

Left-wing Populism and Anti-imperialism: The Paradigm of SYRIZA

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Abstract: *The global economic crisis, the popular discontent against traditional parties and post-democratic forms of governance, as well as the sharp increase in migrant and refugee arrivals have led to the resurgence of populist parties around the world. Left-wing parties usually express an inclusionary populist discourse with patriotic features, while right-wing parties utilize an exclusionary populism with strong nationalist and xenophobic characteristics. In Greece in recent years, the radical left party of SYRIZA rose to power through a left-wing populist and anti-imperialist discourse. Alexis Tsipras formed a paradox coalition government with the radical right party of ANEL to reach an agreement that would lessen the effects of austerity policies. However, once in office, SYRIZA transformed some features of its political style and began to follow a type of “pragmatic populism”. This paper examines the relationship between populism and anti-imperialism, while analyzing SYRIZA’s discourse in opposition and in power. The questions that it attempts to answer are: does Tsipras express an anti-imperialist discourse both in opposition and in power? What forces are considered imperialist by SYRIZA? Can the notion of “crypto-colonialism” explain the rise of left-wing populism in Greece?*

Keywords: populism, anti-imperialism/anti-colonialism, SYRIZA, crypto-colonialism, Greece

Introduction

The beginning of the twenty-first century has been characterized by the forceful rise of left-wing and right-wing populist parties and movements. Specifically, the global economic crisis and the failure of neoliberal policies in many places around the world, the social discontent against post-democratic forms of governance (Crouch 2004), as well as the refugee crisis have led to the resurgence of populist parties, which oppose the political and economic elites. Left-wing populist parties usually express an inclusionary populism with patriotic characteristics, demanding more democracy, equality and solidarity, while right-

wing populist parties utilize an exclusionary populism with strong nationalist and xenophobic features, seeking an ethnically “pure” community (see Mudde and Kaltwasser 2013, 147-174).

Greece is a semi-peripheral country (Mouzelis 1986, xvii) that has experienced the development of a strong left-wing (inclusionary) populist and anti-imperialist discourse both in the past and recently. As stated by Dani Filc (2015, 264), inclusionary populism appears mostly in colonized countries and regions, while exclusive populism appears mainly in former colonialist countries. However, Greece was not a colony of a powerful Western country, but it has always been economically and culturally dependent on the West (Herzfeld 2011, 22–26). Left-wing political parties, movements and leaders diachronically criticize Greece’s dependence on the West through an anti-imperialist discourse. In the 1980s, Andreas Papandreou’s PASOK formed a strong populist hegemony that had been maintained for many years. Initially, Andreas Papandreou opposed US imperialism, underlining the importance of “national independence” for Greece. According to Nafpliotis, PASOK, following the notion of the “dependency theory”, “interpreted the EEC as merely an instrument of American dominance and promotion of US interests in Europe” (Nafpliotis 2018, 512). This gradually changed after PASOK’s rise to power, as Papandreou left his radicalism behind and followed a more pragmatic orientation. Recently, following the outbreak of the global economic crisis in 2007/2008 (2009 in Greece) and the implication of austerity policies, SYRIZA, a small oppositional radical left party, came to power through an inclusionary populist discourse (Markou 2017, 61-63), ruling the country for more than four years. SYRIZA, in opposition, expressed an anti-imperialist discourse, criticizing both the US and the NATO and attacking German hegemony in Europe and the neoliberal logic of the EU. However, SYRIZA in office transformed its political logic.

This paper examines SYRIZA’s discourse both in opposition and in power with a particular focus on its populist and anti-imperialist/anti-colonialist features.¹ The questions that the paper seeks to answer are: does the leader of SYRIZA use an anti-imperialist discourse in opposition and in government? Which forces are considered imperialist by Alexis Tsipras? What has changed in SYRIZA’s political style and discourse over the years? Finally, the paper sets out to trace the roots as well the recent historical course of anti-imperialism in Greece, while attempting to explain the relationship between inclusionary populism and anti-imperialism in the country through the notion of “crypto-colonialism”.

Populism and Anti-imperialism

The recent rise of populist parties, movements and leaders around the world has rekindled the research interest on the populist phenomenon. As a result, there is a great impetus to the study of populism with a plethora of new publications,

seminars and conferences. Yet, over the years, a number of academic publications have presented a rather stereotypical anti-populist perspective (Hofstadter 1955; Müller 2016). This kind of anti-populist analysis appears indifferent to the fact that populism is a discourse that puts great emphasis on the “popular subject” (the people) – the cornerstone of democracy. It, too, ignores the fact that populism activates political competition through its antagonistic dimension at a time when post-political conditions and consensus tend to diminish the political antagonism that is crucial in democratic processes. However, in more recent criticism, there has been a shift towards investigating populism’s internal characteristics and implications on democracy, attempting to overcome the problems inherent in the anti-populist perspective (Moffitt 2016; Ostiguy 2017; Stavrakakis 2019).

Ernesto Laclau’s (2005) theory on populism particularly manages to avoid stereotypical readings and myths on the phenomenon by defining populism as a political logic that dichotomizes society into two opposing camps, “the people” and “the elites”. Specifically, according to Laclau, the structural features of populism are the emergence of “equivalences, popular subjectivity, the dichotomic construction of the social around an internal frontier” and the “discursive construction of an enemy” (2005, 38-39). Following Laclau’s notion of populism, the POPULISMUS project² underlines two minimal criteria of populism: (1) the prominent reference to “the people” and (2) an antagonistic perception of the socio-political terrain as divided between “the people”, “the underdog” and “the elites”, and “the establishment” (POPULISMUS 2015, n.p.). Moreover, Yannis Stavrakakis (2019), the principal investigator of POPULISMUS, argues in his latest book that it is wrong to equate populism with nationalism, nativism, fascism and clientelism, while populism is not inherently based on charismatic leadership, thus criticizing those anti-populist theories that accept the equation of populism with the above phenomena (101-105).

But does populism present common features in any case? For Mudde and Kaltwasser (2013), the answer lies in two types of populism: 1) *inclusionary (inclusive)* and 2) *exclusionary (exclusive)* populism, namely a populism that accepts the inclusion of social groups within its people and a populism that rejects the inclusion of “aliens” within its “community” (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2013, 147-174). In particular, inclusionary populism allows for the political integration of underprivileged and excluded people, while exclusionary populism perceives the people as an ethnically or culturally homogeneous unit, excluding people on the grounds of nativist (namely, nationalist and xenophobic) reasons (Filc 2015, 265-266). According to Mudde and Kaltwasser, South-American and South-European populisms are principally inclusive and egalitarian (socioeconomic dimension), whilst North-American and North European populisms follow an exclusionary (xenophobic) logic (sociocultural dimension) (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2013, 147-174). Thus, how can we explain the development of both types of populism around the world? Dani Filc argues that “colonialism is an important key to understanding the development of either form of populism”

(2015, 264). Looking back at history, we can see that inclusionary populist parties and leaders have emerged mostly in colonised countries and regions (such as Latin America), while exclusionary populist parties rise mostly in former colonialist countries (such as in Northern Europe). Moreover, the notion of “the people” in South American and South European populisms does not present the same features with the nationalist rhetoric of racial discrimination that is used by radical and extreme right parties in Europe. Inclusionary populist discourse calls upon the underprivileged and poor people (people as *plebeians* or *demos*), and exclusionary populism calls upon “the people of the nation”, understanding them as an ethno-cultural unit (Filc 2015, 264-268). Filc contends that, in the past, the colonializing powers denied the benefits of citizenship to the foreign peoples, while today the former colonialists deny migrants and refugees (“aliens”)³ to belong to their national community. It is not a coincidence that many of the immigrants which are targeted by exclusionary populist parties come from former colonies of those countries (Filc 2015, 277). Mudde and Kaltwasser confirm Filc’s observations, as they emphasize how, in recent years, Latin American (inclusionary) populism has advocated a more anti-imperialist discourse, embracing other peoples of Latin America, while European (exclusionary) populism follows a xenophobic and nationalist logic, rejecting other people (non-native) from their community (2013, 168). It is true that many left-wing (inclusionary) populist parties and leaders around the world often go hand in hand with the anti-imperialist (anti-colonial) logic, which is defined as the opposition to imperialism and imperialist forces. For example, Venezuela’s socialist and populist regime takes an aggressive stance against American imperialism (see: Sagarzazu and Thies 2019, 205-214; Fürtig and Gratius 2010, 173)

Greece as a ‘Crypto-colony’ and the Anti-imperialist Response

In Greece, after the fall of the dictatorship, two left-wing parties with an anti-imperialist/anti-colonialist and egalitarian populist discourse managed to rise to power: PASOK of Andreas Papandreou (1981) and SYRIZA of Alexis Tsipras (2015). However, Greece itself was never colonized. Hence, how can one explain the rise of inclusionary populism in such a small semi-peripheral country? “Crypto-colonialism”, this paper suggests, is perhaps the answer.⁴

Greece was not colonized by a powerful Western European country in the past, but it has always been economically and culturally dependent on the West. Since the foundation of the Greek state in 1830, Greece has been under the influence of Western powers, following the orders of European and American leaders. Specifically, after independence and the establishment of the Greek state, Greece entered into the sphere of influence of the “three protective powers” (Great Britain, France and Russia), while in the twentieth century first Britain and then the US took over “the protection” of the country. As Herzfeld argues, since its declaration of independence in 1821, Greece has always been highly

dependent both economically and politically (2011, 22–26). More precisely, “over the nearly two centuries since the initial proclamation of their independent nation-state in 1821, Greeks were forced to fit their national culture to the antiquarian desires of Western powers” (Herzfeld 2016, 10). According to him, countries like Greece are nominally independent, but that independence comes at the price of a humiliating form of effective dependence (Herzfeld 2002, 900–901). This phenomenon, for Herzfeld, can be defined as crypto-colonialism (900–01).

For a number of intellectuals, Greek dependence on the West is maintained to a large extent until today through the imposition of neoliberal doctrine by European institutions and the IMF in the country. In fact, the management of the crisis by the EU and IMF through severe austerity measures led to the loss of national independence for Greece, as “Troika” (or “Institutions”) began to control Greek government agencies (Eleutheriou 2016, 346). Troika and the first governments after the outbreak of the crisis attempted to throw the responsibility of austerity on the Greek people through their rhetoric. Moreover, a large part of North European politicians and technocrats adopted a stereotypical view for Greece and presented the Greeks as ‘lazy’ and ‘corrupt’ people who had to be punished through austerity measures. As Herzfeld argues:

The Western powers supported conservative Greek politicians who maintained Greece’s status as a ‘backward’ client state while reproducing the same inequity in the exploitation of their electoral constituents. As a direct result of this dynamic, journalists and politicians of the powerful countries of Europe have become accustomed to deriding the modern Greeks as hopelessly mired in corruption; they also view the Greeks as lazy and feckless and as irresponsible in their attitudes towards international debt. (Herzfeld 2016, 10)

According to Douzinas and Papaconstantinou, a new type of colonialism is currently on the rise in Europe, in which the Brussels elites treat the European South as “colonial subjects” to be reformed and civilized. This political project is far away from the initial vision of European integration into a peaceful and equal European community but aims instead at a neocolonial disciplining of “poor” and “weak” countries (Douzinas and Papaconstantinou 2011, n.p.). For political economist Giorgos Dourakis, Germany has long been pursuing an expansive national strategy, a new “Ostpolitik”, trying to subdue the periphery of Europe (such as Greece) to make it a base for Asian markets. For him, German moralists are clearly immoral since they blame the victims for the eruption of the economic crisis, while acquitting the perpetrators of the international financial oligarchy (Dourakis 2012, n.p.).

But is there any response by Greek political actors for Greece’s dependence on the West? The strong opposition to Greece’s dependence on the West has mainly been expressed by a left-wing anti-imperialist discourse over the years. Specifically, the cooperation between the British, American and Greek governments during the Greek civil war (1946–1949) as well as the close

relationship between Greece and the US since then has formed a left-wing political space with anti-imperialist characteristics, which seek national independence and popular sovereignty. Anti-imperialism has been a distinctive feature of the left's political identity throughout Greek history, while it has been inspired by communist ideas. According to Costas Eleftheriou, Greek anti-imperialism 1) is connected with the notion of "national independence", 2) predominantly pursues a left-wing cause, especially a communist one, and 3) is constituted as a public sentiment from below and mobilized through a political strategy from above (Eleftheriou 2016, 341).

In the 1960s and 1970s, a strong anti-Americanism spread across the country. For instance, the majority of Greeks believed that the coup d'état of 1967 had been orchestrated by the US. This idea led to the rapid increase of anti-American sentiments in Greek society. The Communist Party of Greece (KKE) and the Internal Communist Party of Greece (KKE esoterikou) were two left-wing parties with strong anti-imperialist and anti-American ideas. However, these were not populist parties. In fact, inclusionary populism has been connected with anti-imperialism in the case of the leader of PASOK, Andreas Papandreou. The left-wing president was a leading populist politician who, initially, opposed the US and NATO. Specifically, on September 3, 1974, Papandreou founded the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) as a new left-wing party based on the following four principles: "national independence", "popular sovereignty", "social liberation" and "democratic procedure" (Thomson 2000, 91). Papandreou developed friendly relations with several third-world liberation movements and socialist regimes such as the Syrian Baath Party and Gaddafi's Socialist Jamahiriya. At the same time, its political discourse criticized the country's accession to the European Economic Community (EEC) and asked for the removal of NATO military bases from Greece. After its rise to power, Papandreou maintained a kind of anti-imperialism in his political discourse but decided to follow a more 'pragmatic' approach to foreign policy issues (Eleftheriou 2016, 343-344).

Recently, the outbreak of the economic crisis and the imposition of harsh austerity measures by the EU and the IMF in Greece have enabled the forceful return of an anti-imperialist and inclusionary populist discourse in the country. SYRIZA opposed the Greek and European economic and political establishment by advocating a politics for the people, democracy, national independence and popular sovereignty. What kind of anti-imperialism did Tsipras express in opposition? And what has happened after his rise to power?

SYRIZA's Discourse in Opposition and in Power: An 'Anti-imperialist' Party?

SYRIZA was founded in 2004 by Synaspismos and a number of leftist ecologist, democratic socialist and communist organizations. In actual fact, SYRIZA is the historical continuation of the euro-communist Internal Communist Party of

Greece (KKE esoterikou) and Synaspismos.⁵ For many years, it could not put an end to the powerful bipartisanship in the country (Katsourides 2016, 53-67). Nevertheless, the eruption of the economic crisis and the imposition of tough austerity (anti-popular) measures by PASOK and ND led to social discontent and anger against the traditional parties and their neoliberal agenda. This enabled SYRIZA to launch a populist attack against the neoliberal agreements between the Greek governments and the Troika, while it participated in the anti-capitalist and anti-austerity movements of the crisis period. The major aim of SYRIZA's electoral platform was the annulling of the so-called Memorandums of Understanding (signed between the EU and the Greek governments) that imposed harsh austerity measures as a condition for a bailout (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis 2014, 126).

In 2004, radical left SYRIZA decided to follow a “social movements” strategy that underlined the importance of opposing “neoliberal globalization” and promoted an alternative path to socialism with democracy and freedom. For Alekos Alavanos, the president of Synaspismos between 2004 and 2008, it was necessary for the party to return back to neighbourhoods, call for youth support and seek the unity of the left (Alavanos 2004, n.p.). SYRIZA's discourse included strong anti-imperialist features, but it was not yet part of a populist discourse, even if there were some references to “the people”. However, it largely pursued an anti-imperialist agenda that was directly linked to the Greek left-wing anti-imperialist tradition. For SYRIZA, the expansion of imperialist interventions was the new nightmare for the people, and it thus urged the radical left to fight for peaceful and anti-imperialist policies in international affairs (Synaspismos 2004).

After the departure of Alavanos and the election of Alexis Tsipras as the president of the party in 2008, SYRIZA started gradually to change its political style. Initially, two concepts coexisted in Tsipras' discourse: “the people” and “the youth”. Specifically, youth and movements have been the driving force of the party until the late 2000s. However, after the eruption of the crisis, the imposition of austerity measures and the spread of social discontent across the country, SYRIZA transformed its political discourse, giving special emphasis to “the people” (as an inclusive signifier), while attacking the Greek and European politico-economic establishment (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis 2014, 126-133). The “people” (λαός) of SYRIZA was presented as an inclusionary and heterogeneous political subject, which included all democratic and progressive citizens as much as the workers, the unemployed, minority groups and all those who suffered from neoliberalism and austerity policies (the underprivileged people). The main enemies of the party and “its people” were the “corrupt” traditional parties of PASOK and ND, the “corrupt” media, “bankocracy”, neoliberal Europe, as well as Germany and Chancellor Merkel as the leading power of Europe's austerity politics. SYRIZA's oppositional populism combined a type of patriotism which, in contrast to exclusionary populisms, was not associated with nationalism and xenophobia. Instead, it promoted an anti-imperialism that criticized the economic policies promoted by Germany as the

leading power of Europe, the EU and the IMF (see more: Stavrakakis and Katsambekis 2014, 126-133).

SYRIZA in opposition maintained the traditional left-wing anti-imperialism that opposes NATO and imperialist interventions. This is not surprising considering the fact that the Greek radical left parties have been diachronically following an anti-imperialist logic. In 2012, SYRIZA's electoral programme called for the closure of all foreign military bases in Greece and the exit of the country from NATO, while highlighting that it would continue to fight for the dissolution of NATO (SYRIZA 2012, n.p.). Nonetheless, the radical left party expressed also an anti-German anti-imperialist discourse that opposed Germany, Chancellor Merkel and the "neoliberal Europe". It is true that the eruption of the economic crisis in Greece led to the emergence of an anti-German anti-imperialism (Eleftheriou 2016, 346).⁶ In particular, SYRIZA expressed an anti-Troika and anti-German discourse with references to "national independence" and "national sovereignty". For SYRIZA, Germany as the leading European power promoted neoliberal policies that weakened the popular classes who were not responsible for the crisis. The main concern for the radical left party was that the EU presented a dogmatic obsession with neoliberal austerity, for which Chancellor Merkel had a great deal of responsibility. In 2012, Tsipras argued that Greece was transforming into "a protectorate" of Europe and a "debt colony" (Tsipras 2012), while, in 2014, he explained the austerity logic of the EU to his opposition as follows: "Go back Mrs. Merkel, go back Mr. Schäuble, Go back ladies and gentlemen of conservative nomenclature of Europe, go back Mistery of Troika, Greece is not a guinea pig" (Tsipras 2014). However, SYRIZA's attacks on the hegemonic policies of the Euro-zone did not involve an anti-European agenda (Andreadis and Stavrakakis 2018, 165). Instead, SYRIZA expressed its opposition to EU economic policies but not to the idea of the EU in general, while it defended the importance of constructing a Europe of hope and solidarity (Newsbeast.gr 2013, n.p.).

In the elections of January 2015, SYRIZA managed to gain a majority of votes through a populist discourse but failed to gain the necessary number of seats in parliament to form a government.⁷ Thus, it decided to cooperate with the newly founded radical right party of Anexartitoi Ellines (ANEL/Independent Greeks) and formed a paradoxical governmental coalition.⁸ SYRIZA continued to express a populist discourse in power (Katsambekis 2019: 21-46). During the first period of the SYRIZA-ANEL governance (January-September 2015), the government began negotiations with the Troika of international institutions (the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund) with the aim of reaching an agreement that would lessen the effects of austerity and neoliberalism. Alexis Tsipras tried to prove that the party wanted to negotiate hard with the country's lenders in contrast to previous Prime Ministers (Papandreou, Papademos and Samaras) who easily accepted the demands of the Troika. It is noteworthy here that Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis defended Greece's EU membership at a meeting with the president

of the Eurogroup, Jeroen Dijsselbloem, while rejecting the government's cooperation with a three-member committee (Troika) (Bbc.com 2015, n.p.). Nevertheless, after some months of harsh negotiations between the two opposing camps, the Greek government left without options (especially after the closure of the banks⁹ and the Greek referendum)¹⁰ and, after the pressures of the EU, accepted a new agreement (third Memorandum). The signing of the new Memorandum led to the split of the radical left party (Alderman and Kitsantonis 2015, n.p.) as well as to new elections (Henley and Nardelli 2015, n.p.). This severe crisis within the left-wing party did not come as a surprise, since its strategic cornerstone had been the abolition of Memorandums. However, in the elections of September 2015, Tsipras managed to win again, forming once more a coalition government with the radical right party of ANEL ("Election Results", n.d.).

The second period of the SYRIZA-ANEL governance (September 2015-2019) was somewhat different.¹¹ Having accepted a new Memorandum agreement, the government's main goal was the improvement of the living conditions of the Greek people through a "parallel programme", one that would oppose the austerity policies that institutions "forced" the country to implement. Its "people-centric" discourse did not change orientation, as SYRIZA continued to dichotomize society between "the people" and "the establishment", arguing that it could still protect "the popular classes" (Avgi.gr 2015, n.p.). Hence, Tsipras' political discourse, performance and agenda in office became more pragmatic than before by rejecting its radical character and constructing a kind of "pragmatic populism". SYRIZA fully accepted the capitalist system and liberal democracy, while it attempted to become a force of political realism. Furthermore, it recognized fiscal discipline and liberal reforms as a necessary tool of governance, created an alliance with some social-democratic actors from the anti-populist spectrum, and entered into a political dialogue with social-democrat academics and politicians through the initiative (platform) of the "Bridge" (Avgi.gr 2019, n.p.). SYRIZA's anti-imperialism and anti-Germanyism had thus been greatly reduced, but its attacks on Europe's neoliberal direction continued to a considerable extent. The left-wing criticism of German hegemony in the EU was not completely extinguished. For example, Stelios Kouloglou, SYRIZA's MEP, has argued that Germany keeps the Eurozone in a "permanent but controlled crisis", securing its "economic and political hegemony" in Europe and pursuing "economic nationalism" (Kouloglou 2017, n.p.). Moreover, SYRIZA continued to present itself as a party that fought to regain the national sovereignty of Greece, while using the concept of "debt colony" in some occasions. For instance, one of SYRIZA's leading politicians and former ministers, Nikos Filis, argued in 2018 that the attempt of regaining national sovereignty for a country (Greece) that remains a "debt colony" is not an easy task (Newpost.gr 2018, n.p.).

Nonetheless, SYRIZA was not an anti-imperialist party anymore, following faithfully the orders of the EU and IMF. Tsipras' harsh attacks on the German government and Chancellor Angela Merkel had come to an end. It

seems that the threat of isolation of small Greece from Europe and the rest of the world (with a possible Grexit) did not allow SYRIZA to continue to be a radical and anti-imperialist party the way it had been in the past. Moreover, SYRIZA maintained very good relations with the US. As Tom Ellis argues,

Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, a once self-proclaimed left-wing radical, gave a warm welcome to then US President Barack Obama in Athens, visited Donald Trump in Washington, and is considered a “darling” in Brussels and all the major European capitals.[...] After four years in power, the attacks of the past on American imperialism and even more so its vulgar insults against its so-called “Merkelist” opponents, are being consigned to the annals of history. (Ellis 2019, n.p.)

Since then, SYRIZA has no longer been a radical left party that envisions the democratic socialist transformation of the country, nor an anti-imperialist party per se. Instead, SYRIZA seems to be a centre-left party that continues to express a strong populist reason and promote social policies as a counterweight to neoliberalism that “was forced” to apply by the institutions. It is almost as if Alexis Tsipras in office attempted to follow in the footsteps of Andreas Papandreou, the historical leader of PASOK, by adopting a more pragmatic political orientation in his policies, discourse and performance.

Conclusion

Following Herzfeld’s notion of “crypto-colonialism”(Herzfeld 2002, 900--01), Greece’s political and economic dependence on the West seems to have directly influenced the rise of a left-wing anti-imperialist/anti-colonialist discourse in the country that has been connected with an inclusionary populism both in the case of Andreas Papandreou and PASOK and Alexis Tsipras and SYRIZA. By contrast, the political forces that advocate an exclusionary populism have not yet managed to rise to power and construct a strong hegemony in the country. However, a nationalist and xenophobic discourse is rather represented by members of the right-wing party of ND, which has returned to power in July 2019 with a neoliberal and anti-populist Prime Minister.

SYRIZA in opposition strongly criticized the Greek and European economic and political establishments through a left-wing patriotic, populist and anti-imperialist discourse. As Stavrakakis and Siomos conclude, “the utilization of anti-colonial repertoires [by SYRIZA] has accompanied the construction of an inclusionary populist discourse, similar to the one characteristic of Latin American populism” (Stavrakakis and Siomos 2016, 18). Nonetheless, SYRIZA in power continued to express a populist discourse that divided society between “the people” and “the establishment”, while gradually reducing its anti-imperialist character. Similar to PASOK in the past, the case of SYRIZA is a case in point that the acceptance of the capitalist system, of liberal institutions

and the existing system of power politics do not leave much room for the development of an anti-imperialist logic in power.

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Notes

- ¹ I equate the concepts of anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism, as they contain the same logic in the left-wing discourse.
- ² POPULISMUS is a research project of the School of Political Sciences (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki) that organized lectures, an international workshop and an international conference about populism and democracy, while it founded an Observatory on Populist Discourse and Democracy. See <http://www.populismus.gr/>.
- ³ The radical and extreme right political parties in Greece use the pejorative term “lathrometanastes” (Greek: λαθρομετανάστες) that means “smuggled immigrants” to negatively characterize the immigrants and refugees who come to the country.
- ⁴ For more on the relationship between inclusionary populism and crypto-colonialism, see Stavrakakis and Siomos 2016, 16-18.
- ⁵ On the history of Synaspismos, see syn.gr.
- ⁶ The strong wave of anti-Germanyism in Greece was, in some occasions, presented with references to the 1940s and Axis Occupation of the country (Lialiouti and Bithymitris 2013).
- ⁷ SYRIZA secured 149 out of 300 seats on January 2015. In Greece, a political party needs to secure 151 seats in parliament to form a majority government.
- ⁸ The cooperation of the two radical parties was justified on the basis of their struggle against neoliberalism and austerity (common narrative).
- ⁹ Yanis Varoufakis accused Brussels and the troika for the closure of the banks (Johnston, Chris and agencies 2015).
- ¹⁰ The Greek referendum took place on 5 July 2015 to decide whether Greece was to accept the bailout proposals by the European Commission (EC), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European Central Bank (ECB). The majority of the Greek people voted in favour of “No” (61%). The referendum appeared to be a form pressure to lenders by the Greek government without achieving its purpose (“Election Results”, n.d.).
- ¹¹ SYRIZA formed again a coalition government with ANEL on September 2015 because it secured 145 out of 300 seats.

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