

Reform and Transition in the Mediterranean

Series editor

Ioannis N. Grigoriadis
Bilkent University
Ankara
Turkey

“This book is a rare and significant example of comparative studies of Greece and Turkey. The two states, despite certain differences, share important characteristics in their constitutional and political development. Perhaps the most important of these common features is, as Grigoriadis convincingly argues, the majoritarian drive, with its well-known consequences such as increasing political polarization, division of the society between ‘we’ and ‘they’, ‘friends and foes’, the weakening of the checks and balance mechanisms, and the danger of a drift toward ‘competitive authoritarianism’ as described by Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way. The book supports Arend Lijphart’s thesis that especially in divided societies, a ‘consensus’, not a ‘majoritarian’, model of democracy is the only workable one.”

—Professor Ergun Özbudun, *Istanbul Şehir University, Turkey*

“Grigoriadis has produced a theoretically important, timely, and welcome monograph. Theoretically, it inscribes itself squarely in the distinguished tradition of Lijphart and Linz and forcefully argues in favour of ‘gentler’ democracies, constructed on a system of checks and balances, rooted on the rule of law, eschewing the perils of polarization associated with what Alexis de Tocqueville memorably described as the ‘tyranny of the majority’, and driven by a positive sum logic capable of promoting consensus and compromise in social and political discourse. In addition, its cogent criticism of the dangers of majoritarianism constitutes a most timely and convincing response to the challenges ominously brought forward by the rising tide of populism in established democracies, including the United States and Europe. Finally, the book is to be welcomed in that it succeeds in integrating two heretofore relatively undertheorized countries, Greece and Turkey, into the theoretical debates informing comparative politics.”

—Professor P. Nikiforos Diamandouros, *European Ombudsman (2003–2013)
and University of Athens, Greece*

The series of political and economic crises that befell many countries in the Mediterranean region starting in 2009 has raised emphatically questions of reform and transition. While the sovereign debt crisis of Southern European states and the “Arab Spring” appear *prima facie* unrelated, some common roots can be identified: low levels of social capital and trust, high incidence of corruption, and poor institutional performance. This series provides a venue for the comparative study of reform and transition in the Mediterranean within and across the political, cultural, and religious boundaries that crisscross the region. Defining the Mediterranean as the region that encompasses the countries of Southern Europe, the Levant, and North Africa, the series contributes to a better understanding of the agents and the structures that have brought reform and transition to the forefront. It invites (but is not limited to) interdisciplinary approaches that draw on political science, history, sociology, economics, anthropology, area studies, and cultural studies. Bringing together case studies of individual countries with broader comparative analyses, the series provides a home for timely and cutting-edge scholarship that addresses the structural requirements of reform and transition; the interrelations between politics, history and culture; and the strategic importance of the Mediterranean for the EU, the USA, Russia, and emerging powers.

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Ioannis N. Grigoriadis

Democratic
Transition and the
Rise of Populist
Majoritarianism

Constitutional Reform in Greece and Turkey

palgrave
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Ioannis N. Grigoriadis
Department of Political Science
and Public Administration
Bilkent University
Bilkent, Ankara
Turkey

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To Ishtar

FOREWORD

One of the problems with democracy is defining its boundaries. During the Cold War, we tended to assume there was a sharp contrast between the Communist states and the Western democracies, but this distinction between democracy and its opposite was never watertight, and fuzziness at the edges continues. At the end of the 1990s, the Dutch scholar Arend Lijphart, in his classic *Patterns of Democracy*, suggested that democracies could be subdivided into two categories: majoritarian and consensual. The former was close to “winner takes all” systems, such as the Westminster model, in which the winning party takes power by itself, leaving the opposition on the sidelines. By contrast, in a consensual system, such as that of Switzerland, Lijphart proposed, government power was consistently and institutionally shared between different cultural elements and opinion groups. As Ioannis N. Grigoriadis persuasively argues in this book, ultra-majoritarian systems can slip into the category of quasi-democracies, in which the locus of power is determined by the majority vote of the electorate, with the rights and interests of the minority flagrantly ignored. In short, there needs to be not only a separation of powers but also a balanced allocation of power between different institutions, to prevent the tyranny of the majority.

Greece and Turkey serve as fascinating and original examples of these processes. Although historic rivals, and occasionally enemies, the two countries are surprisingly alike in many respects, including the political. This includes a tendency towards sharp confrontation between rival political poles. In response, winners tend to suppress losers, regardless of

individual rights. In the Turkish case, some of this may be explained by the Ottoman legacy. As the late Geoffrey Lewis perceptively remarked, since the 1950s Turkish politicians have tended to regard the power given to them by the electorate as analogous to that vested in the Grand Vizier, which was effectively absolute. If the Sultan was displeased with the Vizier, he could sack him (maybe execute him) but until that happened the Vizier had total authority, at least in theory. As this book persuasively argues, the widely reported trend towards authoritarianism in Turkey over the last few years is paralleled by increasingly majoritarian trends in Greece. The proposal that giving the electoral winners more power leads to more efficiency, homogeneity, and economic progress is simply untrue: Instead, experience tends to show that it exacerbates confrontational politics, contributing to clientelism and corruption, and exacerbating social divisions. In the Greek case, this book argues that polarization has made it far harder to cope with the continuing economic crisis. In Turkey, a major problem is to bridge the gap between the ethnically Turkish majority and the Kurdish minority, but majoritarianism seems likely to produce the opposite result.

This appeal for mild rather than confrontational democracy is not the only important feature of this book. Another is the simple fact that it discusses Greek and Turkish politics together, in a comparative perspective. This is a rarity: There are plenty of single-country studies of domestic and foreign policies on the one side of the Aegean or the other, but very few that look at both at once. Comparison deepens understanding of both the comparators and highlights issues which might otherwise be ignored, so that this book deserves imitation.

London, 2017

William M. Hale
Professor Emeritus, School of Oriental
and African Studies (SOAS)
University of London

PREFACE

During the completion of this study, public interest in constitutional reform has boomed. The decision of the AKP government in Turkey and the SYRIZA–ANEL coalition government in Greece to launch a constitutional amendment process has resuscitated the discussion about populist majoritarianism. While the Greek amendment process has not born any fruit by summer 2017, the Turkish voters have approved by a thin majority of 51.4 percent in the referendum of 16 April 2017 the new constitution proposed by the AKP government. The way that the public debate has unfolded has pointed at the relevance of the main findings of this study, regardless of the outcome of the amendment process. As Greek and Turkish societies remain divided on political, religious, social and other grounds and populism remains an attractive political ideology in both countries, the need to reinforce checks-and-balances mechanisms and institutions nurturing social trust remains imperative.

Princeton, NJ

Ioannis N. Grigoriadis

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CONTENTS

1	Introduction	1
2	Democratic Transition in Greece	13
3	Democratic Transition in Turkey	27
4	The Rising Tide of Populist Majoritarianism in Greece	41
5	The Rising Tide of Populist Majoritarianism in Turkey	53
6	Majoritarianism and State Performance	73
7	Conclusion	89
	Appendix I	99
	Appendix II	101
	Index	103

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Ioannis N. Grigoriadis is Associate Professor and Jean Monnet Chair at the Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Bilkent University. In the academic year 2016–2017, he was an IPC-Stiftung Mercator Senior Research Fellow at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (*Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik-SWP*) in Berlin and a Stanley J. Seeger Research Fellow at Princeton University. Between 2004 and 2009, he taught at Sabancı University, Işık University and the University of Athens. His research interests include European, Turkish politics, nationalism and democratization. His recent publications include two books, *Instilling Religion in Greek and Turkish Nationalism: A “Sacred Synthesis”* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) and *Trials of Europeanization: Turkish Political Culture and the European Union*, (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). He has also authored several journal articles. These include “Energy Discoveries in the Eastern Mediterranean: Conflict or Cooperation?”, *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XXI, No. 3, Fall 2014, pp. 124–133, “Reform Paradoxes: Academic Freedom and Governance in Greek and Turkish Higher Education”, *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1, March 2012, pp. 135–152 (with Antonis Kamaras), “Friends No More?: The Rise of Anti-American Nationalism in Turkey”, *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 64, No. 1, Winter 2010, pp. 51–66, “Islam and Democratization in Turkey: Secularism and Trust in a Divided Society”, *Democratization*, Vol. 16,

No. 6, December 2009, pp. 1194–1213 and “On the Europeanization of Minority Rights Protection: Comparing the Cases of Greece and Turkey”, *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 13, No. 1, March 2008, pp. 23–41.

ABBREVIATIONS

AKP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi-Justice and Development Party
ANAP	Anavatan Partisi-Motherland Party
ANEL	Anexartitoi Ellines-Independent Greeks
CHP	Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi-Republican People's Party
DP	Demokrat Parti-Democrat Party
DSP	Demokratik Sol Partisi-Democratic Left Party
ECB	European Central Bank
EEC	European Economic Community
EU	European Union
HDP	Halkların Demokratik Partisi-Peoples' Democratic Party
HSYK	Hâkimler ve Savcılar Yüksek Kurulu-Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KKE	Kommounistiko Komma Ellados-Communist Party of Greece
MGK	Milli Güvenlik Kurulu-National Security Council
MHP	Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi-Nationalist Action Party
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
ND	Nea Dimokratia-New Democracy
PASOK	Panellinio Sosialistiko Kinima-Panhellenic Socialist Movement
RP	Refah Partisi-Welfare Party
SYRIZA	Synaspismos Rizospastikis Aristeras-Coalition of Radical Left

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 2.1	The 3 September 1843 Revolution-Colonel Dimitrios Kallergis demands a constitution from King Otto and Queen Amalia (Unknown artist, Museum of the City of Athens, Vouros-Eutaxias Foundation, Athens)	15
Fig. 3.1	The Ottoman Parliament (Meclis-i Mebusan) reconvenes following the 1908 Young Turk Revolution and the Restoration of the Constitution	29
Fig. 5.1	The 2013 Gezi protests comprised a rare collaboration opportunity for secularist and conservative opposition groups: The tent of the “Revolutionary Muslims (Devrimci Müslümanlar)”	54
Fig. 5.2	A campaign poster of the AKP supporting the “Yes” vote in the 12 September 2010 constitutional referendum	57
Fig. 5.3	A campaign poster of four small left-wing parties inviting to a “Hayır (No)” demonstration before the 12 September 2010 constitutional referendum	59
Fig. 5.4	A “List of Commandments” from the 2013 Gezi Protest Camp	62
Fig. 5.5	An AKP banner on the April 2017 referendum featuring Prime Minister Yıldırım endorsing the “Yes” vote	64
Fig. 7.1	Pro-EU, anti-government demonstration on 15 June 2016 in Athens’ Syntagma Square	91

ABSTRACT

This study explores in a comparative perspective the impact of populist majoritarianism on Greek and Turkish constitutional reform. While majoritarianism features as an element of numerous democratic regimes and often celebrated as a manifestation of popular sovereignty, it can be championed by populist leaders and foment polarization, undermine institutional performance and even entangle the process of democratic consolidation. It may contribute to a confrontational and inefficient democratic regime in cases of transition states where levels of social capital are low. The study of the Greek transition to democracy shows us that the dominance of populist majoritarianism can stifle pluralism, weaken checks-and-balances mechanisms, contribute to the consolidation of clientelism, foster corruption, deepen social divisions and weaken institutional performance. These have been among the key underlying factors for the profound political, economic and social crisis that has befallen Greece since 2009. The Greek experience can be highly instructive about the inherent risks of a majoritarian takeover in Turkey. A populist majoritarian shift in Turkish politics through constitutional reform is likely to have similar deleterious effects regarding social cohesion, institutional performance and corruption. Building up a “mild democracy” requires maturity of institutions, an efficient system of checks-and-balances and implementation control mechanisms. This could lead to a shift from a “zero-sum” to a “positive sum game” approach in the resolution of domestic political disputes. Developing consensus and trust in societies torn by ethnic, religious and

ideological divides is not a luxury but a permissive condition for democratic consolidation, institutional performance, social cohesion and economic prosperity. Recent developments in Turkey seem to corroborate concerns that a majoritarian takeover may occur at the peril of institutional performance and democratic consolidation.