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# Leadership election between crisis and innovation in Greek party politics

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## ABSTRACT

Among political institutions, there is no doubt that political parties have dominated the political and social life during the 3rd Greek Republic. Even though many scholars have argued that parties constitute strong organizations that have invaded the state and the society, we believe that, in terms of organization, they constitute weak structures ruled by strong leaders. We will argue that leadership elections constitute sensitive moments generating crises in the two major political parties, PASOK and New Democracy, which are even more intense once leadership election denotes a moment of innovation. Our main hypothesis is that when leadership election is marked by an innovative process, which has been extraordinarily introduced, it makes allowances for maneuver, rendering the crisis inevitable. This is certainly related to the low level of institutionalization and the predominance of the leaders or certain party actors *vis-à-vis* the party structures. In that case, the intra-party debate focuses mainly on the rules that should be followed and less on the candidates' programs. That said, the context and the intra-party power correlations play a crucial role in the rules that prevail. The constant change in the rules of the game causes new crises, which the party hardly overcomes once the new leader imposes his authority on the organization. Because the political actor is always stronger than the institution, the old and new structures are weak, which re-generates the crisis.

## WORK IN PROGRESS.

Ever since the transition to democracy in 1974, parties have renewed the political scene, contributed to the consolidation of democracy and proved their ability to survive and overcome political crises (Lyrantzis 2005). Their central role in the functioning of the state, organizing the public space, aggregating social demands, socializing the citizens, has been an uncontroversial issue among political scientists (Voulgaris 2001). The quick subordination of the state machinery by the two major political parties (Sotiropoulos 1996) is said to have gradually turned statism to a major ideology, culture and practice in politics and public life. Parties have used the state resources in order to satisfy their political clientele, reinforce party loyalty, limit political competition and ensure their own electoral success. Many terms have been employed to describe the dominance of political parties, among which party democracy (Pappas 1999), cartelization (Vernardakis 2011), partitocracy (Kontogiorgis 2012) and tribe-parties (Lygeros 2011) constitute only a few. Since the beginning of the current economic crisis, the strong state-party linkages have been interpreted as signs of the omnipotence of political parties and certainly pointed as one of its several culprits, favoring patronage (Pappas & Assimakopoulou forthcoming), corruption (Lygeros 2011), and impeding a normal development of the economic private sector (Doxiadis 2010).

Although this explanation is all the more gaining ground in the current public debate, this paper focuses on one of the unpopular and least debated aspects of Greek political parties, namely their organizational dimension. We believe that, in terms of organization, parties constitute weak structures ruled by strong leaders and this is mainly due to their genetic models and imperfect institutionalization. We will focus on the moments of leadership election of the two most important political parties, in order to show that all the more they have constituted a moment of innovation, which generates crises.

Our main hypothesis is that when leadership election is marked by an innovative process, extraordinarily introduced, a crisis is highly likely to be generated. This is related to the low level of institutionalization and the predominance of the leaders or certain party actors *vis-à-vis* the party structures. In that case, the intra-party debate focuses mainly on the rules that should be followed and less on the candidates' programs. That said, the context and the intra-party power correlations play a crucial role in the rules that prevail. The constant change in the rules of the game causes new crises, which the party overcomes once the new leader imposes his authority on the organization. Because, in such cases, the political actor is stronger than the institution, the old and new structures are weak, which re-generates the crisis.

Candidate selection in general, as well as leadership selection in particular constitute one of the most important chapters in politics, since selection methods have significant consequences not only for aspects of intra-party life – like the party’s physiognomy, articulation of ends and strategy - but also for central aspects of democracy, such as participation, representation, competition and responsiveness. (Hazan & Rahat 2006: 109-121). Formal rules concerning, among others, leadership selection are a zone of uncertainty<sup>1</sup>, the control of which is decisive for internal power games. “To establish formal rules is to mold the “playing field” and to choose the terrain upon which confrontations, negotiations, and power games with other organizational actors will take place... He who can interpret the rules reinforces his position *vis-à-vis* the other organizational actors” (Panebianco 1988:33-36). In addition, controlling the rules allows one to passively tolerate deviations from them. “In every organization there are latent rules that are not observed due to a tacit agreement, identified by Downs as “the institutionalization of deviation from the written norms”” (Panebianco 1988). The establishing of rules, the manipulation of their interpretation and their enforcement are therefore zones of uncertainty, of organizational unpredictability, whose control is another decisive resource in power relations (Panebianco 1988:33-36).

To our mind, the study of candidate selection should be explored through the prism of the institutionalization of political parties. According to Panebianco, institutionalization refers to the way the organization solidifies, meaning the process “by which it slowly loses its character as a tool: it becomes valuable in and of itself, and its goals become inseparable and indistinguishable from it. In this way, its preservation and survival become a goal for a great number of its supporters” (Panebianco 1988: 53). For this to happen, Panebianco singles out two criteria: the degree of autonomy *vis-à-vis* its environment and the degree of internal *systemness* or interdependence of different sectors. We are to explore the change in the rules of leadership election in the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) and New Democracy (ND), focusing our analysis not just on the formal rules and procedures, but also on the dynamics produced among intra-party actors and internal groups before and after the transformation rules. Throughout our analysis, we will explore the procedures taking into account the two criteria of institutionalization.

Shortly after the transition to democracy, Konstantinos Karamanlis founded ND, which ever since has remained the standard bearer of liberal conservatism in Greece. The impressive 54.3 per cent of the national vote received by the party in the first democratic election in November 1974 associated the first important years of the party institutionalization with the party in public office. No matter how several initiatives in terms of party assembling have

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<sup>1</sup> According to Panebianco (1988: 33-36), there are mainly six activities, which constitute the zones of uncertainty: competency, environmental relations management, internal communication, formal rules, organizational financing and recruitment.

been organized<sup>2</sup>, throughout the 1970s the party organization remained fluid and insignificant, with practically no intermediate or peripheral associations and a rather personalized system of decision making following the top-down practice of the pre-junta parties (Vamvakas & Panagiotopoulos 2010: 357-360). ND would remain in power for the next seven years, during which it completed the consolidation of democracy and the accession of the country into the European Community.

<b>Election Year</b>	<b>Candidates</b>	<b>Elected Leader</b>	<b>Selectorate</b>	<b>Level of factionalism</b>	<b>Splits</b>
1980	Averoff Rallis	Rallis	parliamentary group	medium	no
1981	Averoff Boutos Stefanopoulos	Averoff	parliamentary group	medium	no
1984	Mitsotakis Stefanopoulos	Mitsotakis	parliamentary group	high	no
1985	Mitsotakis	Mitsotakis	parliamentary group	high	Stefanopoulos (Democratic Renewal)
1993	Evert Varvitsiotis	Evert	Selected party agency	medium	no
1996	Evert Souflias	Evert	Selected party agency	high	no
1997	Evert Karamanlis Polydoras Souflias	Karamanlis	Party congress	high	Manos & Souflias
2009	Bakoyanni Psomiadis Samaras	Samaras	party rank-and-file & sympathizers	high	Bakoyanni (Democratic Coalition)

Table 1. *Leadership election in ND, 1980-2009.*

<sup>2</sup> Pre-congress at Chalkidiki (May 1977), first party congress at Chalkidiki (May 1979), seven regional congresses (May 1979-May 1980).

The first leadership election in ND took place in May 1980. Karamanlis was elected head of state, and the filling of his positions of prime minister and party leader was decided after an election among the party parliamentary group. The competition between Averoff and Rallis ended with a victory of the latter by 50.2 per cent (88 votes) against 48 per cent (84 votes) won by his opponent. However limited the *selectorate* might have been, this procedure constitutes a radical innovation in the history of Greek conservative parties. Despite being a moderate liberal politician, Rallis did not restrain the electoral decline of ND in the election of 1981, which accelerated the next leadership election. He was replaced only a year and a half after his election by his opponent Averoff, a staunch right-winger, following the same procedure of nomination after a vote by the parliamentary group<sup>3</sup>. Averoff marked significant progress in reinforcing the party's organizational base towards the mass party model<sup>4</sup> but led ND to ultra-conservative positions.

The ideological blind alley with PASOK led to two consecutive electoral defeats and ultimately the third leadership election, through an intense internal dispute between the neo-liberal Mitsotakis and the moderate conservative Stefanopoulos. The election of Mitsotakis with 70 votes (63 per cent) against 41 (37 per cent) won by Stefanopoulos marked the neoliberal turn of ND and culminated the polarized competition between the two major parties (Kalyvas 1997; Pappas 2009) that was to stay put until the two arch-enemies since pre-dictatorship years, Papandreou and Mitsotakis, would resign from politics in the mid-1990s. In the midst of internal factionalism and dissensions due to the fourth consecutive electoral defeat in 1985, Mitsotakis was re-elected as a leader in August 1985, by a parliamentary vote contested by Stefanopoulos. Mitsotakis' victory leads to the first serious split of the party related to leadership election<sup>5</sup>. Followed by nine deputies, Stefanopoulos forms a small personalized, conservative party named Democratic Renewal (DIANA), which, nonetheless, decisively contributed to the ascension of ND to power about five years later. During the second party congress in 1986, which reinforces the mass party physiognomy, Mitsotakis broadens the inclusiveness of the *selectorate* by introducing the leadership election through a selected party agency in the party statutes. Thus, Mitsotakis's departure, after the

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<sup>3</sup> Averoff received 60.4 per cent (67 votes) vis-à-vis Stefanopoulos who gained 28.8 per cent (32 votes) and Boutos 10.8 per cent (12 votes).

<sup>4</sup> Party organizations, bureaucracy and press were created; an intensive party life among the youth and branch organizations in labor spaces, as well as voluntary activities took place in order to assert the party penetration in all levels of social life. Party development becomes evident through evolution in membership rate: from 100,000 members in 1981 it increases to 500,000 in 1985.

<sup>5</sup> The first official exit strategy took place in 1977, when the extreme right-wingers split and formed their own party, National Front (EP). Shortly before the 1981 elections Rallis reluctantly reabsorbed the EP renegades into ND. In July 1985 the chief deputy of the European parliamentary group of ND and leadership candidate in 1981, Boutos, left the party as well.

short interlude in power from 1990 to 1993, gives way to the first enlarged intra-party vote procedure.

The vote was cast between Evert and Varvitsiotis, which was held before a special agency of 183 delegates, being constituted of MPs, European MPs and one delegate of each party organization per electoral region. Nevertheless, the parliamentary majority outnumbered the representatives of the party base by a 2:1 ratio (Pappas & Dinas 2006: 487). Even though Evert was elected with 77.5 per cent (141 votes)<sup>6</sup>, his mandate was marked by the deepening of internal polarization and the decline of the mass organization, which had, in the previous period, managed to raise membership to 420, 000 members in 1994, thus making ND the largest party among its European conservative counterparts (Kalyvas 1998: 99). The extensive internal rivalries under Evert took the form of ideological fight of the popular right over neo-liberalism. The party's defeat in the 1996 national ballot led to the sixth leadership election by a limited number of delegates. Evert competed with Souflias and won by 54 per cent over 44<sup>7</sup>, but dispute over his leadership was so extended that, within a year, he was practically overthrown by the party congress.

Against all previous practices, the party congress decided to elect a new leader by a body of 5, 000 delegates<sup>8</sup>. The nephew of the party founder, Kostas Karamanlis, was elected on a two-round ballot<sup>9</sup>, in which the party deputies were but a minority<sup>10</sup>. Shortly after his victory, Karamanlis expelled several prominent cadres from the party - among them being Souflias, the defeated contender in the recent party leadership contest. Under the mandate of Karamanlis, ND developed a new, centripetal strategy (the so-called middle-ground thesis), redesigned its organizational structure, and applied novel electoral tactics which paid-off electorally ND with several electoral victories from 1998 to 2007<sup>11</sup> (Pappas & Dinas 2006: 480-491). The grave electoral defeat of 2009 led to Karamanlis' resignation and gave way to the eighth leadership election. As if to verify Duverger's "contagion from the left" hypothesis, ND adopted an inclusive procedure, mainly by according the right to vote to the party rank-and-file and sympathizers, with the only presupposition of registering as party

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<sup>6</sup> Varvitsiotis hardly managed to get hardly 20.3 per cent (37 votes).

<sup>7</sup> Among extreme polarization, Evert got 83 votes, and Souflias 84.

<sup>8</sup> The congress increased the proportion of deputies required to challenge the party leader from one-third to 50 per cent of their total number and suspended the past ND leaders' prerogative to participate *ex officio* in the highest party organs.

<sup>9</sup> In the first round Karamanlis gets 40.7 per cent, Souflias 30.52 per cent, Evert 25.3 per cent and Polydoros 3.4 per cent. In the second round, Karamanlis wins by a landslide (69.2 per cent over 30.8 won by Souflias).

<sup>10</sup> Over 35 per cent of delegates participate as honorary members: MPs and elected representatives since 1974, ex-members of the central committee and the parliamentary group, ex-ministers, ex-vice ministers, and secretary generals of the party's governments.

<sup>11</sup> Victory in the European parliament elections of 1999 and 2004, in the parliamentary elections of 2004 and 2007 and a good performance in the local and regional elections of 1998, 2002, 2006.

members. The decision was taken through an extraordinary party congress in November 2009, during which much intense debate led to the revision of party statutes regarding the issue. 782, 136 voted, choosing among Bakoyanni, Psomiadis and Samaras the last one winning by 50.06 percent of the vote<sup>12</sup> and thus being declared as the party leader. Bakoyanni had criticized the inclusive procedure even before it was institutionalized by the extraordinary congress, which led to her being expelled in May 2010, even though the conventional reason was a vote in favor of the Greek bailout, against the official party line at that moment. Ironically, Bakoyanni was expelled from the party by Samaras, who back in 1993, as a Minister of Foreign Affairs, led her father's government (Mitsotakis) to resignation in order to create a new party called Political Spring (POLAN).

What one can observe throughout the analysis of leadership election procedures in ND is that although internal factionalism and rivalries are present all over the period being explored, the party manages to preserve unity either when election takes place through a procedure already established and tested (1981, 1984, 1996), or when the changing of the intra-party rules takes place during regular and events anticipated by the procedures (1980, 1993). On the contrary, each time a procedure is extraordinarily decided upon by the leader and/or by the dominant coalition (1986, 1997, 2009) and, furthermore, firstly introduced (1997, 2009), it is likely to generate crises. They become evident by the debate opened most often by the leader's opponent or by ambitious cadres wishing to present their candidacy. Contesters question the pertinence and the legitimacy of changing the rules, or propose other rules, favorable to the characteristics of their allies and followers. In that case, the power of the new leader is affirmed through party splitting or member expelling.

Founded by Andreas Papandreou in 1974, PASOK soon managed to consolidate its position in the party system, by establishing itself as an entirely new party of a socialist identity, indulging novel ideas (Lyrintzis 2005). Throughout the 1970s, it gradually dominated the left bloc of the political spectrum, which had historically been identified with the Communist Party (KKE), mainly by incorporating into its program and discourse some of the main ideas and demands of the communist left (Rori 2008). PASOK managed to stay in power almost consecutively until 2004, with a short interlude in 1989 and another one from 1990 to 1993. This formidable electoral performance cannot be interpreted without acknowledging the charismatic leadership of its founder, who, from the very early stages, succeeded in eliminating the intra-party opposition and in postponing the ND's political project by investing in polarization (Pappas 2009). PASOK's historic victory in October 1981 was followed by a gradual de-radicalization in policy-making, as well as abandonment of anti-European and anti-American stance (Rori 2002). Nonetheless, the party managed to

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<sup>12</sup> Bakoyanni got 39.72 per cent and Psomiadis 10.22 per cent.

remain popular thanks to a populist rhetoric (Lyrintzis 1987; Pantazopoulos 2011), patronage politics (Pappas & Assimakopoulou forthcoming) and by advancing a new version of the old cleavage between the right wing and the anti-right wing forces during the 1980s (Moschonas 2000).

<b>Election Year</b>	<b>Candidates</b>	<b>Elected Leader</b>	<b>Selectorate</b>	<b>Level of factionalism</b>	<b>Splits</b>
1984	A. Papandreou	A.Papandreou	party congress (nomination)	Low	no
1990	A. Papandreou	A.Papandreou	party congress (nomination)	Low	no
1994	A. Papandreou	A.Papandreou	party congress (nomination)	Low	no
1996	Arsenis Charalampopoulos Simitis Tsochatzopoulos	Simitis	parliamentary group  (vote for head of parliamentary group)	high	no
1996	Simitis Tsochantzopoulos	Simitis	party congress  (vote)	high	No
1999	Simitis	Simitis	party congress  (vote)	medium	No
2001	Simitis	Simitis	party congress  (vote)	high	No
2004	G. Papandreou	G.Papandreou	rank-and-file & sympathizers	Low	no
2007	G. Papandreou Skandalidis	G.Papandreou	rank-and-file & sympathizers	high	no

	Venizelos				
2012	Venizelos	Venizelos	rank-and-file & sympathizers	high	Katseli - Kastanidis  (Social Agreement)

Table 2. Leadership election in PASOK, 1984-2012.

As a charismatic party (Pappas 2009), PASOK remained weak in terms of organization. Instead of democratic procedures, it soon developed a structure of bureaucratic centralism, which becomes obvious if one looks closer to the intra-party leadership elections. The first congress takes place no sooner than ten years after the party foundation, when Papandreou is re-elected through a unanimous party vote. However in principle more democratic and inclusive than the first leadership elections of ND, Papandreou's control over the party goes uncontested. Practically all the elections until his retirement follow the same pattern, since there is no competitive vote but a nomination by the party congress, taking the form of a unanimous vote. The unexpected event of Papandreou's hospitalization in January 1996 forces the parliamentary group to urgently vote for a Prime Minister, according to the Constitution but against the will of the dominant coalition, who praised for a vote by the party congress.

Following the intense competition and polarization among four candidates, Costas Simitis is elected<sup>13</sup> through a body of 167 deputies, a fact that gives him a competitive advantage in view of the fourth party congress six months later. The first competitive and perhaps most polarized intra-party vote in the history of the party takes place juxtaposing a moderate, reformist and pro-European candidate (Simitis) to a strongman of the party apparatus, representing the traditional party theses (Tsochatzopoulos). Even though there were significant differences in terms of political priorities, values and physiognomy between the two candidates, the vote was cast neither according to their discourse or ideology, nor following the precedent factional dynamics. Whilst Tsochatzopoulos, backed up by the party apparatus, proposed a dual model of leadership, Simitis placed the *selectorate* before a dilemma claiming that either he would be leader of the party and Prime Minister, or he would resign and the party would lose power. Simitis won this zero sum game<sup>14</sup>, but constant

<sup>13</sup> In the first round Simitis and Tsochatzopoulos gain 53 votes each (31.7 per cent), whereas Arsenis takes 50 votes (29.9 per cent) and Charalampopoulos 11 votes (6.6 per cent). In the second round Simitis comes first with 86 votes (51.5 per cent) whilst Tsochatzopoulos gets 75 (44.9 per cent).

<sup>14</sup> Simitis is elected with 53.8 per cent, whereas his opponent gets 45 per cent.

factionalism and internal opposition marked his mandate. This became manifest at the next two congresses, when a part of the delegates refused to back up his candidacy<sup>15</sup>.

From 1996 to 2004 the country marked significant progress in Europeanization, fiscal consolidation, building infrastructure, and establishing procedures of transparency in the public sector. Despite the achievements of the party in public office, Simitis was all the more openly contested by the party in central office and significant party actors (unions, intra-party factions), in a way that canceled the scheduled reforms. He, therefore, decided to resign from the party presidency shortly before the 2004 national ballot by proposing the candidacy of Giorgos Papandreou, a son of the party's founder. Since Papandreou was not competed by any candidate, this election would have been almost of no interest, if it had not been marked by an innovative procedure, maximizing the inclusiveness of the *selectorate* to almost all citizens wishing to participate. The unprecedented participation<sup>16</sup> altered the negative ambiance that had doomed the socialist camp in the previous period. It failed, nonetheless, to convince the electorate regarding the innovative leader's project, as – among other reasons - a series of mistakes during the campaign cancelled the positive connotations of the radical promises for party transformation (Rori 2008).

The lack of competition and the campaign context stimulated tolerance *vis-à-vis* the extraordinary change in the leadership election rules, even though no debate took place in the party organs in 2004. Contest and dispute over the rules of the game would be suspended until the next occasion. Hence, after four consecutive electoral defeats, Papandreou was seriously distrusted in the aftermath of the 2007 ballot. Doubt over his capability to bring the party to power opened the procedure of a leadership change, where the innovation of 2004 would be applied for the first time in substance - in a competitive base, that is. Through extreme polarization and factionalism over the rules and the rituals of the procedure, the open leadership election was consolidated by the participation of 769, 156 of citizens. Among Papandreou, Skandalides and Venizelos, it is the first who managed to re-elect, undoubtedly favored among others (symbolic significance of the name, mistakes of the opponent, better distribution of selective incentives) by the extensive control over zones of uncertainty due to the access he had to the party machinery<sup>17</sup> (Rori 2009). Even though the defeated candidates recognized the result of the election, the initial ambition of Venizelos to create a think tank that would institutionalize his faction prolonged the crisis in the after-math of the procedure. After several months of latent negotiations with the new dominant coalition, Venizelos abandoned his plan, which was interpreted as an acceptance of the leader's authority.

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<sup>15</sup> During the fifth party congress in 1999 he is re-elected by 65.7 per cent, whereas in the seventh congress in 2001 he gets 71.2 per cent.

<sup>16</sup> The official number given by the party is that of one million citizens.

<sup>17</sup> Papandreou gets 55.91 per cent of the vote, Venizelos 38.18 percent and Skandalidis 5.74 per cent.

The strategy of loyalty and the preservation of unity will pay off Venizelos five years later. After the resign of Papandreou from the head of government in November 2011, due to grave deficiencies in handling the political crisis generated after his decision to propose a referendum for the second memorandum of cooperation with the Troika, a coalition government was formed, directed by an EU technocrat, Lukas Papademos. The completion of the governments' mission gave way to electing a new leader in the socialist party since Papandreou's mandate was officially over and the loss of legitimacy, credibility and popularity minimized his chances to get re-elected. His marginalization and the defeat of his strategy motivated two of his close supporters and dissidents of the current policy backed by PASOK, Katseli and Kastanidis, to follow an exit strategy and form a new party in the left of PASOK, whereas a series of party cadres moved to other parties. Regardless of the fact that other splits had taken place in the past (Arsenis 1986, Tsovolas 1995), it is the first time that it has been related to the crisis generated among others concerning the leadership election.

From November 2011 until March 2012, in the midst of expulsions and splits, as well as extreme social pressure related to the economic crisis there was an on-going debate inside the party concerning the procedure that should be followed in order to decide the candidacies and the *selectorate*. *Grosso modo*, two lines were struggling each time: whether the party should proceed following the statutes or whether the rules should be "interpreted" taking into account the extraordinary circumstances of the crisis (grave decline in the party's popularity, polarization and violence towards the political personnel, expels and factionalism *in extremis*). In terms of *selectorate*, the dilemma was whether the election should be an inclusive, open procedure or whether it should take place among the parliamentary group. In terms of candidacy, it was whether the party apparatus should stay in the letter of the statutes and allow candidacies of cadres that can concentrate the number of signatures demanded or whether it should allow for other cadres to compete. After intensive negotiations, alliances and ambitions expressed, the unofficial conformation of the dominant coalition that was under construction decided to preserve the "letter of the statutes", that is to maintain the open election and the candidacies concentrating all the official characteristics. Although it was a decision favoring Venizelos' candidacy, it was the least risky way to maintain the unity, if not the survival of the party organization in a sensitive turmoil where intra-party competition would have hampered the weak organization that since many years had been falling apart. Therefore, despite internal disagreement and opposition, 236, 151 citizens are said to have participated in Venizelos' election, who received 230, 105 votes<sup>18</sup>. Even though none of the ambitious cadres managed to present their candidacy, they accepted the result and the authority of the new leader.

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<sup>18</sup> According to the official party results, there were 1, 384 blank and invalid votes.

In the case of PASOK, what one can observe is that since the death of its founder, who had been uncontested, almost all leadership change procedures have been preceded and followed by intense internal dissensions, factionalism and crises. Among them, most of all those who adopt innovative selection procedures. To this pattern, the leadership change of 2004 constitutes an exception, merely because of the party's genetic model: the nomination of George Papandreou makes reference to the party founder and draws legitimacy from its symbolic significance. After all, that was the very advantage that favored the election of the young and inexperienced Karamanlis in 1997, even if, unlike Papandreou, he was nominated after a competitive election. In contrast to ND, PASOK suffers from less splits related to leadership elections, what, in our opinion, ought to be associated to the fact that most of the times during the procedure PASOK is in power (1984, 1994, 1996, 1999, 2001, 2004, 2012), whereas ND is in opposition (1981, 1984, 1985, 1993, 1997, 2009). By satisfying selective incentives of its cadres and members through the means of access to state resources, PASOK succeeded in preserving unity better than ND, but at the expense of reforms and changes that received blunt intra-party opposition.

In conclusion, innovation in leadership elections in both parties offers a supplementary arena to the rival candidates to distinguish themselves and to bargain conditions of competition in their favor. That said, it is not the rules of the process *per se* that provoke crises, but the weak institutionalization of the party related to the way it was formed in the first crucial years. The interpretation of the rules according to the interest of the dominant coalition, the frequent change in the rules of the game, as well as the contestation of leadership authority even in the aftermath of the election manifest a weak respect of significant party actors in the institution and a low level of *systemness*. In order for this "transformism" to be a profitable and practical strategy, the party's incentive system in both cases tends to provide far more material or selective incentives than collective ones. This is why it becomes easier for a change in party leadership to be consolidated whilst the party in government than in the opposition. Hence, programs and policy-making all the less constitute arenas of negotiation and deliberation inside ND and PASOK, whereas their ideology and identity become all the more insignificant. That said, this is a mechanism that reinforces leaders and party actors but weakens the institution as a whole and puts in peril its stability, as well as its survival in the long term. Weak *systemness* renders the institution vulnerable to its environment and reduces its autonomy *vis-à-vis* external shocks. Recent grave crises in both major parties, as well as their strong contestation and loss of credibility *vis-à-vis* their traditional electorates constitute nothing more than evidence of their superficial strength.

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