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Abstract

In this paper, we provide evidence that, although the left–right dimension remains the primary axis of ideological competition among Greek voters, an emerging establishment—anti-establishment dimension has consolidated as a secondary, but quantitatively important, line of political differentiation, structuring vote choice and shaping broader patterns of party preference within society. Drawing on a nationally representative survey of 2,574 Greek adults held on 24 March–4 April 2025, we compute net-score indices for 52 political-attitude items and apply principal-components analysis (PCA). Our results reveal two dominant dimensions: the first aligns with a classic socio-economic left–right axis, with cosmopolitan interventionism vs. ethno-nationalist market liberalism at the epicentre, while the second captures an establishment–anti-establishment dimension mapping a division of institutional trust and Western alignment vs. distrust and anti-elite sentiment. Analyzing party electorates on these components uncovers clear clusters: mainstream parties anchor the pro-establishment pole, whereas both hard-right and radical-left challengers occupy anti-establishment positions despite adopting opposing socioeconomic stances. At the same time, though, we uncover that voters are more willing to move along the anti-establishment dimension for their second-choice party than they are to move left or right.

1 Introduction

On January 26, 2025, the slogan “I have no oxygen” became the umbrella under which thousands of citizens gathered in a spontaneous and massive rally at the centre of Athens. The demonstration was organized by the Association of Relatives of Victims of the Tempi Accident, the tragic train collision in Tempi on February 28, 2023, that resulted in the deaths of 57 people, the majority young adults. The incident drew comparisons in the media to a similar train accident in Novi Sad, Serbia, where a station canopy collapsed, killing 15 individuals

(Tsoukas, 2025). In both countries, significant demonstrations followed the tragedies, leading to considerable political repercussions. In Greece, demonstrations were held on January 26, 2025 and February 28, 2025. Their political impact became evident through rising poll numbers for the party Course of Freedom. A report from Kathimerini in March 2025 stated (“Course of Freedom Party Surges in Poll Following Tempe Protests”, 2025):

“Anti-establishment party Course of Freedom has experienced the most substantial increase following nationwide protests over the government’s management of the deadly Tempi railway disaster just over two years ago. According to the latest Pulse poll for Skai TV, the party has surged to 12%, up from 7% last month, tying for second place with the socialist PASOK, the main opposition party”.

Course of Freedom, founded in 2016 by the former SYRIZA President of the Hellenic Parliament, Zoe Konstantopoulou, had until then been hovering between 3% and 5% in polls. Its meteoric rise of such a niche anti-establishment party -in contrast to the downfall of SYRIZA- dynamically brought back the conversation about the dimension that pits the political establishment against anti-establishment forces, a trend that suggests a possible “elite vs. people” dimension of competition that cuts across the older ideological lines of left and right. Against this background, we examine if an establishment vs. anti-establishment divide has emerged as a new structural dimension in politics, and what are the defining elements of the Greek voters’ political identity.

Although there is substantial empirical and theoretical literature on factors associated with the emergence of anti-establishment poles, robust quantitative evidence remains scarce. Equally, there has been limited examination of the extent to which dimensions shape political preferences, partisan proximity, and dichotomies such as left–right. To address these gaps, this paper draws on data from the Eteron (2025) survey, which maps Greek citizens’ attitudes and perceptions of key political institutions, their ideological positions, and pressing political dilemmas, including stances on international conflicts. We find that a quantitatively important anti-establishment dimension has emerged in voters’ opinions, beyond the traditional left–right. This dimension, though, is more fluid, with voters willing to move along it when choosing a second-option party.

2 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 From the “freezing hypothesis” to multidimensionality

Political cleavages are the enduring lines of political conflict that emerge from major, long-standing social divisions (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967). They tend to map onto broad social groups whose interests, values, and identities differ systematically. As Moschonas (1994, p. 160) describes it, political cleavages arise when “political divisions closely follow those lines of objective social differentiation that are most important in a society,” creating stable, society-wide conflicts in which large segments of the population become invested in one side or the other. Deep societal divisions, such as class, religion, and cultural divisions, inform political behavior and party alignment with the left-right wing dichotomy evolving over the years to encompass broader political and economic dimensions (Rohrschneider & Whitefield, 2012). These divisions are distinguished from more ephemeral policy disputes or procedural debates by their scope, intensity, and longevity (Knutsen, 1995, 2001; Kriesi,

2013), shaping citizen's basic beliefs, values, and group identities, and they crystallize into organized party competition around those social groups. Crucially, in cleavage theory, a cleavage is more than an issue split as it consists of (i) a deep social division with potential for conflict, (ii) collective identities that guide behavior, and (iii) organizational expression (parties, unions, churches) that sustain the divide (Deegan-Krause, 2006).

The traditional left-right divide guides the categorization of party competition and voter choice, and scholarship even advanced a “freezing hypothesis”, where according to Lipset and Rokkan (1967) as mass suffrage expanded and parties embedded themselves in society, the number and types of parties would stabilize around those historical lines of conflict. Yet, over time, social and economic changes (i.e. deindustrialization, secularization, globalization and mass higher education) have weakened the old dividing lines and opened space for new lines of division with the researchers documented a second socio-cultural dimension - labeled Green, Alternative, Libertarian – Traditional, Authoritarian, Nationalist (GAL-TAN) by Hooghe & Marks (2009, 2018)- that cross-cuts the economic left–right and centres on identity, immigration, and European integration (Ford & Jennings, 2020; Kriesi et al., 2006, 2008). In short, contemporary politics is best read as multidimensional: newer dimensions do not necessarily displace the left–right division, yet parties and voters sort along more than one stable axis of conflict (Ford & Jennings, 2020). Consequently, while the left traditionally promotes equality, social justice, and a more active state, and the right used to highlight individual freedom -and mainly the economic aspect of it- and include related policies at the forefront of its agenda, today's politics shows that these labels alone cannot capture everything (Mudde, 2007). Over time, the left-right spectrum has evolved in order to adopt emerging societal issues, such as nationalism versus cosmopolitanism, which intersect with its economic dimensions (De Vries, 2018). Thus, despite the fact that the left-right dichotomy serves as a heuristic for understanding political competition and voter alignment, it is often an oversimplification as newer dimensions, such as establishment versus anti-establishment emerge and shift traditional ideological boundaries (Droste, 2021).

2.2 Anti-establishment politics in the European context

Especially after the 2008 financial crisis, scholars argue that the dimension opposing “the people” and “the elite” has taken shape, largely manifested through the rise of anti-establishment parties (Serani, 2020). Florian Hartleb (2015, p.47) notes that the success of these parties cannot be explained by the left–right spectrum alone, rather they created their “own dichotomy of the elites versus the people, creating a dimension between the rulers and the ruled”. In other words, a broad anti-elite sentiment has become a cross-cutting political force (Polk & Rovny, 2017), uniting voters around a shared criticism of the establishment irrespective of traditional ideology dimensions. A salient example is Iakhnis et al. 's (2018) analysis of the 2016 Brexit referendum, which shows that anti-elite sentiment correlates with an increase of up to 17% in support for leaving the European Union among individuals exhibiting strong nativist attitudes. Taken together, these findings motivate a closer examination of a distinct elite–anti-elite line of conflict that can decisively shape electoral outcomes and suggest that shifts in the balance of power between parties reflect not merely an ideological realignment but rather the operation of powerful dynamics beyond traditional ideological and value-based frameworks that fundamentally shape popular identities and perceptions of political legitimacy (Bakker et al., 2020).

It is important to emphasize at this point that anti-elitism and anti-establishment are distinct concepts (Polk et al., 2017), with anti-elitism focusing on the perceived moral failures

of elites, while anti-establishment refers to a party or movement's questioning the structures and norms of the existing political order. In both cases, factors such as institutional trust and anti-corruption sentiment play an important role (Hanley & Sikk, 2016). The present study focuses on anti-establishment as a key term, leaning towards anti-elitism (because elite blame is often the mobilizing language), while avoiding an approach that would equate criticism of the political and economic establishment with anti-systemic classification. What does anti-establishment consist of? What are the driving factors that lead the electorate to anti-establishment? The literature highlights the pivotal role of trust (Iakhnis, et al. 2018) in the formation of an anti-establishment party or movement. The lack of trust concerns traditional parties, politicians who have been in the spotlight for many years, the performance of democratic institutions, traditional parties and the media (Hartleb, 2015), while there is often a questioning of the Western world when we talk about anti-establishment forces in the Western hemisphere. The lack of trust is closely linked to the perception of corruption (Akkerman et. al., 2014) mainly concerning senior dignitaries and those who wield power (Niemi et. al., 1991). Trust in political institutions is therefore an important driving force for shaping voters' political party choices, while alongside it are a series of variables that shape voters' anti-establishment support (Boswell, et. al. 2019). Thus, the people-vs-establishment dimension tends to incorporate existing elements. On the supply side, anti-establishment is focusing on parties that remain broadly "mainstream" on core regime/economic commitments but mobilise reformist, anti-corruption, and "newness" appeals, distinguishing those parties from ideologically radical challengers that fuse anti-establishment rhetoric with more programmatically extreme positions (Hartleb, 2015).

Furthermore, Droste (2021), drawing from Sartori's (1970, 1976, 1982) theory of party systems, highlights the ideological gap that determines the perception regarding the functioning of the current regime. Thus, identifying as anti-establishment captures opposition to the political establishment and elites, along with critiques of fundamental policy issues (e.g., foreign and economic policy), but does not necessarily entail a demand to overthrow the regime (i.e., democracy) or the economic system (i.e., capitalism). Perhaps the distinction between anti-establishment and anti-system is ultimately the most crucial, especially in an era when some analysts argue that, within anti-establishment politics, the left-right dichotomy loses much of its power to define societal differences (De Benoist, 1995; Le Gall & Magni-Berton, 2013). Uçen (2007), examining populism in East-Central Europe, observed that over time "radical ideological components are becoming overshadowed by pure anti-establishment appeal," noting that whereas many 1990s populist parties in post-communist Europe possessed strong ideological content (nationalism, socialism, etc.), by the 2000s a new "centrist populism" had emerged that siphoned popular anger predominantly into demands for transparency, accountability, and the punishment of corrupt elites. In such cases, the main message of populism is its pronounced opposition to the establishment, with these parties attributing misdeeds to the post-communist elite and pledging to restore moral integrity.

Uçen's (2007) analysis highlights the distinct importance of ideology in shaping anti-establishment sentiment, which is structurally different from that associated with radical ideologies. Consequently, anti-system as an analytical tool embraces ideology as an important variable, while anti-establishment seems to have the potential to cut across ideologies horizontally, creating a new divisive intersection beyond the traditional left-right dichotomy. In this context, the literature reflects the increasing importance of the establishment and anti-establishment dimension and, subsequently, the formation of political identity and partisan preference.

2.3 Dimensions of political competition in the Greek context

Across Europe, political competition is rarely confined to the left-right dimension, with the number and content of dimensions varying according to context and may appear different depending on which issues are important and which parties are promoting them (Ford & Jennings, 2020). To that end, Katsanidou and Jungmann (2025) using the 2024 European Election Study argue that the classic socio-economic and socio-cultural divides often fail to capture national political spaces. Relatedly, Dassonneville, Hooghe and Marks (2024) are modeling political space through voter choice probabilities, showing that both the importance and the configuration of issue dimensions change across countries and over time, rather than being fixed ‘elements’ of European politics. This is precisely why Greece is analytically useful, considering that historically after 1974 (Metapolitefsi), Greek competition was dominated by a broad left–right alignment largely depicted as a polarised two-party system (PASOK vs. ND), which was reinforced by the “majority bonus system” incentives.

Nevertheless, the Eurozone crisis fueled the pro- vs. anti-memorandum axis that cut across traditional camps and temporarily reorganized the party system (Vasilopoulou & Halkiopoulou, 2016; Katsanidou & Otjes, 2016; Georgiadou & Mavropoulou, 2021). Post-bailout, elements of the pre-crisis pattern (left–right dimension) have partially restored, but a second, socio-cultural axis (often captured as authoritarian–libertarian) continues to structure party and voter positions (Dinas et al., 2022). Our analysis for Greece therefore models (a) economic left–right and (b) establishment vs. anti-establishment as the dimensions that help explain electoral volatility (Katsanidou & Otjes, 2016; Dinas et al., 2022). For example, views on EU integration and immigration -frequently treated as a single “cultural” block-sometimes tend to be weakly correlated for many voters, implying distinct sub-dimensions (Vasilopoulou & Zur, 2022). Accordingly, our framing treats the socio-cultural “second dimension” as potentially multifaceted and empirically tests whether separate attitudinal clusters (e.g., EU, immigration) emerge and how they map onto vote choice.

In the Greek political scene, the evidence supports bidimensionality: as shown by Dinas et al. (2022), the European axis intersects the classic left–right divide and helps explain why left-wing parties “open up” across the spectrum on the EU issue. Taking into account Kriesi et al. (2006, 2008, 2012)-that attitudes toward immigration and the EU are often linked-and their focus on the electorate, and therefore that the “second” cultural field is multidimensional, we attempt to investigate how this dimension is shaped in the Greek context, which, after the 2008 crisis, constitutes a prominent case for deepening the analysis of the socio-cultural dimension. Thus, we examine two possible hypotheses: (H1) There are two dominant dimensions in Greece, with (a) a socio-economic left-right dimension and (b) an establishment-anti-establishment dimension focusing on trust in institutions/anti-corruption sentiment. (H2) Anti-establishment attitudes are associated with support for specific parties and therefore lower trust in political institutions, stronger disappointment with “corruption” increases the likelihood of voting intention for anti-establishment parties instead of dominant mainstream parties, sometimes exceeding left-right positioning.

3 Methodology

This study utilizes data from Eteron’s research (2025) titled “The radiography of voters”, to examine the dynamics of the new dimension in the Greek party system. The survey data consist of responses to political attitude questions, covering topics such as economic policy,

institutional trust, democratic governance, foreign policy, and social values and the dataset is segmented by voter party preference where respondents' answers are aggregated by the party they intend to vote for during the period 24 March–4 April 2025, which allows us to examine the underlying dynamics that shape ideological and partisan identity (and vice versa) (Moschonas & Ioannidis, 2025). This period was selected to capture the impact on the party system after the Tempe Valley mass demonstrations as well as after the stabilization of the centre-left spectrum following SYRIZA's latest split and the founding of Kinima Dimokratias, led by former SYRIZA leader Stefanos Kasselakis. This structure allows us to compare the attitudinal profiles of different parties' supporters and capture multiple potential dimensions: the classic left–right economic divide, a cultural progressive–traditional divide, and a hypothesized establishment—anti-establishment divide that revolves around institutional trust and attitudes against the status quo. Besides, over the past decade the political system in Greece has experienced the rise of anti-establishment forces regarding the austerity-anti-austerity policies (e.g. SYRIZA) alongside intense debates on issues like the European Union and immigration, making it a prominent case to identify how these dynamics evolve.

The research was between 24 March and 4 April 2025, covers a nationally representative sample of 2,574 Greek adults (age 17+), with data gathered through 2,047 self-administered online interviews (CAWI) and 527 telephone interviews using random-digit dialing and quota sampling (CATI). Responses were weighted to match the Greek population by gender, age, and vote shares in the 2023 parliamentary elections and quality controls included a 100% completeness check on CAWI questionnaires and a 24.66% consistency check on CATI responses, with the overall margin of error not exceeding $\pm 2.1\%$; while the analyses of the small subgroup of prospective Niki voters ($N < 60$) are treated as indicative.

To facilitate comparison across different party voter groups and condense response distributions, we transformed the raw survey responses into net scores for each variable. We computed net scores for every item with an inherent direction (binary agree/disagree, approval, or ordered Likert-type scales) and did not compute net scores for purely nominal variables (e.g., ideological preference), because nominal categories have no ordered pro/anti polarity. Therefore, a net score is defined as the difference between the percentage of respondents expressing a positive/supportive response and the percentage expressing a negative/unsupportive response, for the given question which helps identify the difference between approvals and disapprovals (Alcantud & Laruelle, 2013): $\text{Net score} = \% \text{ positive (supportive)} - \% \text{ negative (unsupportive)}$. Neutrals/“don't know” re excluded. This yields a single summary metric per item that ranges from -100 (if everyone is negative) to $+100$ (if everyone is positive), with 0 indicating a neutral or evenly split stance. For example, if 40% of a party's supporters are satisfied with democracy and 30% are dissatisfied (with the remainder neutral), the net satisfaction score would be $+10$ (i.e. 40% minus 30%). Net scores are used to measure net favorability or net agreement on issues, as they succinctly capture the overall tilt of a group's (Felsenthal, 1989). Therefore, in our analysis, we computed net agreement scores for all Likert-scale questions (such as agree vs. disagree statements), for policy preference questions we recoded responses into bipolar net-support scores (e.g. support for Israel = $+10$; support for Palestinians = -10 ; Neither/DK = 0), and for evaluative items (such as trust versus distrust in institutions) we generated net-favorability scores by subtracting negative from positive evaluations.

Moreover, we preserved only questions with symmetric scale and we exclude neutral responses (e.g. “neutral”, “neither” or “DK/NA”). This results in losing information, such as a systematic neutrality stance a party's voters may have, and reducing the number of observa-

tions contributing to each net score. Nevertheless, Alcantud and Laruelle (2013) characterize “dis/approval voting” using a three-point scale: approval (+1), indifference/abstention (0), and disapproval (-1) and treat the zero (“indifference/abstention/don’t know”) explicitly as outside the approval vs. disapproval balance, thus effectively excluding neutral responses from the net calculation. Likewise, Felsenthal (1989) shows that when combining approval and disapproval into a single net measure, only clear positive and negative ratings are counted, with ambivalent or missing judgments set aside to sharpen the measurement of sentiment. By following these established methods, we maintain a consistent -100/+100 metric across all items and ensure that our net scores directly capture the directional tilt of each party’s base. Finally, following the aforementioned literature we applied a simple linear rescaling of all net scores from the original [-100,+100] range to a standardized [-10,+10] range by dividing each value by 10. This step ensures that all variables enter subsequent dimensional analyses on the same unit scale, facilitating improved readability and reporting, consistency with other traditional scales (left-right wing) and comparison across the items.

By normalizing different questions to a comparable scale, we ensure that each item contributes equally to the analysis regardless of original response format and we can aggregate individual-level data to the party-group level, aligning with our interest in structures that manifest in collective alignments (party electorates) rather than isolated individuals. By focusing on party-level net scores, we effectively capture how each party’s base positions itself on each issue on average. This operationalization addresses the “organizational element” of dimension: if an establishment vs. anti-establishment dimension exists, it should be evident in systematic differences between clusters of these net scores. We calculated net scores for all major voting intention categories (including New Democracy, SYRIZA, PASOK-KINAL, KKE, Greek Solution, NIKI, MeRA25, Pleafsi Eleftherias -Course of Freedom-, etc.). The resulting dataset is a matrix of size $P \times Q$ (with $P \approx 11$ parties/groups and $Q \approx 52$ survey items), in which each cell is the net score of party p on question q . A characteristic example of this data illustrates clear contrasts—for instance, New Democracy (ND) voters showed a positive net trust in the Prime Minister as an institution (+7.6), whereas voters of several smaller parties had strongly negative net trust in that office. Likewise, on whether “there is no better system of government than parliamentary democracy”, ND supporters had a strong (+9.36) net agreement (indicating strong support of democracy and skepticism of authoritarian solutions), while supporters of anti-establishment parties were significantly less supportive about this statement. These net differences already hint at an underlying dichotomy, but a more analytical dimensional analysis is needed to confirm and characterize it.

Thereby, in the second step, we applied Principal Component Analysis (PCA) to the matrix of net scores, which is a data-reduction technique that identifies latent dimensions (orthogonal components) which account for patterns of covariation among the variables (here, the attitude items) (Abdi & Williams, 2010; Wold et al., 1987). The goal was to uncover the structure of Greek voters’ attitudes; essentially to examine if the different survey variables load onto a few broad factors corresponding to dimensions of competition. If an establishment vs. anti-establishment divide is a fundamental new dimension, we would expect PCA to yield a principal component capturing high positive loadings for pro-establishment attitudes (trust in institutions, satisfaction with democracy, support for moderate reform over radical change, etc.) on one end, and high negative loadings for anti-establishment attitudes (distrust, discontent, anti-elite and authoritarian-populist sentiments) on the other (Greenacre et al., 2023). Similarly, other components might align with known dimensions (e.g. an economic left-right factor loading on market vs. welfare items, or a cultural liberal-conservative

factor loading on immigration and traditional values). We used the net score variables as inputs to PCA, treating each survey item’s net score (across parties) as a variable. In essence, the PCA assesses which items “go together” -for instance, if parties that are high on institutional trust are also consistently high on support for the EU and low on perceived corruption, those items will cluster on a component. We conducted the PCA with standard procedures: the values were centred, and we examined the scree plot and eigenvalues (≥ 1) to decide how many components to retain. We also rotated the components (using varimax rotation) to facilitate interpretation of distinct factors. The analysis revealed a set of principal components (factors) that correspond to the major dimensions structuring the data. By examining the top-loading items on each component, we interpreted the substantive meaning of each latent dimension. Throughout this process, theoretical guidance was crucial: we anticipated that specific factors might represent the hypothesized establishment–anti-establishment axis, given the prominence of such sentiment in post-crisis Greek politics and its cross-cutting nature. PCA is an appropriate tool here because it lets the data reveal whether voters’ identities are indeed structured by a new dimension, rather than imposing a predefined structure.

4 Uncovering the Dimensions of the Greek Party Electorates

4.1 Beyond the traditional “left-right” dimension

The Kaiser criterion (eigenvalue > 1) and visual inspection both pointed to two dominant components. The first principal component (PC1) has an eigenvalue accounting for about 53% of the total variance, and PC2 accounts for an additional 32%, bringing the cumulative explained variance to roughly 85% with two components. This indicates that mainly two dimensions capture the vast majority of the structured differences among party electorates and the third component’s eigenvalue drops to around 3.9% of variance (and subsequent ones even lower), suggesting that additional components represent only minor nuances or noise. In line with this, we focus our analysis on the first two principal components, which together form a two-dimensional political space summarizing the data.

PC	Variance %	Cumulative %
PC1	52.99	52.99
PC2	31.82	84.81
PC3	3.92	88.73
PC4	2.50	91.23
PC5	2.28	93.51

Table 1: The percent of variance explained by the first 5 PCs.

Positive PC1 scores correspond to cosmopolitan and interventionist views (e.g. support for multiculturalism, an open stance toward immigrants, and a strong state role in the economy), whereas negative PC1 scores denote ethno-nationalist and market-oriented tendencies (a preference for cultural traditionalism, nativism, and less state intervention). In substantive terms, this dimension aligns with the classic left–right divide in both economic and social policy, combining elements of what scholars label a socio-cultural liberal vs. traditionalist dimension alongside the role of government in the economy (Bornschieer, 2018; Oesch

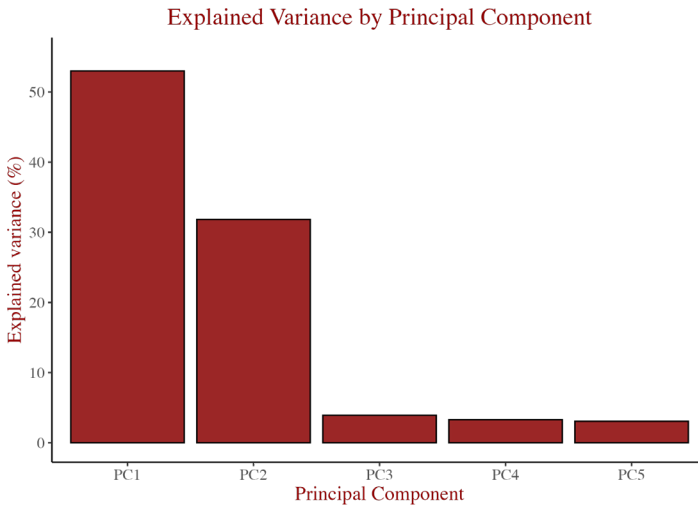


Figure 1: Variance percentage explained by each of the main principal components.

& Rennwald, 2010; Neumayer, 2004). The second principal component (PC2) represents an institutional trust or establishment-related dimension, with voters scoring high on PC2 expressing strong trust in political institutions and Western alignment -for instance, trust in the national government, Prime Minister and President of Democracy, and a positive orientation toward the EU, whereas low PC2 scores indicate deep distrust of establishment institutions, often coupled with Eurosceptic and pro-Russia sentiment (Hartleb, 2015; Droste, 2021; Polk & Rovny, 2017).

Mapping Greek voters into this two-dimensional space (using the first two principal components) reveals clear clusters corresponding to party constituencies. The mainstream centre-right New Democracy (ND) electorate anchors one end of the spectrum where ND voters score high on the pro-establishment dimension (PC2), indicating strong institutional trust and pro-government sentiment and lean to the traditional/conservative side of PC1. They occupy the quadrant of “establishment-aligned right”: supportive of the status quo, socially traditional, and generally pro-EU. In contrast, voters of right-wing anti-establishment parties group toward the opposite pole of PC2, exhibiting low institutional trust, but diverging along PC1 based on left vs. right ideologies. For instance, the supporters of nationalist parties, such as *Elliniki Lysi* (Greek Solution), *NIKI* (Victory party), or the new entrance is this sphere of the spectrum *Foni Logikis* (Voice of Reason) cluster in the “traditionalist anti-establishment” corner, scoring very low trust in institutions (high disaffection) and adopting nativist, authoritarian stances, culturally conservative outlooks and strong anti-elite resentment with a comparatively economically traditional right-wing, market-oriented profile (i.e., less supportive of state redistribution than the left anti-establishment electorates). This is what Iakhnis et al. (2018) describe as the “cocktail of right-wing populism”.

On the other hand, voters of left-wing parties -for example, the radical-left *MERA25* (Yanis Varoufakis’s party) or even the Communist Party (KKE) also show low institutional trust (similarly alienated from mainstream elites), but score high on PC1, signifying progressive or leftist issue positions (e.g. support for state intervention, multicultural openness). They occupy a “progressive anti-establishment” zone in the PCA space. Despite

being at opposite ends of the left–right spectrum, both these groups share a distrustful, anti-establishment stance, confirming that such a sentiment in Greece cuts across traditional ideological lines, creating unprecedented common patterns in terms of political attitudes.

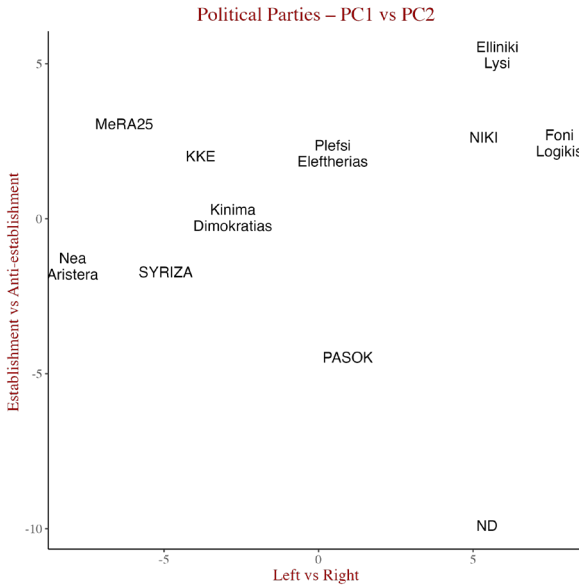


Figure 2: Parties plotted on the 1st and 2nd PC scales (the PC's have been inverted so that "right" is indeed on the right of the plot, and higher anti-establishment is on the upper part of the figure)

Besides, as Hartleb (2015) observes, the classical left–right dichotomy “loses much of its relevance in the framework of anti-establishment protest politics”, given that challenger parties (Vries & Hobolt, 2020) from both the left and right rally against the mainstream elites. These findings echo arguments supporting the emergence of a cross-ideological dimension that pits establishment-friendly voters against anti-establishment voters, reducing the explanatory power of the left–right dichotomy. Meanwhile, the centre-left and centre-ground voters plot in more moderate positions on both axes. PASOK–KINAL (the centre-left party) supporters, for example, show middling scores on PC1 and slightly positive PC2 as a result of a mix of pro-European, system-supportive attitudes with moderately progressive policy preferences. They cluster near the centre of the map, between ND and the rest of the left-wing parties. Notably, SYRIZA’s voter profile appears confused: SYRIZA began as an anti-establishment radical left party, but since its journey in government and its rapid electoral decline since 2023, its voters occupy an intermediate position leaning left on the first dimension and showing only mildly negative to neutral institutional trust on the second dimension. This suggests that SYRIZA’s electorate mixes leftist ideology with a more tempered anti-elite stance compared to more hardline left-wing parties. In other words, the voters of parties that during Metapolitefsi were in power (ND, PASOK and SYRIZA) have electoral bases that tend to oppose the anti-establishment stance. This pattern aligns with the view that when citizens become dissatisfied with their representation, they gravitate toward challenger or extreme options on both ends (Norris & Inglehart, 2019).

These empirical patterns from Greece can be situated within a broader European con-

text of changing political dimensions (Deegan-Krause, 2006), with our findings illustrating that the characteristics of an establishment-anti-establishment dimension hold deep roots in Greek society and the political system, cross-cutting the old ideological spectrum. In Greece, the financial crisis and austerity in the 2010s catalyzed widespread political distrust, creating fertile ground for an anti-establishment vs. establishment dimension. Therefore, beyond policy disagreements, a unifying theme of challenger parties is the promise to “replace corrupt or inefficient elites,” as Hanley & Sikk (2014) document, and to give voice to those who feel excluded (Abedi, 2004). Ultimately, the analysis reveals that understanding Greek voter behavior today requires looking beyond left–right programmatic disputes to also consider the attitudinal dimension of establishment vs. anti-establishment. Voters’ political identities are not defined solely by traditional ideological factors, but also by their orientation toward the governing system itself—a finding that is in line with broader European patterns of populist realignment (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017; Iakhnis et al., 2018). As a result, a structural divide has solidified in Greek politics, one that pits “the people” against “the political class” across traditional party lines, with strong implications for party competition and voter behavior.

4.2 Party Transitions

Regarding the fractional-logit model in Table 3 and the party-transition diagram in Figure 3 the opportunity arises to observe that in Greece voters’ second-choice patterns cluster far more tightly along the classic left–right axis than along the anti-establishment one. In Table 3 the coefficient on left–right distance ($|\Delta PC1|$) is -0.226 ($p = .037$), indicating a substantial differentiation in switching probability as a function of left–right ideological distance, whereas the anti-establishment coefficient ($|\Delta PC2|$) is much smaller (-0.055) and statistically insignificant ($p = .548$).

To examine the strength of the aforementioned dimension, we model voters’ probability of “switching” from their first-choice party i to an alternative party j using a fractional-logit generalized linear model. Let

$$p_{ij} = \Pr(\text{second-choice} = j \mid \text{first-choice} = i),$$

and define the two predictors as the absolute distances in principal-component space between parties i and j :

$$d_{1,ij} = |PC1_j - PC1_i|, \quad d_{2,ij} = |PC2_j - PC2_i|.$$

Our estimating equation is

$$\text{logit}(p_{ij}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 d_{1,ij} + \beta_2 d_{2,ij},$$

where β_0 captures the baseline log-odds of switching when parties coincide in ideological space, and β_1, β_2 measure the marginal change in log-odds per unit of left–right (PC1) and anti-establishment (PC2) distance, respectively (see Table 3).

Since the dependent variable p_{ij} is a proportion bounded between 0 and 1, a standard linear regression would risk predictions outside the unit interval and violates the homoskedasticity assumption (the variance of a proportion depends on its mean). A fractional-logit (GLM with logit link and binomial family) naturally constrains fitted values to $[0, 1]$ and accommodates the non-constant variance of proportion data. Moreover, the logit link captures the inherently nonlinear relationship between ideological distance and switching probability, yielding interpretable changes in log-odds of switching per unit change in ideological distance.

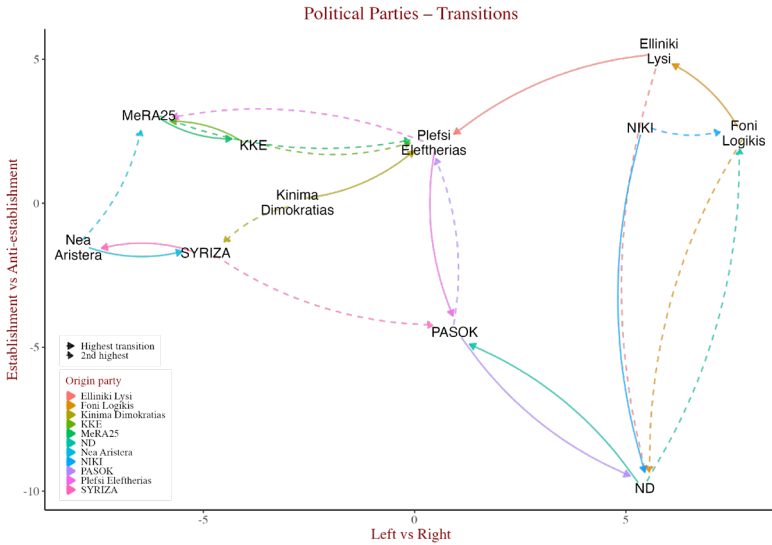


Figure 3: For each party two arrows represent the two other parties that voters choose as their second-best choice.

Variable	Coef.	SE	z	$P > z $	[0.025,0.975]
constant	-0.8957	0.7048	-1.2709	0.2038	(-2.2772, 0.4857)
$ \Delta PC1 $	-0.2262	0.1084	-2.0867	0.0369	(-0.4386, -0.0137)
$ \Delta PC2 $	-0.0546	0.0907	-0.6013	0.5476	(-0.2324, 0.1233)

Table 2: Fractional-logit regression of voter-switch probability on ideological distances.

The fractional-logit model in Table 3 and the party-transition diagram in Figure 3 provide the opportunity to observe that in Greece voters' second-choice patterns cluster far more tightly along the classic left–right axis than along the anti-establishment one. In Table 3 the coefficient on left–right distance ($dist_PC1$) is -0.226 ($p = .037$), indicating a substantial differentiation in switching probability as a function of left–right ideological distance, whereas the anti-establishment coefficient ($dist_PC2$) is much smaller (-0.055) and statistically insignificant ($p = .548$). In other words, for each unit increase in left–right distance, the log-odds of naming a party as a second choice falls significantly, while changes in anti-establishment distance have little effect.

Figure 3 depicts this trend, as most arrows (both solid for first-preference switch and dashed for second), especially in the centre and on the right, are oriented vertically (along the anti-establishment axis) rather than horizontally (along the left–right axis). Voters leap across the left–right divide less often when contemplating a back-up party; instead, they stay within their ideological camp. This dynamic confirms that the left–right division remains the dominant “mental map” for Greek voters when they consider alternative parties. Although an anti-establishment vs. establishment dimension has grown in Europe (and in Greece especially, after the financial crisis), Greek voter behaviour demonstrates that the traditional left–right dichotomy remains the primary axis of political alignment, even as an anti-establishment dimension gains ground, and the endurance of the left–right ideological

identity is evident in voters' second preferences.

5 Discussion

Our work provides evidence that Greek political identities cannot be read only through the unambiguous prism of “left-right”, despite the historically stable two-party system after 1974 which was indeed based on a polarized two-party pattern (PASOK vs. ND), which was reinforced by institutional incentives (extra parliamentary seats for the party with the highest share of votes). The Eurozone crisis triggered cascading effects, activating a pro/anti-memorandum axis that was closely linked to the positioning of the establishment versus the anti-establishment dimension, and although this shift initially appeared to recede amid a new emerging but weaker bipartisanship (ND-SYRIZA), it was soon replaced by a fluid and difficult to understand fragmented scene. Using the data from Eteron's (2025) research "The radiography of voters" and utilizing PCA on net-score items, two dominant components emerged with a “classic” left–right dimension that combining economic and socio-cultural content (state interventions vs. free market-oriented), and an establishment–anti-establishment dimension centred on institutional trust and “system” alignment. It is important to note that far-right anti-establishment parties are not only culturally nationalist, but also lie on the market-oriented side of PC1, while radical left challengers combine anti-establishment sentiment with pro-state economic preferences.

Consequently, two things are true at the same time: the gap between the establishment and the replaced is structurally visible, but it does not “replace” the left-right anchor. The dominant left–right dichotomy that roots back to historical conflicts of Greek political history remained “the strongest predictor of party choice,” absorbing issues from economic policy to cultural values (Tsatsanis, Teperoglou, & Seriatos, 2020) still remains relevant. Hence, on the one hand, the data document that the electoral bodies of the parties classified in the left hemisphere are more strongly concentrated along the left-right axis than along the establishment-anti-establishment, while the presence of the second axis being evident and largely explaining the fragmented scene. Thus, Greece is a clear illustration of the European trends where the dimension varies depending on the context, the parties, and the time. At the same time, anti-establishment attitudes are deeply connected with the electorate of parties and consist of lower trust.

Our findings are based on an observational design, so the next step is to study whether these dimensions are stable or a reflection of current circumstances, and a natural extension would be to use repeated waves to test whether the establishment-anti-establishment axis shows resilience over time and whether specific events (e.g., scandals) influence the voting-behavior. Future work could also focus more on causal-relationships to understand whether vote choice and distrust coevolve. Finally, since the issues of “EU” and “immigration” do not always combine uniformly for all voters, it is worth finding if the sociocultural space is itself multi-component and how each sub-dimension links to party choice.

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