

## In Search of Alternatives **Greece between European Frustration and Russian Temptation**

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Tensions with the Eurogroup over a solution to the debt crisis have led to a loss of respect for the EU in Greece. As a result, the Greek public debate has increasingly revolved around Russia as an alternative to the “austerity directive” coming from Brussels. The initial efforts of the government of Alexis Tsipras to establish closer links with Moscow have not paid off, however. Crucially, Russia is unable – and unwilling – to offer Greece financial support. But even from a Greek perspective, reversing its integration in the EU and NATO would be difficult to implement. The EU should nonetheless pay careful attention to the discussion about Russia’s influence on Greece, for the EU can only remain attractive to Greece if it renews its promise of prosperity for Greek society.

“Greece belongs to the West.” With this well-known slogan, Konstantinos Karamanlis, former Greek prime minister and president, laid the foundations for the principles of Greek foreign policy, anchoring his country firmly in the West.<sup>1</sup> That was in the 1970s, after the collapse of the military junta. Since then, the European Union has been a central point of reference for Greece and has played a decisive part in the country’s democratic consolidation and modernization. However, the Greek debt crisis that broke out in 2010, the accompanying economic and social upheavals, and the tensions with European creditors over public debt have rocked the country.

The Greek public finds itself facing the uncomfortable questions of whether Athens can stick to European rules and meet European standards. As it does so, long forgotten tensions with Europe are coming to light, stirring up a new debate about Greece’s geopolitical orientation. This was also reflected in the election of the populist left-right coalition of prime minister Alexis Tsipras in January 2015.

While Greece examines its European identity, the topic of Russia’s involvement has also come under scrutiny in the European public sphere. Not only the deteriorating

tone of the negotiations between Greece and its European creditors but also new awareness of how Moscow deploys “information warfare” in an attempt to influence public discussion in EU member states, fuel speculation about whether Greece could possibly become a Trojan horse for promoting Russia’s interests in the EU.<sup>2</sup>

This analysis explores the predominating image of Russia within Greek society and the Greek political parties. To what extent does Moscow offer a genuine political alternative to Greece’s involvement with the EU and NATO? Which role does the “Russia factor” play in the Greek debt crisis? And can Russia really influence Greek politics, even if it means coming into confrontation with EU interests?

### **Greece’s Ambivalent Relationship with the West**

Greece’s ties to the West through the EU and NATO have had a formative influence on the country’s political

culture, constraining and shaping the actions of every Greek government since the overthrow in 1974 of the military junta.<sup>3</sup> Certainly, the EU has been an important point of reference in matters of identity building, foreign affairs, and modernization. Greece's 1981 entry into the European Economic Community smoothed the country's path toward Europe. A more intense phase of Europeanization was ushered in with the prospect of membership in the European Economic and Monetary Union, making Greece a firm supporter of European integration and boosting its image as an integral part of the EU.

Relations with the West have nevertheless remained ambivalent. The part played by the US in the Greek civil war of 1946–49 and Washington's toleration of the 1967–74 junta led to marked anti-American sentiment in Greece, especially on the political left. Moreover, Greek security interests in key matters of Greek foreign policy often differed from those of the country's Western allies.<sup>4</sup> The conflict with Turkey in particular received less attention than Athens would have liked. As a result, Greece has always made a point of emphasizing its independence in important questions of foreign policy, dissociating itself in particular from the US. This can be seen even today in the way Greece imports its foreign political conflicts into EU considerations – for instance by blocking Macedonia's membership candidacy.

Relations with Russia, on the other hand, have remained largely free of major conflicts. The threat posed by the Soviet Union during the Cold War was never as present in the Greek imagination as it was, for example, in Germany and the US. On the contrary, the two nations' anti-German resistance during World War II fostered postwar solidarity in the collective memory of the Greeks, a sentiment that – at least from the point of view of the political left – was reinforced by the Soviet support for the communist side during the Greek civil war.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, Russia traditionally supported Greek interests in the Cypriot conflict, acting as chief advocate on the UN Security Council for the rights of the Greek-speaking Republic of Cyprus.<sup>6</sup>

### Old Friends: Greece, Russia, and the Orthodox Church

The two countries' common cultural and religious heritage, which was shaped by the roots and values of the Orthodox Church and to a certain extent involved defining themselves through a mutual dissociation with the West, has certainly informed the Greek image of Russia and continues to contribute to Greece's positive perception of Moscow. In particular, Greek liberation from Ottoman

rule is closely associated in the collective consciousness with the country's Russian brethren.

On a political level, the common historical background is often deployed to win approval of domestic policies. On his first state visit to Moscow in April 2015, Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras praised the close relations between the two countries and their shared Christian-Orthodox foundations, thus evoking a narrative that the Russian leadership has been drawing on for some time. This narrative posits a bedrock of Orthodox values and views Russia as the greatest Orthodox nation in the world. On the one hand, this account acts as an instrument of foreign political "soft power," which uses gestures of friendship to elevate Russia's status in the world and reinforce its cultural and political influence over neighboring territories. On the other hand, it serves to legitimize Russia's domestic policy and thus to stabilize the "Putin system."<sup>7</sup>

### A By-product of Growing Euroskepticism

Many Greeks tend to view Russia as a player capable of "cushioning" the impact of Euro-Atlantic influence and the sense of being obliged to follow "directives from Brussels." Russia's nationalist foreign policy, with its emphasis on its own sovereignty, meets with sympathy within much of the Greek population. This perception has been reinforced by the social repercussions of the Greek debt crisis at home. At the same time, the EU is suffering a massive loss of respect. Before the outbreak of the debt crisis in fall 2009, 56 percent of Greeks saw the EU in a positive light. By fall 2014, that figure had dropped to 23 percent.<sup>8</sup> The EU is increasingly criticized for its severe austerity measures. In contrast, 65 percent of Greeks had a positive image of Russia that year, in spite of the Ukraine crisis.<sup>9</sup> Thus Russia is often brought into play as an "alternative" in Greek public debate. Traditional conceptions of history are invoked, giving rise to increasing calls for Greece to turn to Russia and to ask Moscow for aid during this difficult period. The current pro-Russian mood is thus a by-product of the Greek population's growing Euroskepticism.

### Cozying up to Moscow

When Alexis Tsipras's left-right coalition was elected in January 2015, Athens stepped up its efforts to forge closer relations with Russia. This led to nervousness in Brussels and the European capitals. On the one hand, negotiations on a lasting solution to the Greek debt crisis were going through a rough patch; Tsipras had come into power with the election pledge to renegotiate credit terms with European lenders and was toying with the possibility of

asking the Russian government for aid instead. On the other hand, given the crisis in Ukraine, suspicions were fuelled that sustainable growth Moscow was showing sympathy for Athens in order to co-opt a veto player within the EU and NATO. This would square with the fact that Russian President Vladimir Putin has in recent years increased his efforts to get close to Euroskeptic forces all over Europe, including the Front National in France and Jobbik in Hungary.<sup>10</sup>

The election of Tsipras as prime minister certainly constituted a major break in Greek politics. For the first time, parties from the margins of the political spectrum – Syriza from the radical left and Anel (Independent Greeks) from the populist right – took on the responsibility of government. While the government leaders of the other EU member states initially reacted with reserve to the election results, President Putin was one of the first to offer his congratulations.

In certain respects, both parties exhibit affinities with Russia, as became apparent in the regular trips to Moscow made by Greek ministers during their first months in office.<sup>11</sup> The strongest force in the Greek parliament, Syriza, had already spoken out in favor of renewing and expanding cooperation with Russia during its time in the opposition. In its party program of 2013, Syriza even rejected Greek NATO membership, calling instead for a multidimensional foreign policy that would permit Greece to maintain bilateral relations independently as a sovereign state.<sup>12</sup> Foreign Minister Nikos Kotzias, for example, proposed that Greece should assume a bridge position between the EU and Russia. He regards Russia as a fundamental element of European security architecture.<sup>13</sup>

In particular, the hardliner faction Left Platform, which in the meantime splintered off from Syriza to protest the third rescue package negotiated by Tsipras, harbors pro-Russian sympathies.<sup>14</sup> These stem from marked Euroskepticism and rejection of Euro-Atlantic institutions, but it is also combined with a certain degree of Soviet nostalgia. In the meantime, the group led by former Minister of Energy Panagiotis Lafazanis has formed its own political party and participated under the name of Popular Unity in the parliamentary elections of September 20, 2015 – failing, however, to reach the 3 percent threshold required to enter parliament.

On the right, Syriza's coalition partner Anel is similarly Russia-friendly. Unlike Syriza and Popular Unity, Anel bases its positive image of Russia on the historical and cultural links of the Christian Orthodox heritage, which it believes makes the two nations natural partners. Anel rejects the concept of multiculturalism and adopts a tough stance on matters of immigration and integration. And

indeed, the party's nationalist-conservative positions have large areas of overlap with the set of values propagated by the Kremlin.

It is worth noting, then, that the coalition partners Syriza and Anel both espouse Euroskeptic positions, albeit with different points of emphasis. Both in opposition and in the first term of government, the two parties repeatedly criticized the austerity measures demanded by Greece's European creditors, and the Troika's lack of transparency, legitimacy, and accountability. In their negotiations with the creditors, both parties invariably stressed their democratic mandate to put an end to the "austerity directive" of Brussels. After years of humiliation, they believed it is time to finally restore Greece's dignity and sovereignty.<sup>15</sup> For them, Russia served as a model of how a state can act in a sovereign and independent manner and oppose the European system.

In addition to Anel and Syriza, two further parties from the extreme margins of the political landscape harbor particular sympathy for Russia: the Greek Communist Party (KKE) and the neo-Nazi party, Golden Dawn.<sup>16</sup> While the Russia-friendly image of the KKE stems largely from ideological affinities with the former Soviet Union, Golden Dawn invokes the religious ties of the Orthodox heritage. With his semi-authoritarian, anti-liberal, neoconservative and nationalist model, Putin offers many points of identification to the party. Golden Dawn has close ties to extreme right parties within Russia and is said to have received financial support from Moscow.<sup>17</sup> In March 2015, the party took part in the "Conservative Forum" in Saint Petersburg, which was organized by Rodina, the nationalist party of Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin. The forum was attended by representatives of radical right parties from all over Europe.

Furthermore, the leaders of Golden Dawn are said to maintain close contacts with the Russian ideologue Alexander Dugin, whose concept of neo-Eurasianism is based on nationalist, anti-liberal, and anti-Western elements, and involves imperial plans for a Russia that would stretch from Asia to Europe and act as a counterbalance to the liberalism of a US-dominated world.<sup>18</sup>

Even though Dugin's direct influence remains extremely limited, elements of his vision are nevertheless reflected in the patterns of reasoning that characterize Putin's foreign policy. In addition, the Moscow leadership helps him to gain the approval of nationalist groups. With the support of leading politicians, Dugin searches the world for allies to his cause and finds them principally among the parties of Europe's extreme right. But Dugin is also said to have had contacts with Syriza. In 2013, former Greek Foreign Minister Kotzias invited him to lecture at

the University of Piraeus, where he himself was a lecturer at the time.

The incumbent minister of defense and Anel party leader, Panos Kammenos, is also said to have been in contact with Dugin through the Russian oligarch Konstantin Malofyev, who allegedly financed pro-Russian separatists in Ukraine.<sup>19</sup>

### Boosts to the Greek Economy?

Despite the ideological proximity between the Greek coalition government and the Kremlin, each side puts its own interests first. Every Greek government since the outbreak of the debt crisis has been forced to put all its political capital into negotiating a lasting solution for conquering the mountain of debt. Greece, whose economic power has shrunk by about a quarter since 2010, has no other alternative if it wants to return to sustainable growth and overcome its social crisis. Thus, within the framework of intensified bilateral relations with Russia, the Tsipras government has campaigned heavily for closer economic and trade relations between the two countries. Russia is already a key trading partner and a significant market for the tourist industry that is such a vital part of the Greek economy.<sup>20</sup> The Tsipras government has angled for Russian investments and better conditions for Greek exports. It has also tried to attain mitigations for Greece in the bans on European food imports that Moscow issued in response to the EU sanctions regime. So far, however, Putin has made no exception for Greece.

Over and above that, Greece's close ties to the Kremlin were to provide benefits in the form of stronger energy cooperation and price reductions. Greece is extremely dependent on Russian oil and gas.<sup>21</sup> In light of its strategically important situation in the eastern Mediterranean, the Greek government planned – and still plans – to establish the country as an energy hub for Russian gas and oil in order to generate additional revenue. Athens and Moscow subsequently agreed on Greece's participation in the Turkish Stream project that is to transport gas through Turkey to Greece. But the viability of this project is still uncertain and depends on an agreement between Russia and Turkey. The failure of other Russia-initiated gas projects, such as the Burgas-Alexandroupolis pipeline or the South Stream project, ought to be warning enough.

Despite its best efforts, the Greek government has failed to attain solid economic success through its endeavors to forge close ties to the Kremlin. For Russian businesses looking to make investments, the political and economic stability of Greece remains a crucial factor, and there is no guarantee of that at present. It is true that

there is Russian interest in Greek state businesses such as the railway network operator TrainOSE, the construction company ROSCO, and the port of Thessaloniki, but for political reasons the Tsipras government has been particularly hesitant on matters of privatization. In addition, the EU sanctions regime against Putin and the Russian counter-sanctions are a considerable hindrance to trade between the two countries. It is true that the Greek government has publicly questioned the effectiveness of EU sanctions against Russia, stating their adverse effects on the Greek economy. However, it has not ultimately made unilateral attempts to split the EU's unified position on the matter of sanctions.

It seems even more unlikely that Russia could become an alternative or additional creditor for Greek public debt amounting to over 300 billion euros.<sup>22</sup> With growing economic and financial crisis of its own, and persistently low oil and gas prices, Moscow's financial room for manoeuvre is too restricted. Even if Russia did have the necessary financial capacity, the question would remain to what extent it would actually be prepared to support Greece – and what Greece could and would provide in return. Supplying financial aid to Greece would bring Putin no palpable benefit.

The example of the Cypriot debt crisis of 2013 should serve as a warning; despite Cyprus's significantly lower financial needs and its close financial ties with Russia, there were evident limits to Moscow's willingness to offer financial support at conditions acceptable to both sides. In fact, it is in Russia's interest that Greece remains a member of the eurozone. Only then can the Kremlin exert any influence over EU decisions – assuming it maintains close relations with Athens, that is. In the meantime, the Kremlin welcomes the disruptive potential to the EU caused by the unstable political and economic situation in Greece, because it contributes to the general weakening of the European Union.

### The Russian Card: A Joker in the Negotiations?

Greece's efforts to forge stronger ties with Russia have had no significant impact on the Greek economy. Far more important for Tsipras was the fact that – thanks to the rapprochement between the two countries – Russia became a crucial element in the Greek negotiation strategy with European creditors. One of the first official acts of the Greek government in January 2015 was to distance itself – under threat of a veto – from a common declaration of new sanctions against Russia by the EU heads of state or government. The Tsipras government may have agreed

to the sanctions in the end, but it succeeded nevertheless in signaling to its European partners that, unlike its predecessors, it was going to negotiate with its European creditors on an equal footing, in spite of the debt crisis – and that it had an alternative to the EU in Russia.

The regular trips to Moscow made by Tsipras and other representatives of his government served to reinforce this impression in the European public sphere. Tsipras managed to shift the intensifying negotiations from financial and political aspects to geopolitical and strategic considerations, thus temporarily strengthening the Greek position.

Unlike in the past, the risk of contagion for other European economies associated with a Greek exit from the eurozone was now deemed manageable. The general consensus in the Eurogroup was that the crisis could be prevented from spreading to other countries thanks to “fire walls” set up by the EU in the form of mechanisms such as the European Security Mechanism and the Banking Union. Instead, the “Grexit” debate in the European capitals focused increasingly on geopolitical risks; as a NATO member, Greece is an important anchor in the southeastern Mediterranean and in the Balkans. Were it to leave the eurozone, the country would descend into social and economic chaos, making it not only politically unpredictable, but also susceptible to Russian influence.

As it turned out, however, Tsipras’s negotiation strategy did not pay off and he had to concede that he could not split the Eurogroup. In fact, his European partners were so outraged by his behavior that for the first time since the outbreak of the debt crisis, the Greek government was completely isolated. The Baltic states, in particular, felt deceived by Greece’s attempt to exploit the sanctions regime for its own purposes and began to adopt a harder political line against the Greeks. For not only did Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania consider their own security to be immediately threatened by the conflict with Russia and the annexation of Crimea; they had themselves implemented extensive reforms and severe cuts in social expenditures since the global financial crisis of 2008–09. Consequently, the intransigence of the European creditors and the pressures from the financial markets forced Tsipras to conduct a U-turn in his policies, ultimately making him to agree to the third rescue package for Greece and to comply to the conditions laid out in it.

### The Greek Debt Crisis as a Welcome Disruption

From a Russian perspective, the Greek debt crisis remains peripheral. Priority is given to consolidating Russian

influence in the Eurasian realm and freezing the Ukraine conflict – as well as more recently entering the geopolitical power play revolving around the Syrian civil war. But the Tsipras government’s clash with the Eurogroup was and still is a welcome opportunity for Putin. As part of his domestic agenda, he can put his own national spin on the Greek debt crisis and the EU’s political, economic, and institutional crisis, choosing to present those crises as signs of the structural weakness of the West.

For Putin, the Greek debt crisis serves as an example of the EU’s lack of transparency and democratic deficit and the consequent alienation of European citizens from politics in Europe. His goal is to make the “decadent” Western democratic model appear as untrustworthy as possible. Russian foreign media such as Russia Today and Sputnik have promoted this narrative in their coverage of the Greek crisis in order to influence European media discourse, although in Greece itself such media only play a tangential role. Moreover, Putin can use the highly symbolic intensification of his relations with the Greek government to show that he is not isolated in the EU and that he remains an unpredictable player, particularly in matters of energy and security policy.

In Greece too, then, as in other European member states, Russia compromises the EU’s consensus-based decision-making processes. To achieve this, it does not necessarily have to be active itself. For disruption to occur, it is enough that the European public suspects Russian influence and, in light of the tenseness of the present situation, begins to grow nervous.

### Greece and the Ukraine Crisis

Alongside the Greek debt crisis, the EU has found itself at loggerheads with Russia since the Maidan protests in Ukraine and Russia’s actions in Crimea and eastern Ukraine. Unlike in other EU member states, there has been little in-depth discussion of the foreign political implications of this conflict in Greek public debate; discourse has been dominated in the past six years by negotiations with European creditors over the debt crisis.

Generally speaking, the Greek attitude to the Ukraine conflict also reflects the by and large positive image of Russia in Greece. The Greeks are more hesitant than other Europeans to openly criticize Russia. According to a survey conducted in June 2014, only 44 percent of Greeks who were questioned agreed with the statement that the EU should continue its economic and political support of Ukraine, even if it meant putting a strain on relations with Russia. This was the lowest percentage of all EU member states where the survey was carried out.<sup>23</sup> Greek

media coverage is for the most part fairly balanced. Strikingly, however, even while criticizing the Russian annexation of Crimea for its breach of international law, it gives lot of space to outlining Russia's position and showing it in a sympathetic perspective. This is surprising because both Turkey's invasion of Cyprus and the Macedonian conflict were key events shaping Greek foreign policy, so that on an international level, territorial integrity is in fact a core aspect of it.<sup>24</sup> Another focus of the media coverage is the negative effects on the Greek economy of the EU sanction regime and Russia's counter-sanctions.<sup>25</sup> As part of the coverage of the Ukraine crisis, the situation of the Greek minority in Ukraine is also a topic of attention.<sup>26</sup>

The Ukraine conflict has also brought out the pro-Russian stance of various Greek parties. This is particularly evident in the patterns of voting in the European parliament: Syriza, the Communist KKE, Anel, and Golden Dawn all voted against the EU's association agreement with Ukraine in 2014 and against a report demanding a critical re-evaluation of EU relations with Russia in 2015.<sup>27</sup>

In their vindication of Russian aggression, these parties are following age-old patterns of reasoning that reflect various aspects of Russia's allure in the Greek political landscape. In a February 2014 statement, for instance (that is, before Syriza took office), the political secretariat of Syriza criticized the EU and the US for encouraging the destabilization of Ukraine and lending direct and indirect support to radical right-wing groups in the Ukrainian "government of national unity." For the most part, then, Syriza regards the Ukraine conflict as a battle between neo- and anti-fascist powers, thus excusing Russia's brutal invasion of the country.

Since coming into power, however, Syriza has considerably toned down its position on the Ukraine conflict. Officially, the Tsipras government condemns the annexation of Crimea, confining itself on a European level to pushing for a policy whose aim is to avoid lasting rivalry and unnecessary confrontation with Russia and to bring about a swift diplomatic solution to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Athens regards a combination of deterrence and involvement – with emphasis on the latter – as the correct EU approach.<sup>28</sup> The Greek threat to revoke the extension of sanctions against Russia may have caused a stir, but in fact the Greek government has so far gone along with all sanctions. This suggests, on the one hand, that Syriza has invested all of its political capital in the negotiations with the Eurogroup and cannot or will not put much emphasis on European foreign policy; on the other hand, it also shows that even Syriza is constrained by the straitjacket of its Euro-Atlantic connection.

The right side of the political spectrum – principally the Golden Dawn party – justifies Russia's role in the Ukraine crisis by seeing it as a response to the US's active invasion of the Russian sphere of influence. In this way, it is not Russia that is perceived as the aggressor, but the US and the EU. The Christian Orthodox aspect also plays a part in the interpretation of the conflict; Anel's party leader, Panos Kammenos, declared his support for the Russian government because, in Anel's view, it offered protection to the Greek minority in Crimea.

## It's up to the EU

The controversial discussion in the European public sphere of Russia's possible influence in Greece is closely linked to developments in the debt crisis. But despite all the rhetoric and the symbolic gestures, the Greek government's efforts to galvanize relations with Russia have not paid off. The Kremlin cannot and will not play a supportive role, neither economically, nor as a wild card in the negotiations with the European creditors. It is not in Moscow's interest that Greece turns away from the EU by exiting the eurozone; that would only leave the Kremlin without an avenue to influence EU decision making.

Moreover, fears of a Greek split from the EU and NATO have not materialized. This is because it is hard to give up the frame of reference provided by this foreign policy connection; furthermore, since being in office, the Tsipras government has had to invest its entire political capital in negotiations with the Eurogroup. In the future, too, every Greek government will focus exclusively on finding a lasting solution to the public debt with its European creditors, so that an actual reversal in Greek EU and NATO integration is hard to imagine.

Above and beyond that, the Greek party system is in a constant state of flux, and parties regularly readjust their ideological orientation to incorporate new divisions within society. This is best illustrated by the Tsipras government's political U-turn in the negotiations with its European creditors. It will be hard for Moscow to find stable and reliable partners in Greece.

The EU must nevertheless take serious note of the fact that the Greek public and the Tsipras government have toyed with the idea of approaching Moscow. It is true that the Russian model is only of limited appeal, but it does reveal the democratic deficit, the inefficiency, and the credibility crisis of the EU. Now it is up to the EU to once again become the sole point of attraction for Greece by working on its image and redressing its political deficits. Given the situation in Greece, the EU will only succeed if it can renew its promise of prosperity and breathe new life into the principle of solidarity. This calls for a last-

ing solution to Greek public debts and a comprehensive investment and growth strategy. Only when these have been found will it be possible to offer prospects to Greek society again – especially to the younger generation. After the negative escalation of negotiations between Athens and the Eurogroup and the verbal gaffes made on both sides, it is time for some new objectivity. In both cases, Germany in particular has a crucial role to play.

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## Notes

- 1 Here I use the term "the West" in a historical context to refer to the EU-US cooperation, although I am aware that, given the increasing disparity between the two sides, it no longer really represents the post-Cold War reality. The term hardly features in Greece's current political debate.
- 2 For an initial discussion of Russia's "information warfare," see Stefan Meister and Jana Puglierin, "Perception and Exploitation: Russia's Non-Military Influence in Europe," DGAPkompakt 10 (October 2015) <<https://dgap.org/en/article/getFullPDF/27185>> (accessed January 18, 2016).
- 3 See Spyros Economides, "The Relevance of 'Europe' to Greek Foreign Policy," in *Europe in Modern Greek History*, ed. Kevin Featherstone (London, 2014), pp. 61–76.
- 4 Julian Rappold, "France, Germany, Greece: The Potential for Cooperation Despite the Crisis," in *Opening up the Franco-German Dialogue: How Dialogues Can Enhance European Integration*, ed. Claire Demesmay and Hans Stark, DGAP-analyse 6 (July 2015), pp. 7–9 <<https://dgap.org/en/article/getFullPDF/26834>> (accessed January 18, 2016).
- 5 The political right, which enjoyed a majority in Greek society for many years, long regarded Soviet support in the civil war as part of a communist threat.
- 6 Theocharis Grigoriadis and Vlantios Iordanis, "Greek Russian Relations I: Foreign Policy and Diplomacy," ELIAMEP Working Paper 54, Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (2014) <[http://www.eliamep.gr/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/54\\_2014\\_WORKING-PAPER-Theocharis-Grigoriadis.pdf](http://www.eliamep.gr/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/54_2014_WORKING-PAPER-Theocharis-Grigoriadis.pdf)> (accessed January 18, 2016).
- 7 See Nicolai N. Petro, "Russia's Orthodox Soft Power," Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs, March 23, 2015 <[http://www.carnegiecouncil.org/publications/articles\\_papers\\_reports/727](http://www.carnegiecouncil.org/publications/articles_papers_reports/727)> (accessed January 18, 2016).
- 8 Only 2 percent of the Greeks surveyed in fall 2014 had a very positive image of the EU; 21 percent had a fairly positive image; 32 percent were indifferent. At the other end of the scale, 28 percent perceived the EU in a fairly negative light and 16 percent in a very negative light. See European Commission, "Annex" to Standard Eurobarometer 82, Autumn 2014 <<http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/PublicOpinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/STANDARD/surveyKy/2041>> (accessed January 18, 2016). The latest Eurobarometer of Autumn 2015 shows that the image of the EU has deteriorated further: Only one percent had a very positive image of the EU; 21 percent had a fairly positive image; 40 percent were indifferent. At the other end of the scale, 26 percent perceived the EU in a fairly negative light and 12 percent in a very negative light. See European Commission, "Annex" to Standard Eurobarometer 84, Autumn 2015 <<http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/PublicOpinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/STANDARD/surveyKy/2098>> (accessed January 18, 2016).
- 9 See German Marshall Fund for the United States, "Transatlantic Trends: Country Profile: Greece" <<http://trends.gmfus.org/files/2014/09/Greece.pdf>> (accessed January 18, 2016).
- 10 See Antonis Klapsis, "An Unholy Alliance: The European Far Right and Putin's Russia," Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies Research Paper (May 2015) <<http://www.martenscentre.eu/sites/default/files/publication-files/far-right-political-parties-in-europe-and-putins-russia.pdf>> (accessed January 18, 2016); "The Russian Connection: The Spread of Pro-Russian Policies on the European Far-Right," Analysis, Political Capital Research and Consulting Institute, Budapest (March 14, 2014) <[http://www.riskandforecast.com/useruploads/files/pc\\_flash\\_report\\_russian\\_connection.pdf](http://www.riskandforecast.com/useruploads/files/pc_flash_report_russian_connection.pdf)> (accessed January 18, 2016).
- 11 Under the Tsipras government, a series of Greco-Russian government consultations took place between January and August 2015. Tsipras and Putin twice held talks (on April 8 in Moscow and on June 6 in Saint Petersburg); Foreign Minister Nikos Kotzias met his Russian counterpart, Sergey Lavrov, on February 11, and Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu met his Greek counterpart, Panos Komenos, on April 15. Environment and Energy Minister Panayiotis Lafazanis made two trips to Moscow to talk with Gazprom chairman Alexei Miller and Russian Minister of Energy Alexander Novak.
- 12 The concept of multidimensional foreign policy is not a new one in the Greek debate. The former conservative Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis used it in 2004–09 to refer to his rapprochement with Russia. See "The Political Resolution of the First Congress of SYRIZA" July 2013 <<http://www.syriza.gr/article/id/53894/The-political-resolution-of-the-1st-congress-of-SYRIZA.html#.Vdw5B5feLEs>> (accessed January 18, 2016).
- 13 See Giorgos Christides, "Tsipras setzt auf Russland," Spiegel Online, January 28, 2015 <<http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/griechenland-will-veto-gegen-russland-sanktionen-einlegen-1015487.html>> (accessed January 18, 2016).
- 14 The "Left Platform" and its leader, former environment and energy minister Panayiotis Lafazanis, stood as a new party called Popular Front in the early parliamentary elections on September 20, 2015.
- 15 See Alexis Tsipras, "Introductory Speech of the President of the Parliamentary Group of SYRIZA," First Congress of SYRIZA, July 2013 <<http://www.syriza.gr/article/id/54588/Introductory-speech-of-the-President-of-the-Parliamentary-Group-of-SYRIZA-Alexis-Tsipras-at-the-1st-Congress-of-SYRIZA.html#.VdseQpfeLEs>> (accessed January 18, 2016).

- 16 The KKE received 5.4 percent of the votes in the parliamentary elections of January 2015; Golden Dawn received 6.2 percent.
- 17 See Mitchell A. Orenstein, "Putin's Western Allies: Why Europe's Far Right is on the Kremlin's Side," *Foreign Affairs*, March 25, 2014 <<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-03-25/putins-western-allies>> (accessed January 18, 2016); Sofia Tipaldou, "The Dawning of Europe and Eurasia? The Greek Golden Dawn and its International Links," in *Eurasianism and the European Far Right*, ed. Marlène Laruelle (New York et al., 2015), pp. 193–222.
- 18 Klapsis, "An Unholy Alliance," 2015 (see note 10); Anton Shekhovtsov, "Putin's Brain?" *New Eastern Europe* 4/XIII (2014) <<http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2014-09-12-shekhovtsov-en.html>> (accessed January 18, 2016).
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