016]: those directly involved in the crisis response.

Created *ad hoc* to respond to special conditions with, potentially, new actors (domestic and foreign) and processes.

Who does the leader authorise?  
Include? Seek advice from?

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# **Spoiler Alert!** **What we don't do**

- This is not about “who was a better leader”
  - This is not about “ who a better negotiator”
  - This is not about how the MoU came to be
  - Focus on a much smaller subset of these questions
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# Our comparison:

- Two seminal periods of the Greek crisis (Papandreou + Tsipras, first 6 months)
    - IV: € crisis in both periods had a similar intensity: money running out
    - **DV: Impact on central control & coordination within government**
    - Transformation? Inertia? Retrenchment?
  - Axes of comparison:
    - PM interpretation of the crisis & task engagement
    - PM steer to CRN to produce & implement a strategy
    - Legitimation of the CRN's work in the Cabinet
  - Sources: 70 hours of personal interviews (incl both PMs) + secondary material
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# GAP: Interpretation and Strategic Direction

- *Cosmopolitan and experienced* (big picture, consensual). A personality bigger than Greece.
  - “*Greece had a problem, but it was not the problem*” (good analysis, lost battle with EU)
  - Some *personal angst* as the first to face the crisis: & this impacted on his direction.
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# GAP: Crisis Response Network

- Small, but very cohesive
  - ‘Group think’ (EZ at all cost) and relatively inexperienced (old milieux sidelined)

## Significant empowerment of MoF and SOE

- Fully aligned with the PM but limited reach in the administration (delays in appointments)
  - Wide network of GAP’s personal advisors
    - Not fully embedded into a regular decision making pattern
  - Significant ‘absences’ (BoG, IMF Rep)
  - Speaking “creditors’ language”, but no Greek blueprint for dealing with the crisis
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# GAP: Cabinet

- Largely on board with broad strategy, but low buy-in and support for the CRN
    - Internal rivals not willing to openly undermine GAP
    - First MoU unanimously agreed in cabinet and only 3 PASOK MPs voted against in Parliament
  - Frequent mobilisation of Ministerial Council and informal
    - Clout of MoF amongst government heavyweights limited
  - Hasty legislative activity undermined 'buy in' and coordination
    - Very evident in the implementation stage
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# Tsipras: Interpretation & Strategic Direction

- Public narrative **very stark and clear** – a matter of resistance, enabled to mop up support.
  - **Time on his side** to prepare (this was a chosen fight; time to prepare strategy, options).
  - Tsipras was **a shrewd tactician**; also secure in reflecting on his own limitations (and those of his party).
  - So, a shrewd tactician, but **he gave an unstable lead.**
    - Reputation: “Left should not fail”.
    - *What did he know, what didn't he know, and what did he learn?*
    - Contrast between private and public persona
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# Tsipras: Crisis Response Network

- Small, but very fractious (peculiar make up)
    - MoF vs SOE
    - MoF vs Deputy PM
    - Government vs BoG
    - Personal tensions (SYRIZA's "economists team" soon fractured)
  - Limited resources within (MoF relatively isolated)
  - MoF external advisers disconnected from the rest of the team
  - Tsipras an reluctant arbiter (ambiguous steer)
    - Sidelineing of MoF from negotiations in April 2010 rather messy
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# Tsipras: Cabinet

- CRN's divisions mapped onto the Cabinet
  - Grexit supporters, 'pragmatists', PM loyalists, ANEL
- Mobilisation of Ministerial Council limited, but use of 'informals' (largely inclusive)
  - Key government ministers + advisers + party figures (way of controlling MoF)
- Unity of the Cabinet dependant on PM's 'constructive ambiguity'
  - Leading to breakup when deal with creditors was reached

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# Conclusion

- Outcome (for centralisation):
    - Papandreou: **Inertia** (fragmentation of core executive sustained)
    - Tsipras: **Retrenchment** (even greater fragmentation)
    - **Agency** mattered for how the crisis was managed within the core executive: narratives; choices; strategies.
  - Failure of CRN to act as a conduit of reform
    - Membership, PM steer, Cabinet legitimacy, connection to wider administration
  - Implications for implementation of MoUs
    - For Greece: beyond the six months
    - For the EU: institutional mechanisms for policy delivery.
  - Does Greece need a more centralised government machine?
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# Conclusion

	Papandreou	Tsipras
<b>The PM lead</b>		
Clarity of narrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inconsistent, complex</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consistent, simple and shallow</li> </ul>
Task engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High, but detached</li> </ul>
<b>Crisis Response Network</b>		
Unity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stable in composition</li> <li>Strong 'group think' / Unity of purpose</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unstable in composition</li> <li>Weak 'group think' / Internally divided</li> </ul>
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small in size</li> <li>Limited connection to administration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small in size</li> <li>Limited connection to administration</li> </ul>
<b>Cabinet</b>		
Degree of factionalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acquiescent</li> <li>Strong relationship between PM and MoF</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deep internal divisions</li> <li>Ambivalence between PM and MoF</li> </ul>
Legitimacy of CRN	Medium, but eroding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unstable</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome:</b> for centralisation	<b><i>Inertia:</i></b> fragmentation sustained	<b><i>Retrenchment:</i></b> greater fragmentation