

SYRIZA's Electoral Victory in Greek Thrace: Impact of Muslim Minority Vote in the Changing Political System

BURCU TAŞKIN

Istanbul Medeniyet University

This article, based on the link between institutional changes and voter behavior, focusing mainly on the 2015 parliamentary elections in Greece and the SYRIZA party's success in Greek Thrace, aims to understand why the Muslim minority voted significantly for SYRIZA and how they managed to send four Muslim representatives to the Greek Parliament, three of them from the same party. The article argues that, although there is massive support for radical-left SYRIZA due to its electoral promises to improve social services in addition to the party's rational candidate nomination, this support reflects a mixture of sociological and issue-voting behavior of the Muslim minority related to their motivation for political representation rather than an ideological shift. The changing political system in Greece since 2012, from a two-party to a multi-party system with decreasing voter turnout, increased the impact of the Muslim vote on electoral results in the September and January 2015 elections; however, it also increased social tension between the majority and the minority.

INTRODUCTION

In the 20 September 2015 Greek parliamentary elections, *Synaspismos Pizospastikis Aristeras* (SYRIZA; The Coalition of Radical Left) repeated its January 2015 electoral success, attracting again a large share of the Greek electorate with 35.5% of the votes, surpassing its main rival the *Nea Demokratia* (ND; New Democracy) party by a comfortable margin of more than 7%. Although SYRIZA's seats were reduced from 149 to

Address correspondence to Burcu Taşkın, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Istanbul Medeniyet University, D-100 Unalan, Istanbul, Turkey. E-mail: burcu.taskin@medeniyet.edu.tr

145, the party capitalized on the ability of its leader Alexis Tsipras, who offered the Greek electorate a radical program. Tsipras renewed SYRIZA's previous coalition agreement with *Aneksartiti Ellines* (ANEL; Independent Greek Party), giving the new government 155 seats out of 300 in the Greek Parliament.

The September 2015 national elections also confirmed the role of the Muslim vote in SYRIZA's victory and its importance for Greek politics, as demonstrated in the January general elections when the radical-left party received the highest percentage of votes nationwide from Greek Thrace (Rhodopi and Ksanthi) where the Muslim minority is spatially concentrated. Support for SYRIZA continued above average in the July 2015 bailout referendum. Although the party lost 9% of the vote in Rhodopi because of the nomination of a strong Muslim candidate, İlhan Ahmet, by the liberal pro-EU Potami River party (*To Potami*) in the September general elections, his nomination caused a loss of seats for ND rather than SYRIZA. The result was a big surprise with the Muslim minority succeeding in sending four representatives to the Greek Parliament, something that had not occurred since the 31 March 1946 national elections. The importance for the unstable Greek politics of the election of three Muslim deputies on the SYRIZA ticket (Mustafa Mustafa and Ayhan Karayusuf from Rhodopi and Hüseyin Zeybek from Ksanthi) lies not only in the fact that the party took 145 seats in the fragile new government that got a vote of confidence with only 155 seats but also because, just after the 20 September 2015 parliamentary elections, all three Rhodopi seats were held by Muslim members of parliament (MPs), and mainstream Greek newspapers presented this situation as "Islamization" of Greece, giving rise to minority-majority tension.¹

Considering this current win-win situation between the Muslim minority and SYRIZA, the main aim of this article is to examine what factors influenced the conservative Muslim minority in Greek Thrace to significantly vote for the radical-left SYRIZA party and, hence, to contribute to its gains. What microlevel (demographic-cultural) and macrolevel (institutional) factors shape the Muslim voters' preferences related to the changing political system in Greece? The article first examines the demographic features of the Muslim minority, followed by a discussion on the minority's voting behavior. The second part aims to display how the Greek political system in relation to microlevel and macrolevel factors is expected to influence political representation of the minority in general and to provide a brief analysis of the representation of the Muslim minority in the Greek Parliament since 1920. In the third part, the SYRIZA-Muslim-minority conciliation for the 2012 and 2015 parliamentary elections is scrutinized. The article concludes by discussing the future of the Muslim-community-SYRIZA accordance in relation to the dynamics in Greek politics.

THE MUSLIM MINORITY IN GREEK THRACE

Greek Thrace is often referred to as Western Thrace and is composed of three provinces: Alexandroupoli in the east, Komotini in the center, and Ksanthi in the west. Western Thrace was under Ottoman rule from its conquest in 1364 until the 1913 Balkan Wars. It has been under Bulgarian rule (1913–1919) and under French rule on behalf of the Union States (1919–1920). Since 1920 it has been under Greek control and political rule. In the 1923 Lausanne Treaty that was signed following the Turkish War of Independence, the Greek Orthodox population in Turkey was compulsorily exchanged with Muslims of Greece. However, Muslims of Greek Thrace were exempted from the population exchange, as were the Greek Orthodox people of Istanbul. The Lausanne Convention specified the exchange between Turkey and Greece, adhering to the traditional religious criterion. Hence, minority is officially regarded in Greece only as Muslim, which consists of three different ethnic groups: Turks, Pomaks, and Roma.²

Today, Greek Thrace is part of the administrative region of East Macedonia and Thrace and consists of three prefectures (also electoral constituencies): Ksanthi (capital Ksanthi), Rhodopi (capital Komotini), and Evros (capital Alexandroupoli). The overall population of Thrace is 340,000. The precise size of the Muslim population is a matter of dispute due to their large-scale emigration over the years and the lack of an official census since the 1950s. Estimates range from 90,000 to over 120,000 while official accounts put it between 110,000–135,000.³ In general, approximately half of the population in the Rhodopi electoral district and one third of the Ksanthi district are Muslims, suggesting that when Evros is included, almost one third of all the voters in the entire region are Muslims. This article focuses on the Muslim-minority vote in the Rhodopi and Ksanthi electoral districts where the Muslim population constitutes a significant number and does not include Evros.

In addition to religious-ethnic features and demographic composition, economic status is also expected to be a determining factor in the voting behavior of the minority.⁴ The close relationship between minority status and economic underdevelopment is also evident by the fact that the prefecture with the highest concentration of Turkish Muslims, Rhodopi, is the poorest in the region and in Greece. The Rhodopi gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is 62% of the nationwide average, ranking it at the very bottom of the country's 52 prefectures.⁵

The main political issues of the minority are stated on various occasions starting with the recognition of their Turkish identity, rather than being referred to as Muslim, which the Greek state prefers. The second problem is the nationalization of the lands belonging to the Turkish-Muslim minority who earn their living through animal husbandry and agriculture. A third problem is illegal expatriation from Greek citizenship due to the

enforcement of Article 19, which caused approximately 50,000 minority members to lose their citizenship. The fourth problem is the management of properties owned by the *vakf* (foundations) of the community.⁶ The fifth one is the election of the Mufti directly by the minority population, which had been assured by the Lausanne Treaty but began to be violated during the 1967 junta rule.⁷ The main cultural demand of the minority is further reform and improvement in the minority education system. Although the right of the Muslim minority of Western Thrace to receive education in their mother tongue is provided by the Treaty of Lausanne and educational bilateral agreements, minority students lack opportunities to gain knowledge of the Greek or Turkish language due to a mixed system of administration, outdated textbooks, poorly educated teaching staff, and the absence of an efficient school curriculum.⁸

Political representation of the community is crucial to expressing its demands and concerns at the national level, in addition to normalizing relations between the minority and the majority. Since 1977, Muslim MPs in the parliament have been mentioning the problems outlined above in the Greek parliament.⁹ In the case of the Muslim minority in Greek Thrace, an interesting voting pattern is observed where it is determined mainly by parties' candidate nomination and the possibility of political representation. The following sections analyze voter behavior of this Muslim minority and the institutional factors that influence that community's national-level political representation.

VOTING BEHAVIOR: NO PARTISANSHIP BUT PURSUING MINORITY POLICY IN THE GREEK PARTIES?

Voting behavior is clearly shaped by short-term and long-term influences. The chief short-term influence is the state of the economy, which reflects the fact that there is usually a link between a government's popularity and economic variables such as unemployment, inflation, and disposable income. Another short-term influence on voting is the personality and public standing of party leaders.¹⁰ The rise of the radical-left party SYRIZA in Greece since the 2012 national elections is mainly analyzed through reference to its charismatic leader, Alexis Tsipras¹¹ and through economic-voting theory, where it is claimed that, due to the deep recession of the 2009 economic crisis, Greek voters punished the incumbent parties in previous governments for worsening economic conditions.¹² Although just after the economic crisis, it was the *Panellinio Socialistiko Kinima* (PASOK, Panhellenic Socialist Movement) that won the national elections in October 2009 and became the first party in the following 2010 local elections with only minor losses by diverting the responsibility from his party to the European Union. In the long

term, however, the great recession not only led to a decrease in the support for mainstream parties but also increased destabilization of the party system in Europe including Greece.¹³

Greek Thrace constitutes the poorest region in Greece, and except for the 2004 elections, in the 21st century, the minority has been represented in the Greek Parliament by either center-left or radical-left parties. Therefore, the party preferences of the Muslim minority led to this question: What determines their voting behavior: party identification, ideological alignment, or economic voting? Similar to the Greek voters, minority voters following the 2009 economic crisis — especially in Ksanthi — first voted for PASOK and then for SYRIZA, and Tsipras' charismatic leadership assisted in mobilizing the minority community. However, as this article argues, the minority's mass support for SYRIZA should be regarded as a consequence of a long-term voting pattern based on the link between sociological voting and political representation maximization rather than just simple economic or emotional voting.

Due to the 3% national electoral threshold implemented in 1990, Muslim politicians cannot run in the elections as independent candidates nor does the minority party *Dostluk, Eşitlik, Barış* (DEB; Friendship, Equality, Peace Party) have a chance to get sufficient votes by mobilizing Christian voters. However, there is no strong party affiliation with any of the Greek parties within the Muslim minority.¹⁴ The Turkish minority of Greece, which is an agricultural community and bound to the land, has traditional political behaviors. Although, since 1920, they vote for central-left or central-right parties (see Supplementary Appendix, "List of Muslim Minority Deputies in the Greek Parliament, 1920–2015," online), patron–clientelistic relationships are more internalized and the community votes for the person/community leader rather than a party or an ideology. The fact that, in the Turkish parliamentary elections, Komotini electorates, including Ksanthi, vote for conservative and nationalist Turkish parties such as *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (Justice and Development Party [JDP]) and *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* (MHP, Nationalist Movement Party) with strong support ranging between 70–80%,¹⁵ suggests that the Muslim minority shares the values of right-wing ideology. However, political discourses of leftist parties in Greece on social and economic justice and human and minority rights are more appealing to the community, which suffers the most from social and economic inequality.

İlhan Ahmet, who has served in the Greek Parliament, describes the voting behavior of the minority as "strategic voting." Ahmet positions himself in the Kemalist, modern and liberal wing, which he believes serves minority rights best compared to the other ideologies. According to Ahmet, "the community disdains partisanship within the minority but pursues minority politics within the parties." He criticizes SYRIZA's Muslim MPs for ignoring the cultural/religious values of the minority and focusing on their leftist

ideologies, thus causing partisanship within the community. He declares that he perceives himself as a minority representative rather than party representative because he does not get votes from the Christian electorates. He also added that the Greek state would like to know with whom the minority politician aligns; no matter if it is the Greek or Turkish state side, they would like to eliminate uncertainty about the politicians.¹⁶ His political career indicates that party identification or ideological alignment of minority MPs is not a requirement for the Greek parties either. In the 2004 general elections, İlhan Ahmet was nominated and elected on the center-right ND's ticket; he was not a member of the ND party before his nomination but was invited by party leader Karamanlis to run in the elections. In addition to his wide social network as a lawyer, his good command of Greek, and as the grandson of ex-deputy Osman Üstüner, Ahmet is an eminent figure with the potential to mobilize a significant number of votes. In the 2007 elections, PASOK became the leading party in Rhodopi and ND candidate İlhan Ahmet lost the seat with 60 votes. İlhan Ahmet later gave a petition to the court; however, the electoral results remained the same. In the interview we had, he explained the results as a manipulation of the Greek state to avoid the election of three minority MPs. In the May 2012 elections, Ahmet was nominated by the Democratic Alliance (Dimokratiki Summaxia [DISI]), a splinter party of ND, and, although he got 10,608 votes, his party could not pass the electoral threshold and Ayhan Karayusuf won with only 2,987 votes. In the reelections of June 2012, this time, in order to be elected, he changed his party and was nominated by the social-democratic *Dimokratiki Aristerar* (DIMAR, Democratic Left) and mobilized 12,283 votes; however, this time due to the close-list electoral system, Karayusuf was better at getting the support of Muslim as well as Christian voters and was elected with 13,676 votes. In the 2015 elections, when İlhan Ahmet ran with a To Potami ticket, he managed to increase the party's votes from 8,445 to 10,221 between January and September and gained his party one seat from Rhodopi.

The lack of party alignment to Greek parties does not suggest that the community has always had a unified and simple political orientation within itself. The emergence and development of the great schism inside the minority, namely controversies between traditionalists/anti-Kemalists and modernists/Kemalists,¹⁷ had a great impact on the minority's educational and sociopolitical development until the 1970s. As this division loses its significance today, it can be noted that the Muslim minority adopted a sociological model voting pattern, which highlights the importance of social alignment (ethnic/religious community membership) reflecting solidarity beyond class, income, age, or gender differences.

The Muslim minority realized that the most valid positive implementations regarding minority problems, such as accepting proposals given by the minority MPs,¹⁸ were achieved in the 2007–2015 period when some

crucial elements were combined. First, the minority was represented by a high number of MPs, elected from the same party (Haciosman and Mandacı from PASOK; Mustafa, Karayusuf, and Zeybek from SYRIZA), secondly, these parties have leftist ideologies, and, thirdly, they were in power or served as the main opposition party. These features enable us to understand the voting strategy of the minority based on rational choice: preferring the Muslim candidate nominated from the party that will secure seats from Rhodopi or Ksanthi. This strategy cannot be minimized only by saying that the minority votes for the first party but mainly suggests that they vote to get the maximum number of representatives in the parliament (see [Table 1](#)). Moreover, MPs from the radical-left parties have a greater chance for effectiveness in the parliament because they regard the minority issue in terms of “human rights and social equality” and manage to get the support of other members from their own parties; thus, the minority’s mass support for center-left PASOK was accelerated between 2007–2009 and for SYRIZA in recent elections.¹⁹ Therefore, within the changing Greek political system, the factors that affect the possibility of political representation are salient to analyzing and to understanding the linkage between voting behavior, political representation, and support for SYRIZA.

ANALYSIS OF MICROLEVEL AND MACROLEVEL FACTORS FOR THE MUSLIM MINORITY’S POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

Political representation is the activity of making citizens’ voices, opinions, and perspectives “present” in the public policy-making processes.²⁰ Some analyses of the political participation of minorities argue that the class or the socioeconomic status of a minority group determines its level of participation, which could help explain why left-wing parties are particularly popular with ethnic/religious minorities.²¹ Saalfeld supports the link between minority political preferences for traditional leftist parties and their low socioeconomic status by asserting that actors will seek alliances with other actors that share the same socioeconomic interests.²² On the other hand, other sociological and anthropological studies point to the fact that similar ethnic groups use different participatory strategies, which is inconsistent with the expectations of both class and socioeconomic approaches.²³ Furthermore, recent studies also found that these approaches do not explain why the same ethnic minority groups have different levels of participation in different countries.²⁴ Confirming the assumptions of Barth, the political behavior of the Muslim minority of Western Thrace has been shaped by the political, social, and economic conditions under which they have been living. Although since 2007 support for leftist parties has been increasing,

TABLE 1 General Vote and Muslim Vote in Western Thrace (1996–2015).

Elections	Voter Turnout in Percentage			Muslim MPs' Votes			Christian MPs' Votes			Votes for Muslim Candi-				Vote Shares for the First and Second Parties (in Percentage)			
	Greece	Rhodopi	Ksanthi	Rhodopi	Ksanthi	Biol	Dimitris	Rhodopi	Ksanthi	Rhodopi	Ksanthi	Greece	Rhodopi	Ksanthi	Greece	Rhodopi	Ksanthi
22 September 1996	76.3	69.2	71.7	Galip Galip: 10.512 (PASOK)	Akifoğlu: 9.459 (ND)		Dimitris Tsetines: 11.243 (PASOK)		Panayiota Sguridis: 10.160 (PASOK)	27,775/7,7014	14,741/68,294	PASOK-ND	PASOK-ND	ND	PASOK-ND	PASOK-ND	PASOK-ND
				Mustafa Mustafa: 7.655 (Synaspismos)					Nikos Lambadioris: 5,526 (PASOK)	36	21.6	41.50-38.1	45.3-32.9	48.7-36.1			
9 April 2000	74.9	70.9	71.3	Galip Galip: 9.731 (PASOK)		—	Evrpidis Stilyanis: 17.534 (ND)		Alexandros Kon- tos: 11.321 (ND)	28,905/7,6825	13,500/69,633	PASOK-ND	PASOK-ND	ND	PASOK-ND	PASOK-ND	PASOK-ND
				Ahmet Mehmet: 6.917 (PASOK)			Hrisa Manolia: 13.897 (PASOK)		Panayiota Sguridis: 11.560 (PASOK)	37.6	19.4	43.8-42.7	36.5	47.5-44.5			
							replaced by A.Mehmet)		Sotiris Stonidis (PASOK)								

7 March 2004	76.6	72.9	72.1	İlhan Ahmet: 13.792 (ND)	—	Evripidis Stilyanis: 19.166 (ND) Hrisa Manolia: 10.931 (PASOK)	Alexandros Kon- tos:14.554 (ND) Panayioti Sguridis: 9.569 (PASOK) Filippos Tsalidis:7.379 (PASOK)	32,553/ 83,980 38.8	17,147/ 77,748 22.1	ND- PASOK 45.36- 40.5	ND- PASOK 47.3- 43.9	ND- PASOK 47.8- 43.4
16 Septem- ber 2007	74.1	69.8	70.4	Ahmet Haciosman: 14.874 (PASOK)	Çetin Mandaci: 15.211 (PASOK)	Evripidis Stilyanis: 15.088 (ND) Yorgos Petalotis: 7.772 (PASOK)	Alexandros Kontos: 14.529 (ND) Panayioti Sguridis: 8.059 (PASOK)	35,040/ 82,042 42.7	18,888/ 78,870 23.9	ND- PASOK 41.82- 38.1	PASOK- ND 45.9- 45.8	PASOK- ND 48.9- 39.8
4 October 2009	70.9	68.5	68.8	Ahmet Haciosman: 15.499 (PASOK)	Çetin Mandaci: 17.270 (PASOK)	Evripidis Stilyanis: 17.125 (ND) Yorgos Petalotis: 14.319 (PASOK)	Alexandros Kon- tos:10.876 (ND) Sokratis Ksinidis 9.617 (PASOK)	32,598/ 81,758 39.9	19,396/ 78,216 24.8	PASOK- ND 43.94- 33.5	PASOK- ND 53.07- 34.5	PASOK- ND 58.79- 26.2

(Continued on next page)

TABLE 1 Continued

Voter Turnout in Percentage			Muslim MPs' Votes			Christian MPs' Votes			Votes for Muslim Candi- dates/General Vote* (in Percentage)			Vote Shares for the First and Second Parties (in Percentage)		
Elections	Greece	Rhodopi	Ksanthi	Rhodopi	Ksanthi	Hüseyin Zeybek: 11.006 (SYRIZA)	Evripidis Styliyanidis: 7.910 (ND)	Alexandros Kontos: 6.240 (ND)	Rhodopi	Ksanthi	Greece	Rhodopi	Ksanthi	
6 May 2012	65.1	60.3	60.1	Ahmet Haciosman: 10.772 (PASOK)	Hüseyin Zeybek: 11.006 (SYRIZA)	Ayhan Karayusuf: 2.894 (SYRIZA)	Evripidis Styliyanidis: 7.910 (ND)	Alexandros Kontos: 6.240 (ND)	29,200/71,917	19,509/69,032	ND- SYRIZA	PASOK- ND	SYRIZA- ND	
17 June 2012**	62.5	59	57.3	Ahmet Haciosman (PASOK)	Hüseyin Zeybek (SYRIZA)		Evripidis Styliyanidis (ND)	Alexandros Kontos (ND)	na/70,506	na/66,095	ND- SYRIZA	ND- PASOK	SYRIZA- ND	
25 January 2015	63.9	58.2	58	Mustafa: 12.429 (SYRIZA)	Hüseyin Zeybek: 16.244 (SYRIZA)	Ayhan Karayusuf: 9.559 (SYRIZA)	Evripidis Styliyanidis: 9.827 (ND)	Alexandros Kontos: 7.184 (ND)	29,334/68,601	20,261/66,740	SYRIZA- ND36.3	SYRIZA- ND	SYRIZA- ND	
								Stathis Yannakidis: 3.750 (SYRIZA)	42.8	30.4	- 27.8	48.66- 20.6	45.67- 23.6	

20 September 2015**	56.6	53.4	51.9	Mustafa (SYRIZA) Ayhan Karayusuf (SYRIZA) i Ihan Ahmet (To Potami)	Hüseyin Zeybek (SYRIZA)	—	Stathis Yannakidis (SYRIZA) Grigorios Stogiannidis (SYRIZA)	na/ 62,827	na/ 59,829	SYRIZA- ND 35.5- 28.1	SYRIZA- ND 39.5- 22.7	SYRIZA- ND 49.6- 23.8
5 July 2015 Referendum	62.5	53.8	54.1							Yes 38.7 No 61.3	Yes 36.5 No 63.5	Yes 32.1 No 67.9

Source: For voter turnout: Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) <http://www.idea.int/vt/>; Candidates' votes until 2015 elections: Burcu Taşkın, Unpublished PhD Thesis; Parties' vote shares are derived from <http://www.electionresources.org/gr/>.

Bold: Percentage of votes.

*Shows the total votes cast, not registered voters. Number of registered voters in Rhodopi was 117,656 and in Ksanthi 115,326 for September 2015 parliamentary elections.

**Elections held in close-list PR electoral systems, and, hence, candidates' votes cannot be known.

this alliance cannot be explained only through their class or socioeconomic status.

At this point, Karen Bird's work on the opportunities and constraints related to political representation of minorities, which suggests a detailed analysis of microlevel and macrolevel factors, is needed in order to understand the possibility for representation and its influences.²⁵ While macrolevel factors are related to the political systems of the home countries, features of the relevant minority community determine microlevel factors. The microlevel factors that are expected to influence the political representation of the minority are group size, spatial concentration, participation in minority associational life, political cohesiveness and mobilization, language skills, and length of residency. Macrolevel factors include electoral rules, party competition, candidate nomination, and selection processes. By referring to Bird, this article claims that, in addition to the improvements of Muslim MPs' education and mobilizing capabilities, the changing political system in Greece as reflected in higher competition, lower voter turnout, a favorable electoral system, and changing party system enhanced the bargaining power of the Muslim community and helped the consolidation of SYRIZA's political power in the region.

Groups' Size, Length of Residency, Language Skills, Localism, and Political Mobilization

Muslims in Greek Thrace, which were inherited from the Ottoman state, constitute a significant population size of approximately one third of the total and have a spatial concentration in the region that increases their bargaining power in the general and local elections. The social organization of the Muslim minority encountered a new situation when the Muslims ceased to be the ruling element. Learning the Greek language was not a priority within the minority even after the accession to Greece in 1920.²⁶ Interestingly, lack of fluency in Greek and social organization were not obstacles for the Muslim candidates to gain access to the Greek parliament. A significant population size combined with a high level of localism guaranteed the political representation of the Muslims despite their weak integration into the Greek society.

Beside the group size, "localism," described as the proportion of deputies born in the constituency that they represent, should be included in the general literature as a microlevel factor, because when "localism" combines with an open-list electoral system, it positively influences political representation. As the population of the constituency decreases, localism increases in Greek elections. Related to their territorial constraint, Muslim Turkish minority MPs have never been nominated outside Western Thrace since 1920. It is so restricted that the localism effect functions even between

Rhodopi and Ksanthi, mainly due to the open-list proportional electoral system adopted for the Greek general elections, which increases the connection between the candidate and the electorate. The second factor is psychological, where it is believed among the Christian majority that a Muslim minority MP cannot represent Christian constituents. However, the psychological factor is weaker for the parties and candidates that have a deep ideological basis, as observed for the Muslim candidates nominated by the radical left-wing parties such as the *Kommounistikó Kómma Elládas* (KKE, Communist Party of Greece), Synaspismos, and SYRIZA, whose Muslim candidates also represented Christian voters.

Related to weak party identification, political mobilization of the minority does not follow conventional strategies. During an electoral campaign, it is customary that the minority candidates do not make party propaganda and avoid using party slogans and symbols. They try to explain why the party that nominated them is the best option for the community. “Turk’s vote is to Turks” is the common slogan for political mobilization during the electoral campaign, especially in Ksanthi where minority voters also vote for Christian candidates. Regular Friday prayer is another tool for political mobilization besides the press.

Electoral Rules, Voter Turnout, Party Competition, and Candidate Nomination and Selection

In addition to the microlevel factors discussed above, macrolevel factors determined by the political system of Greece have impacted the Muslim vote and its alignments with the Greek parties. As electoral systems determine how seats in parliaments are distributed and affect the candidate-nomination process, it is the most influential factor. From 1920 to 1936, the electoral system in Greece was altered several times in an unstable political atmosphere, but the number of Muslim MPs remained stable, due mainly to the electoral-college implementation and a significant population size (see Supplementary Appendix). When it was a majority system the MPs were elected from a single party; however, when it was a proportional representation system, minority seats were distributed between two major parties (the Venizelist Liberal Party and the anti-Venizelist/royalist People’s Party). The 30 November 1963 general election was the last time the Muslim minority was represented by three MPs until the 22 September 1996 elections, which was not repeated until the 2012 elections.

The influence of electoral system changes is more obvious for the period 1974–2015. According to Greek electoral law, three seats in the Parliament are given to Rhodopi (reduced from four to three after the 1981 census) and three seats to the Ksanthi electoral districts (in total six seats). In Rhodopi and Ksanthi, each Greek party can nominate a maximum of

five candidates. Each voter in Rhodopi and Ksanthi has a single vote to choose among the candidates declared on the party lists, whereas crosses of preferences increase in other districts up to four according to population size.²⁷ The idea of running with the independent ticket emerged within the minority in 1985, when the close-list electoral system was adopted and the major parties hesitated to nominate Muslim candidates from the first rank to avoid criticism from the press. In the 1989–1990 elections, all minority MPs were elected on independent tickets. This political participation method continued until the Greek state implemented a 3% national threshold for small parties and independent candidates, which effectively closed the way for the independent votes. Since 1974, Greece has been enforcing the open-list reinforced proportional representation (PR) system (except in the 1985, June 2012, and September 2015 elections),²⁸ which favors the major parties in the second and third distributions of the seats and gives extra seats to the winning party (40 seats in the 2007 and 2009 elections, 50 seats in the 2012 and 2015).

Open list favors the voters' preferences and keeps MPs closer to their constituency's wishes, whereas closed list favors each party's preference for selection of its parliament members and is expected to yield tighter party cohesiveness. Moreover, when there is a strong minority presence, PR with preferential voting increases representation.²⁹ However, in the Greek case the open-list system increases the competition among the Muslim candidates in mobilizing the minority votes as well. Hence, Greek parties try to decrease the chance of minority candidates by nominating more than one Muslim candidate and by dividing the Muslim vote, which in many cases has caused nonrepresentation of the minority in Ksanthi (1974, 1981, 1989, 2000, 2004 elections). Both elections in 2012, and those of 2015, reflect the significant changes that have taken place in the Greek political system and society. They also clearly showed that the premium of 50 seats is in no way sufficient for the first party to achieve a majority of consensus in parliament. When a close-list PR system was implemented in the 2015 September elections, in Rhodopi and Ksanthi three Greek parties (SYRIZA, To Potami, and Antarsia) nominated Muslim MPs from the first ranks in order to get a secure seat from Thrace, which, with the assistance of the electoral system,³⁰ resulted in the election of four Muslim MPs from Western Thrace where Rhodopi was left without Christian representatives. In general, although comparison of the plurality system and the PR system does not suggest any sufficient difference, this article shows that while "close-list PR" created better opportunity for political representation it also increased minority–majority tension.

Despite the intense party competition in Greece since 2007 and the relative transition from a two-party system to a multiparty system, as seen in Table 1, almost 40% of the Greek voters did not vote in the 2012–2015 parliamentary elections and the ratio remained under the national average in Rhodopi and Ksanthi. The Muslim vote/general vote ratio is crucial in

demonstrating that the Muslim vote has been increasing relative to the general vote since 1996. Although in the 2004, 2007, and 2009 general elections the total Muslim vote in Rhodopi was higher compared to the 2015 parliamentary election, due to low voter turnout (decrease in general vote), the Muslim community secured three representatives by unifying their votes under one party. This shows decreasing nationwide voter turnout has accelerated the impact of the Muslim vote when it is concentrated to ideologically left-oriented parties. In Ksanthi, although the vote for Muslim candidates in percentage has increased in every electoral term, the crucial jump occurred in 2012 when Hüseyin Zeybek managed to mobilize Christian electorates for SYRIZA and the Muslim community reduced the dispersal of their votes between candidates and parties.

In terms of party system, the number of minority MPs in the parliament decreases under a two-party system. The number of Muslim MPs increased to three only in the periods when radical-left parties managed to get minority votes — as seen in 1996, 2012, and 2015 elections. A comparison of the periods reveals that party alignment has changed within the Muslim community. Until 1981, the center-right parties were receiving most of the votes. Since the 2004 elections, the center-right ND party has been unable to get a seat with the minority votes. The latest elections show that the minority vote has begun to swing toward the center-left, especially for radical-left parties. As pointed out, the Muslim minority usually votes for the party and candidate with the highest chance to win a seat in the parliament. It would be a mistake, however, to reduce the preference of the minority for PASOK and later for SYRIZA to merely their chances of winning the election. In the January 2015 parliamentary elections, fragmentation of the Muslim vote among the Greek parties was less than in previous elections, with almost 75% voting for SYRIZA, thus managing to extract two seats representing both districts where the three winners were Turkish-speaking Muslims.³¹ In the 25 January 2015 parliamentary elections, eight Muslim candidates from Rhodopi were nominated for six different parties and nine Muslim candidates from Ksanthi were nominated for seven different parties. For the 20 September 2015 elections, the electoral system had changed from an open-list to a close-list system. The number of Muslim candidates increased to 14 where in addition to SYRIZA's three previous MPs, To Potami's candidate İlhan Ahmet was elected as well. As discussed in the previous section, this outcome highlights a change in political behavior of the minority, shaped by the 2009 economic crisis in combination with their long-term sociological voting pattern. The fact that in September 2015 To Potami's candidate İlhan Ahmet mobilized around 10,000 votes signifies that the minority candidates matter more than parties. Therefore, the candidate-nomination process is another influential factor for the political representation and political behavior of the minority.

The relationship of Greek political parties with minority candidates has been characterized by distance and the logic of vote maximization mainly

present during preelection periods. As a consequence, minority representatives had little loyalty to party positions and ideology, while the benefits they could extract for their Muslim supporters were limited to selective distribution of favors, for example, allowing the issuing of a driver's license for an individual.³² Nomination of loyal Muslim candidates by the left-wing parties played an important role in decreasing the mistrust between the minority and Greek society. For the ideologically oriented parties, candidates' religion or ethnicity loses significance. Considering the 2012 and 2015 general elections, decreasing voter turnout at the national level favored the parties that have a deep ideological basis and are able to sustain voter loyalty. In the September 2015 elections, while To Potami succeeded by nominating a popular Muslim MP İlhan Ahmet for the 2012 and 2015 parliamentary elections, SYRIZA chose Muslim candidates who have strong party affiliation and they were successful in mobilizing Christian as well as Muslim voters rather than just choosing popular names. This strong relation suggests SYRIZA's MPs have higher chance to communicate with the party leader and to contribute in the parliament on behalf of the minority.

Aarbakke stated that there was an established distribution of seats among the Muslim candidates: In each prefecture of Ksanthi and Rhodopi, the deputies are shared with the bigger party taking two seats and the smaller party taking one seat.³³ The 2015 parliamentary elections broke this formula with the election of the three Muslim MPs from the largest party ticket and especially in the September 2015 elections when Rhodopi elected only minority deputies. Before analyzing the SYRIZA–Muslim-minority conciliation process, it is necessary to discuss the minority MPs' effectiveness³⁴ in the Greek parliament in order to evaluate chronological changes.

EFFECTIVENESS IN THE PARLIAMENT (1920–2015)

Until 1974, it was not the custom for the Turkish-Muslim-minority members to participate in parliamentary debates; therefore, they did not leave a mark in the parliament. The community's trust in minority candidates was the reason for their election for several terms even though the Greek political system was not stable. The cases of Müderris Hafız Ali Galip, who was elected to the Greek Parliament from Komotini/Gümülcine (Rhodopi) district for six terms between the years 1920–1936, and Osman Nuri Fettahoğlu (Xanthi), who had been elected to the Parliament for eight terms (1946–1963), are two examples. For the period from the accession of Western Thrace to Greece in 1920 until suspension of the Greek Parliament by Metaxas in 1936, eight national elections were held; the Muslim minority won 29 seats in those elections that were filled by 16 different MPs. Although most of the Muslim MPs from Ksanthi had a Kemalist affiliation in contrast to Komotini, the main

generalization about this period should be the support for a Venizelist party and indifference toward the community's Kemalist-traditionalist divide.³⁵ Muslim MPs belonged mainly to the clergy, merchants, and the landowner class. Their weak command of the Greek language, an inability to mobilize Greek people, and their deficiency in parliamentary work were not obstacles to their election and reelection. Yet, this does not suggest that political representation was unimportant for the minority. For instance, although it may seem strange that in the post-1923 period until 1933, the minority favored the Liberal Party of Venizelos, champion of the "*Megali Idea*" (a larger Greek state encompassing all areas traditionally parts of Greece) that was the main party in power and Muslim candidates had greater chances of being elected through the Liberal ranks and achieving a greater degree of influence over minority affairs.

From the transition to democracy in 1946 until the beginning of the junta regime in 1967, Greeks voted in nine general elections. During those years, the Muslim minority won 27 seats, shared among only eight different MPs, which shows the position of Muslim MPs as stable figures within the community despite their lack of parliamentary work. Political mobilization through local communication tools such as newspapers replaced taking the floor in the parliament. The Muslim minority again preferred the old parties under the polarized multiparty system of the 1950s, but their party identification was weak, as is reflected in the changing positions of their MPs. However, in general all MPs were elected on center-parties' tickets; radical parties failed to mobilize Muslim votes during that period. The disdain toward communism is a common point for the minority MPs and the community, which can also be observed in their support for rightist parties in general until 1996 when Mustafa Mustafa was elected with Synaspismos' ticket. In this period, while political cleavages between the Kemalists and traditionalists continued, the second generation from some Muslim families managed to be elected as well, similar to the custom in Greek politics.

Since Greece's transition back to democracy in 1974, the features of the minority candidates have altered so that Muslim MPs have become more effective in the parliament. Leaders advocate the need to acquire good knowledge of Greek alongside education in Turkish. From 1974 until the 2015 general elections, 17 elections took place and the Muslim minority won 36 seats, shared by 18 different MPs thus showing a decrease in patron clientelism. Beginning in 1981, with the rise of PASOK, center-left parties also began to mobilize minority votes under the two-party system, constituted by PASOK and ND.³⁶ The average number of Muslim MPs in the Greek Parliament had reduced; however, as the minority began to elect candidates with professional occupations such as doctors, lawyers, pharmacists, engineers, and architects, the MPs' effectiveness in parliament increased on issues related to minority and general matters (see Supplementary Appendix). Yet, the effectiveness of the Muslim MPs brought a new dilemma for them.

If they mentioned the problems of the minority community too much in parliament, they lost their chance for renomination in the next elections. If they did not work in parliament for the benefit of the minority community, they lost their chance for mobilizing the minority votes for the next elections. Therefore, Muslim deputies make ambiguous electoral campaigns and avoid declaring their loyalty to the Greek state or to their party in their parliamentary speeches. Yet, except the independent Muslim MPs who served between 1989–1990 parliamentary terms, the minority MPs usually use the words “minority,” “Western Thrace minority,” or “minority of the region” rather than referring to the ethnic origin of the community.

When Synaspismos’ Muslim candidate for Rhodopi, Mustafa Mustafa, was elected in 1996, the most conspicuous feature of the result was that for the first time the minority voted massively for a candidate of a left-wing party (see [Table 1](#)). Synaspismos’ minority politicians were well integrated within the party organization and the party, unlike the other large parties, did not worry about finding appropriate candidates. He also continued to be well respected among the minority, which led to his several nominations and reelection in 2015 on the SYRIZA ticket. However, Mustafa’s ability to influence was restricted by several factors in 1996. First, he represented a small party outside the government. Second, his commitment to the party meant that to a certain degree he was restricted by the ideological and political limitations of Synaspismos. Still, with the initiatives of Mustafa in addition to other KKE MPs, the reaction to Article 19 was intensified and it was abolished in 1998.³⁷ In 1999, the minority representatives raised a question in parliament regarding Greece’s refusal to sign the European Council’s “Framework on the Protection of Minority.”³⁸ They declared that a minority’s ethnic identity should be recognized.

For the parliament established after the 2015 legislative elections, Mustafa Mustafa, having been elected from the leading party in the coalition government, has more ability to be effective in the parliament along with the contributions of the other Muslim MPs — Karayusuf, Zeybek and lately Ahmet — who were very effective representatives in terms of giving written interpellations and parliamentary speeches.³⁹ The Muslim MPs of SYRIZA support the electoral campaign “Turks’ vote is to Turks”; they believe with their party’s support they can find a more longstanding solution to the minority problems, one based on a “human-centered” approach. They work for issues relevant to the whole nation as well as the economic problems of the region, rather than specifically for minority rights. Their work for the minority is mainly about problems regarding education. They prefer to discuss their written interpellations with party colleagues and to make the Christian MPs sign the interpellation as well.⁴⁰ For instance, in 2013 when Karayusuf and Zeybek explained to their party leader and to other SYRIZA MPs why the “240 Imam Law” should not be approved, 69 SYRIZA MPs voted against that bill.⁴¹ In general, the parliamentary work of the Muslim

MPs in the period 2007–2015 suggests that minority MPs can be more effective in parliament when they get seats through a left-oriented party that is in power.

SYRIZA–MUSLIM-MINORITY CONCILIATION IN THE 2015 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

SYRIZA's electoral success in Rhodopi and Ksanthi is significant for analyzing the changes in the relations between the minority electorate and the Greek parties. As aforementioned, while the microlevel and macrolevel opportunities increased the impact of the Muslim vote in the region, so also did the popularity of the candidates and alternation in the community's political behavior when it switched to the radical-left party and thus enabled SYRIZA to mobilize the majority of the votes. SYRIZA's economic plan and its rhetoric on improvement of the social services following the 2009 economic crisis attracted the minority, which inhabits the poorest region of the country. In addition to these factors, SYRIZA's discourses on human rights and minority rights serve as a security shield against the rising nationalism in Greece particularly through the Golden Dawn Party.

SYRIZA's Candidate Nomination and the Muslim Vote

The open-list PR system applied in the elections enables us to measure the successes of the individual candidates in mobilizing the voters. Moreover, mobilizing the minority votes with the correct candidate is likely to bring a definite seat in the parliament, especially in Komotini. According to Karayusuf, it is difficult to motivate people through political consciousness, and there are certain factors that mobilize the minority's vote: the party's possibility of coming to power; a Turkish candidate at the first ranks; the Turkish candidates' possibility of election; and the popularity of the candidate (that is, to be a person who is loved).⁴²

Table 1 shows that SYRIZA became the first party in Ksanthi in four consecutive elections since the 2012 elections, when pharmacist Hüseyin Zeybek, who served in the left-wing movement for decades, also utilized the name of his eminent family that has served the Muslim community as politicians, and it shows that, in Ksanthi, SYRIZA increased its seats to two in the 2015 elections. As seen in Table 1, minority in Ksanthi was left without representation in 2000 and 2004 when, due to high fragmentation of minority votes, PASOK's Muslim candidates carried water to their Christian candidates. This fragmentation began to decrease in 2007. Table 1 also indicates that the small Greek parties need minority support in order to pass the threshold and to sustain a seat in the parliament; moreover, it emphasizes that SYRIZA has

replaced PASOK in Greek politics and increased its vote share nationwide vis-à-vis ND, especially in Rhodopi and Ksanthi since 2012.

In the January 2015 general elections, almost half of the electorate in the poorest district in Greece, Rhodopi, voted for SYRIZA, and that province is registered as having cast the highest share of its total votes for SYRIZA, where SYRIZA's Muslim MPs got 72% of the party's total votes (21.998/30.476). It is necessary to note that Muslim candidates attained not only Muslim votes but also managed to appeal to Christian voters — even more than their Christian party members. The close-list PR electoral system in September 2015 elections this time enabled İlhan Ahmet to mobilize some portion of Haciosman's votes for the To Potami party, and, although SYRIZA's votes were reduced to 39.5%, the minority increased its representatives to four.

Although the minority's support for SYRIZA broke the disdain or fear of the radical-left within the community, this does not suggest that they had abandoned their political views in favor of a leftist ideology. SYRIZA's electoral campaign, based on an economic program following the 2009 economic crisis and more democratic rhetoric against the rising nationalism in the country, best served the community's needs and interests; hence, its economic performance and inclusive discourses are crucial to the consolidation of its power.

SYRIZA's Economic Program and Approach to Minority Rights

According to Rhodopi SYRIZA MP Mustafa Mustafa, "the reasons behind the Turkish minority's inclination toward the left are the inability of the previous governments to bring a permanent and rational solution to minority policies and the effects of the economic crisis."⁴³ SYRIZA based its electoral campaign mainly on the promise to provide the deprived masses with economic recovery. In accordance with its leftist political views, SYRIZA openly supports human rights, democracy, equality, and social justice, which are crucial values for a minority that has security concerns due to rising nationalism and Islamophobia in Europe. Although SYRIZA's electoral campaign and economic plan did not include any special promises regarding the minority, among all of the Greek parties that ran in the 2015 parliamentary elections, only SYRIZA's economic promises appealed to the Muslim voters. Compared to the other parties, SYRIZA has an impartial attitude towards all religious groups in the society; moreover, in 2012, the party declared in its 40-point program that it would negotiate a stable accord with Turkey. These statements were welcomed by the Turkish-speaking Muslim community, which has been struggling to protect its cultural and religious identity and seeking normalized, improved relations between Greece and Turkey.

The East Macedonia-Thrace region is ranked second in unemployment at 28.1%, which is above the country average of 26.4%, as recorded by

the Hellenic Statistical Authority (*Elliniki Statistiki Arkhi*, ELSTAT). Among minority youth, unemployment is more than 45% in Rhodopi, and 40% in Ksanthi.⁴⁴ This factor, in addition to the discontent with the previous governments' failure in economic redemption, explains why SYRIZA's electoral slogans "hope is coming" (*Η ελπίδα έρχεται*) for the January elections and "we win tomorrow" (*Κερδίζουμε το αύριο*) for the September elections are broadly acknowledged by the minority and countrywide. Minorities have been affected most by the economic crisis, as most people are peasants or workers and a much smaller number are government employees. Their main agricultural production is based on tobacco cultivation and, as the support from Europe decreased, they entered rough times. SYRIZA's 40-point plan signals that the party will work to improve the living standard of lower-class citizens and needy groups in the society by raising the minimum wage and providing free health benefits. Its promise to guarantee human rights in immigrant detention centers and to facilitate the reunion of immigrant families emphasized the party's humanitarian approach to the problems of society.

According to Ayhan Karayusuf, SYRIZA is the only party with policies to preserve national identities compared to the previous governments, all of which suppressed its identity. In his electoral campaign, Karayusuf used the slogan "continue down the road with our values and faith" by referring to his potential for reelection and suggesting that a vote for socialist SYRIZA would not threaten the cultural and religious values of the minority. Karayusuf's call to all Greek electorates to vote for and unite under SYRIZA for a struggle against discrimination, injustice, racism, and crisis was crucial to merging the interests of the minority with those of the entire population.⁴⁵ Karayusuf also mentioned that the Muslim MPs had been elected not merely because of their religious identity but also because of their leftist political positions. Moreover, he pointed out, the main problem of the minority people is related to education, which they are demanding be offered in their mother tongue (Turkish) in minority kindergartens. Hence, it is understood that the main expectations are about the recognition of Turkish identity and education rather than Muslim identity.

Ksanthi MP Hüseyin Zeybek defines his identity as "minority and Greek." He is a partisan believing in socialist ideology; however, he defined "minority issue" as his red line. He stated that SYRIZA has a positive positioning against the ban on using the term "Turkish" for the minority associations. Zeybek says his party accepts the Turkish identity.⁴⁶ According to him, in the new parliament, there are three minority representatives in the party and it is impossible for SYRIZA not to enter into dialogue with the community. However, such a tendency seems to be offset by the strong conservative/nationalistic positions of their coalition partners, the Independent Greeks. The Minister of Education's decision to close nine minority schools in addition to previous ones made during the PASOK period due to budget

cuts created disappointment within the community, which regards education as the primary issue.⁴⁷

“Negotiation of a stable accord with Turkey” is another statement of SYRIZA that the minority welcomed. Another positive expectation is that of no change in Greece’s support for Turkey’s EU membership. After the troubled period of the late 1990s, because PASOK was the initiator of the rapprochement with Turkey through earthquake diplomacy in 1999 and its Foreign Minister Georges Papandreou acknowledging the right to self-identification of minorities, Greece’s Turks voted massively for PASOK in the 9 April 2000 parliamentary elections and two Muslim MPs were elected from PASOK (see [Table 1](#)). Therefore, the possibility of the continuation of good Turkish–Greek relations and Tsipras’ not so nationalist, more moderate voice towards Turkey would be satisfactory for the minority. However, the minority community did not welcome attendance of SYRIZA MPs Mustafa and Karayusuf at the Commemorative Ceremony for Asia Minor Genocide in Rhodopi,⁴⁸ which signified that they were representing the whole region rather than only the minority.

Similar to the 2012 parliamentary term, the 2015 Greek elections appeared to offer an opportunity for the minority with four effective MPs where three of them are from the same party serving in the parliament. On the other hand, there are some obstacles for them to solve the long-standing problems of the minority. First, in the parliament, the existence of the ultranationalist — even fascist — party Golden Dawn prevents them from naming the problems of the minority in the parliamentary speeches where the issue is always regarded as Turkish–Greek relations, and their loyalty to Greece is questioned. Moreover, the nationalist party ANEL as the coalition-government partner would deter SYRIZA from pursuing policies that satisfy the minority. Second, Greece is in a deep economic crisis and national issues are made a priority over minority rights.

CONCLUSION

This article points out that electoral engineering such as increasing the national threshold to sustain political stability and to control minority’s political participation does not always work. As it is argued the rise of party competition following the change in Greece since 2012 from a two-party to a multiparty system increased the impact of microlevel and macrolevel factors on electoral behavior of the Muslim community and opened up new opportunities for them to access Greek politics. In Greece where localism is a very high priority for the candidates, a suitable combination—electoral system type (open-list reinforced proportional representation) with the nomination of left-wing-oriented popular candidates by a party having the potential to win the elections—enabled the Muslim voters to concentrate

on a single party and to facilitate SYRIZA's advance in Greek Thrace. In the January 2015 elections, with a set of electoral strategies offering social services and good relations with Turkey, SYRIZA managed to mobilize almost 75% of the Turkish-speaking Muslim vote in Western Thrace where the unemployment rate is the highest and voter turnout is lower than the national average.

The study also claims that, despite the fact that Rhodopi was not represented by any Christian deputy in the September 2015 elections and mainstream Greek media presented the results as Islamization of Greece, because SYRIZA's Muslim MPs also attracted Christian voters due to their ideological orientation, their presence in the parliament can contribute to the normalization of minority-majority relations in Greece, rather than creating tension. The analysis on Muslim MPs' discourses indicates the scope of their parliamentary work alters according to their voter profile (Muslim and/or Christian). The analysis of the previous parliamentary work displays how Muslim and other SYRIZA MPs prefer to act together on issues relating to the interests of the minority, the region as well as the nation as a whole. SYRIZA's Muslim MPs Karayusuf, Zeybek and Mustafa were active in the parliament when their party was in opposition and today they are still effective and confident of attracting more than half the Muslim voters. By working to address the economic and social problems of the whole region, emphasizing issues related to education rather than religion, and collaborating with their colleagues in their written interpellations, Muslim MPs have shown balanced politics that will help to consolidate SYRIZA's votes in the region.

In Greek Thrace, ethnic Turks hold a dominant position within the Muslim community, allowing them to impact on electoral results and to influence the choices of party candidate nominations in their favor. In order to secure their political representation in the Greek parliament, the minority in Greece vote for the candidates and parties that have the highest potential to come to power. Therefore, although the minority, despite its conservative character, began to vote for the center-left and radical-left parties in recent years, in order to mobilize minority votes in future elections, SYRIZA has to maintain its contention for power. The data on party preferences also suggest that the right-wing parties need to question why their connection with the minority has been weakened since 1996.

Moreover, the minority's expectations are higher of SYRIZA compared to the previous governments and beside amelioration of the economic crisis in Greece and in the region, their electoral support will be determined by SYRIZA's performance regarding minority issues, especially in the field of education as the interviews with minority MPs suggested. Until now the majority of problems have remained unresolved by the SYRIZA-ANEL government, and on the contrary the closing of minority schools created discontent within the community. Providing rational responses to the

reactions of nationalist parties in the Greek parliament and satisfying the demands of the minority constitute a challenge for SYRIZA in the near future.

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SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

Supplemental data for this article can be accessed on the [publisher's website](#).

NOTES

1. The newspaper *Eleftheros Tipos* evaluated the electoral results as "Sensitive Balances: Minority and 3 Deputies in Rhodopi" (22 Sep. 2015). On the other hand, the newspaper *Estia* used the heading "3 Muslims Threat" for an article discussing the possible influence of three SYRIZA MPs on the future of the new government (25 Sep. 2015). The populist-right wing newspaper *Dimokratia* headlined in bold and big fonts on its first page: "The most sensitive (!!!) region of our country will be represented by three questionable Muslims," "Rhodopi is without Christian deputy" and under the heading "Uncontrolled Turkish Consulate," the headline used Turkish and Greek flags to suggest that the danger is not only "Islamization" but also Turkish influence in the region (22 Sep. 2015).

2. In Greece, only Muslims are recognized as minorities and are granted the rights guaranteed in the Lausanne Treaty. Greece and Turkey attempted to exercise different policies: Greece identified the minority on the basis of religion (except for during the early 1930s and the 1950s) overestimating Pomaks and Gypsies, while Turkey considered the whole minority as one and only nationally Turkish. Elisabeth Kontogiorgi, *Population Exchange in Greek Macedonia: The Forced Settlement of Refugees 1922–1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

3. Turkish authorities want to keep the figures high as indicated by the Turkish consul in Komotini providing the figure 150,000–170,000, available online at <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/bati-trakya-turk-azinligi.tr.mfa> (accessed 12 April 2007). Aarbakke's calculations of the Muslim population for 1991, based on the Greek census, however, identified 39,115 at Ksanthi, 56,865 at Rhodopi, and 7,900 at Evros, hence 103,880 in total. In Ksanthi, 19% of the Muslims are Turks; 63% are Pomaks, and 18% are Roma, while in Rhodopi with a Muslim population of 71%, Turks comprise the majority, followed by 17% Pomaks and 12% Roma. Vermund Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority of Greek Thrace" (PhD Thesis, University of Bergen, 2000), 31–35.

4. Geoffrey Alderman and John Leslie, *Governments, Ethnic Groups and Political Representation: Comparative Studies on Governments and Non-Dominant Ethnic Groups in Europe, 1850–1940* (New York: Dartmouth Publishing, 1993).

5. Dia Anagnostou and Anna Triandafyllidou, *Regions, Minorities and European Integration: A Case Study on Muslims in Western Thrace, Greece* (Athens: ELIAMEP Publications, 2006).

6. Article 19 of the Greek Citizenship Code (No:3370/1955) provides that "A person of non-Greek ethnic origin leaving Greece without intention of returning may be declared as having lost Greek nationality." Article 19 that came into effect in 1959 was abrogated by the Greek Parliament in June 1998.

7. Stephanos Stavros, "The Legal Status of Minorities in Greece Today: The Adequacy of their Protection in the Light of Current Human Rights Perceptions," *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 13(1): 1–32 (1995).

8. For details on the minority education system, see *Minority Education in Greece*, 1 October 2008, <http://www.osce.org/odhr/33832?download=true> (accessed 23 June 2010).

9. Minority MPs did not refer to problems of the minority until 1977; Aarbakke, "Muslim Minority," 68.
10. Martin Harrop and William L. Miller, *Elections and Voters: A Comparative Introduction* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1987).
11. Tsipras is acknowledged as a charismatic leader who utilizes populism similar to that of the founder of PASOK, Andreas Papandreou: See Yannis Stavrakakis and Giorgos Katsambekis, "Left-Wing Populism in the European Periphery: The Case of SYRIZA," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 19(2): 119–42 (2014).
12. Roula Nezi, "Economic Voting Under the Economic Crisis: Evidence from Greece," *Electoral Studies* 31(3): 498–505 (2012).
13. Georgios Karyotis and Ruding Wolfgang, "Blame and Punishment? The Electoral Politics of Extreme Austerity in Greece," *Political Studies* 63: 1–23 (2013); Hernández Enrique and Hanspeter Kriesi, "The Electoral Consequences of the Financial and Economic Crisis in Europe," *European Journal of Political Research* 55(2): 209–224 (2016).
14. Kostis A. Tsiumis, *Western Thrace Muslim Minority and Greek-Turkish Relations 1923–1940* [in Greek] (Thessaloniki: Aristotelio Panepistimio, 1994).
15. "Komotini's Electoral Results for 2015 Turkish Elections," <http://secim.haberler.com/2015/gumulcine-secim-sonuclari/> (accessed 21 Jan. 2016), Total number of registered voters is 260, and voter turnout is 23.5%.
16. Personal Interviews, April 2013, Komotini. Political representation of the minorities (number of MPs in the parliament) has been mainly formed according to the internal institutions of the countries the minorities live in and independent from Greek–Turkish relations. Today, before every election in Greece, the Western Thrace Turks Solidarity Association (Batı Trakya Türkleri Dayanışma Derneği [BTDD]), based in Istanbul, arranges transportation via bus from Turkey to Greece for the hundreds of Greek citizen Turks. This also shows the importance of political representation for the minority. However, there is neither evidence nor a recent study on the role of Turkey in matters of minority votes.
17. The traditionalist Muslims based their influence on the conservative character of the minority, while the modernist Turks identified with the Turkish reforms. The reforms that Kemal Atatürk introduced in the modern Turkish Republic, which completely changed the Islamic image of the country and formed a clearly secular state, were not welcomed by the conservative part of the minority society of Western Thrace, a region where religion played a key role. Tsiumis, "Western Thrace Muslim Minority," 10.
18. The minority was unofficially forbidden to carry out restoration on their properties and also on the foundation estates; hence, they usually make the restorations illegally. Ahmet Hacıosman's "bill proposal" given on 2 Aug. 2011 about the illegal construction of houses built by the minority members was accepted by the two major parties PASOK and ND. This was the first time a written interpellation made by a minority MP was realized and a bill was implemented based on that proposal. Hacıosman stated in our interview that, even though these written interpellations have not been realized, minority MPs should put all their efforts into the parliament (Personal Interviews, April 2013, Komotini).
19. Burcu Taşkın, "Political Representation of Minorities: Comparison of Greek-Orthodox Minority of Istanbul and Muslim-Turkish Minority of Western Thrace" (doctoral dissertation, Bilgi University, Istanbul, 2014).
20. Hanna F. Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967).
21. Jan E. Leighley and Arnold Vedlitz, "Race, Ethnicity and Political Participation: Competing Models and Contrasting Explanations," *The Journal of Politics* 61: 1092–1114 (1999).
22. Thomas Saalfeld, "Representation, Integration and Political Entrepreneurship: Institutions and Strategic Options for Ethnic-minority Elites in Western Europe — A Framework for Analysis," in *ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops*, 1–44 (Turin, 22–27 March 2002).
23. Fredrich Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (New York: University of Michigan, 1969).
24. Maria Spirova and Boyka Stefanova, "The European Dimension of the Political Representation of Minorities," in *EUSA Conference* (Los Angeles, 24–26 April 2009); Lisa Togeby, "The Political Representation of Ethnic Minorities: Denmark as a Deviant Case," *Party Politics* 14: 325–43 (2008).
25. Karen Bird, "The Political Representation of Women and Ethnic Minorities in Established Democracies: A Framework for Comparative Research" (Working Paper presented to the Academy of Migration Studies, Denmark, 11 Nov. 2003).

26. Aarbakke, "The Muslim Minority of Greek Thrace," 144.
27. <http://www.yypes.gr/en/Elections/NationalElections/DeputyElections/InterestCitizen/> (accessed 30 Sep. 2015).
28. As the electoral law stated, it should be a closed-list PR system if elections were held within 18 months.
29. Karen Bird, "The Political Representation of Visible Minorities in Electoral Democracies: A Comparison of France, Denmark, and Canada," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 11(4): 425–65 (2005).
30. SYRIZA as the first party got extra seats from ND in Ksanthi and Rhodopi, which enabled Ayhan Karayusuf to be elected as the third MP from Rhodopi. Moreover, ND's eminent politicians Alexandros Kontos and Evripidis Stilianidis from Ksanthi and Rhodopi, respectively, lost their tickets to the parliament.
31. According to the results for the January elections, SYRIZA's votes were higher in rural areas where the Turkish and Muslim populations are the majority. However, in cities and towns in which the Greeks form the majority, SYRIZA also received a higher percentage of votes than the national average. "Turks of Greece Overwhelmingly Vote for SYRIZA," *Daily Sabah*, 27 Jan. 2015, <http://www.dailysabah.com/europe/2015/01/27/turks-of-greece-overwhelmingly-vote-for-syriza> (accessed 29 Jan. 2015).
32. Dimosthenis Dodos, *Electoral Geography of Minorities: Minority Parties in the Southern Balkans: Greece, Bulgaria, Albania* (Athens: Exantas, 1994), 171.
33. Vermund Aarbakke, "Concept of Reciprocity and its Significance for the Political Organization of the Muslim Minority in Greece," in Samim Akgönül, ed., *Reciprocity: Greek and Turkish Minorities Law, Religion and Politics* (Istanbul: Bilgi University Press, 2008), 30.
34. Here, "effectiveness" refers to quality of representation, not the number of representatives in the assembly. The term indicates whether minority MPs address the problems of the minority in the parliament.
35. Eleftherios Venizelos' feud with King Constantine I during the First World War precipitated the National Schism that split the country into two rival camps. For details, see Richard Clogg, *Parties and Elections in Greece: The Search for Legitimacy* (London: Hurst, 1987), 108.
36. Takis S. Pappas, "The Transformation of the Greek Party System since 1951," *West European Politics* 26(2): 90–114 (2003).
37. The situation became more serious for Greece in November 1997 when the Monitoring Committee of the Council of Europe decided to set a meeting for Jan. 1998 to discuss the launch of a monitoring process against Greece on the grounds of Article 19. This possibility played a significant role in triggering the decision to abolish Article 19 in the parliament with a majority of votes. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yunanistan-a-turk-azinligi-resmen-tanima-cagrisi-39092791> (accessed 27 April 2010)
38. "Yunanistan'a Türk azınlığı resmen tanıma çağrısı," *Hürriyet Newspaper*, 24 July 1999.
39. Ayhan Karayusuf gave 286 written interpellations and made nine parliamentary speeches in his first term of service (7 Dec. 2012–6 Dec. 2014) and 26 interpellations with one speech in the previous parliament where only four of them were related to the Muslim minority. Of the 166 written interpellations and nine speeches by Hüseyin Zeybek before the 2015 elections, only five were minority related. In the previous parliament, he asked 29 questions but none were about minority-related issues. Mustafa Mustafa gave two written interpellation between 25 Jan. and 20 Sep. 2015. İlhan Ahmet gave 25 written interpellations and eight letters and made parliamentary speeches between 2004 and 2007, the majority of which were related to problems in education. He gave written interpellations about education, minority identity issues, Article 19 victims, freedom of religion and conscience, economic problems and development, and social problems (Hellenic Parliament Archives). <http://www.hellenicparliament.gr/en/>, accessed 17 April 2017.
40. Taşkın, "Minority Representation," 305.
41. "SYRIZA's MPs said No to the '240 Imam Law,'" *Millet Newspaper*, 12 Jan. 2013, <http://www.batitrakya.org/bati-trakya-haber/240-imam-yasasina-hayir.html> (accessed 18 March 2014).
42. Personal Interviews, April 2013, Komotini.
43. "Syriza: Türk azınlık yıllarca 'komünist' diye korktu, şimdi de destekliyor," *Hürriyet Newspaper*, 28 Jan. 2015, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/syriza-turk-azinlik-yillarca-komunist-diye-korktu-simdi-de-destekliyor-28069885> (accessed 17 Feb. 2015).

44. "Yunanistan ve Batı Trakya'da İşsizlik," *Trakyanın Sesi*, 10 Dec. 2014, <http://www.trakyaninsesi.com/haber/2307/yunanistan-ve-bati-trakyada-issizlik.html> (accessed 9 April 2015).
45. "2015 Greek Early Elections," *Azınlıkça Newspaper*, 21 Jan. 2015, <http://www.azinlikca.net/2015-yunanistan-erken-secimleri.html> (accessed 30 Jan. 2015).
46. Personal Interviews, April 2013, Ksanthi.
47. The number of minority schools closed or united since 2010 has increased to 60 by the 2016 Fall term. "Yunanistan dokuz Türk okulunu kapattı," *Hürriyet Newspaper*, 19 Sep. 2016, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yunanistan-dokuz-turk-okulunu-kapatti-40226512> (accessed 5 Oct. 2016).
48. "Milletvekilleri Mustafa ve Karayusuf Küçük Asya Soykırımını Anma Törenine Katıldılar," *Birlik Newspaper*, 27 Sep. 2015, <http://www.birlikgazetesi.net/haberler/10728-2015-09-27-10-57-38.html> (accessed 14 Oct. 2015).

Burcu Taşkın is working as an Assistant Professor at Istanbul Medeniyet University, Department of Political Science and Public Administration. Her areas of interest are political representation of minorities, electoral participation, voter behavior, Turkish–Greek relations, and Balkan politics. She is the author of the article "Voter Turnout in Turkey's Parliamentary and Local Elections (1950–2014): Does Participation Increase when Competition Decreases?" *Turkish Studies* 16(4): 465–486 (2015).