

PASOK & KKE: back to the future (?)

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In this note we will try to document the performance of two parties, not necessarily in comparison with each other, but mainly in comparison with their own past performance. These parties are the social-democratic Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) and the Communist Party of Greece (KKE). The parties have been selected, on the one hand, because of the increase in their share of the vote in the recent parliamentary elections - an increase that is also moderately observed in the local elections - and, on the other hand, because of the parallel trends that can be observed, in the sense of a return to the electoral performance of their recent past. In order to demonstrate their re-emergence or, in other words, their comeback, we are going to analyse an electoral-political cycle that spans almost a decade, from the regional elections of 2014 to those of 2023.

As far as PASOK is concerned, in the 2014 local elections it managed to achieve three important victories in some of the country's largest municipalities (Athens, Thessaloniki, Piraeus) with candidates who were either directly related/supported by the party from the previous local elections in which they had won (Athens: Kaminis and Thessaloniki: Boutaris) or had its subtle support for the first time (Piraeus: Moralis). In 2019, of the three municipalities, PASOK and the broader centre-left forces managed to only retain Piraeus, as in the other two cases a mayor with a clear centre-right/right dynamic was elected, while PASOK-backed candidates did not even manage to reach the second round (Athens: Geroulanos, Thessaloniki: Vougias). Thus, in 2023, candidates supported by PASOK (Dukas) or with a PASOK past (Angeloudis) - with SYRIZA's support in the second round - won the municipalities of Athens and Thessaloniki respectively against candidates who had the direct support of New Democracy.¹

Apart from their dominance in the three municipalities, another example of PASOK's return to local government is the victories achieved by its members with long parliamentary and/or ministerial tenures, such as Kegeoglou in the municipality of Minoa Pediados, Aedonis in the municipality of Pallini and Arapoglou in the municipality of Kalamaria. All three newly elected mayors were widely known and, as already mentioned, associated with PASOK until recently.

The re-election of both Daniilides in the municipality of Neapolis-Sykeon (the eight victory in a row) and Arnaoutakis in the regional unit of Crete (the fourth victory in a row) can also be seen as a factor demonstrating PASOK's stable links with the local communities.²

A similar historical walk-through will be carried out for the KKE in order to demonstrate its dynamism and, at the same time, its parallel course with PASOK up to the 2023 elections.

¹ Moralis also won Piraeus, but this time New Democracy supported also him.

² Both of them can be considered historical members of the party.

In the municipal elections that took place on 18 and 25 May 2014, the KKE managed to win 5 municipalities through the party formation of Laiki Syspeirosi (Λαϊκή Συσπείρωση). The party elected mayors in the following cities: Patras, Petroupoli, Haidari and the municipality of the island Ikaria. The 5th victory for Laiki Syspeirosi came a few months later in the municipality of Kaisariani where the second round of elections was held again.³ The fact that the pro-KKE municipal formations had won these municipalities was considered, both by the party and by political analysts, a significant victory for KKE.

However, in the next local elections (May 2019), the party's electoral formations recorded significant losses. Specifically, the KKE-supported formations failed to be re-elected in the following municipal units: Ikaria, Kaisariani, Haidari and Petroupoli. The only victory achieved by the KKE was in the municipality of Patras with the re-election of mayor Peletidis, who managed to increase his percentage but not the absolute number of votes he received.

In the recent local elections, KKE recorded an impressive result in terms of the number of municipalities it won. Candidates supported by the party managed not only to return to the standards of the 2014 elections by winning the five municipalities (Patras, Petroupoli, Haidari, Ikaria, Kaisariani) that they had previously won, but to also increase the party's influence by one more municipality, namely the municipality of Tirnavos.

To conclude our note on the KKE, it is worth noting some semantic and substantive elements regarding the 2023 local elections.

Firstly, that the same candidates who won the municipalities of Petroupoli, Chaidari and Kaisariani in 2014 and 2023 are the same candidates who lost in 2019. We can therefore say that they also made a personal comeback or, in the same abstract way, that we had an electoral reconstruction in these municipalities.

Secondly, the victory - for the first time - in the municipality of Tyrnavos (together with the other victories mentioned above) confirms the increased influence of KKE, which was also recorded in the double parliamentary elections of 2023.

Thirdly, the KKE is on the rise in the Attica region. Its rise has already been recorded in the elections for the Greek Parliament,⁴ but it has also been confirmed in the regional elections. More specifically, focusing on the electoral geography of this particular region (the most populous in Greece), the accompaniment of Laiki Syspeirosi recorded an increase of almost 41,000 votes compared to 2019 (from 132,066 to 173,043) or 5.59% (from 8.28% to 13.87%), giving it - as in the parliamentary elections - the 3rd place against PASOK in Attica regional elections.

Through the results and data that we have highlighted, we believe that the parallel lives of the two parties in recent years have been sufficiently demonstrated. It seems that in party competition, even if the starting point and the ultimate goal are diverging, paths can at times be quite similar.

³ The KKE candidate had failed to make it to the second round by one vote initially, but according to a court decision he finally made it to the second round, which took place on 30 November 2014, which he won.

⁴ KKE and its strengthening in the Attica region, Thanassis Dimakas at Tsagkroni, V. (2023). GPSG Pamphlet No 7: first thoughts on the 21 May 2023 election in Greece. Gpsg Pamphlet, (7). Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3630037>.

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