

## PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE INFLUENCE OF DOMINANT GROUPS ON POLITICS IN ATHENS GREECE

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### RÉSUMÉ

Cet article traite de l'influence des groupes dominants sur la vie politique grecque. On a compilé une liste de 19 groupes parmi les plus importants de la société hellénique et on a interrogé un total de 712 résidents d'Athènes à propos de leur influence sur les élections générales de 1974. Les résultats confirment aussi l'opinion que les gens attribuent une grande influence aux groupes qu'ils n'aiment pas. Le "clientélisme et le patronage" semblent être au centre de la politique grecque, là où les groupes dominants continuent de jouir des privilèges spéciaux au sein de la société grecque.

### ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the influence of dominant groups in Greek national politics. A list of 19 major groups in Greek society was compiled and a total of 712 residents of Athens were asked to evaluate the amount of influence exercised on the outcome of the 1974 general elections. The results of this study showed that, on the whole, political personalities were perceived to have greater influence than all other factors considered. The results also confirmed the idea that people ascribe a great deal of influence to groups they dislike. "Clientelistic or patronage relations" seem to be the norm in Greek politics; the various dominant groups continue to enjoy special privileges within Greek society.

The influence of dominant groups in shaping national and international political decisions has been a subject of interest to political sociologists and political scientists alike. In this paper we focus on only one aspect of the influence of the dominant groups, namely the Athenian perceptions of the amount of influence of dominant groups in national politics. For the purpose of this analysis dominant groups will be defined as all those groups which exert influence on the political processes,

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particularly on the outcomes of national elections. More specifically, we will focus on the 1974 election -- the first since the restoration of democracy in Greece.

In the literature on mass politics and political elites, we can identify two major theoretical and conceptual orientations. One is more conservative/aristocratic and two, a more radical approach. The former looks at the masses as apathetic and incapable of ruling themselves. Supporters of this view have a basic distrust of the masses' ability to influence social and political events. In the conservative view dominant groups and their leaders are by nature and necessity more important in making the crucial decisions and influencing politics and social change than are the masses.

In the case of Greece we find a dearth of studies of dominant groups particularly with respect to the public's perceptions concerning their leaders. Indeed a number of students of Greek politics and society (Legg, 1969; Pollis, 1965; Kourvetaris, 1977) have suggested that the problem of Greece as an unstable western democracy lies not so much in the nature of its people but in the processes of recruitment and composition of its leaders. In other words, it is more of a problem concerning the top rather than a problem of the bottom of the social and political structures.

The dominant groups have been one of the major problems of Greece since its inception as an independent nation in the mid 19th century. The modern political and social history of Greece is replete with frequent military interventions, coups, counter coups, revolts, civil wars, and political crises in general.

Recently, there has been an effort to empirically study social and political leaders in Greek society. Alexander (1964) studied the Greek industrial elites, Kourvetaris (1971 a,b, c) the military, Legg (1969) the political leaders, Carmocolias (1974) the perceptions of educational and occupational elites in Patras concerning political communications (especially the newspapers); and Meynaud (1966) a variety of political forces in Greece.

The frequent military interventions and the breakdown of democratic regimes in the past have in part contributed to the negative perceptions of the people toward the effectiveness of their political system and the legitimacy of their leaders. Negative public perceptions of leaders may weaken the effectiveness of the political system and challenge the legitimacy of its leaders.

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Greece's setting can be used to test a number of hypotheses concerning the influence of dominant groups in Greek society. For example: Why do people attribute greater influence to some groups than to other? What can we learn from people's perceptions about dominant groups' influence in politics?

In this analysis we will consider the social and political correlates of those who identified certain political groups. Perceptions of dominant groups will provide us with some idea of how the people feel about those who are ruling them. Public opinion surveys contribute to our understanding of how people perceive the politicians and the way that the political system works. Such perceptions may influence regime support and commitment to that system. A sense of legitimacy and support for the implementation of policy and decision-making may result.

Form and Rytina (1969) noted that perceptions of elites were related to social class or status. Dye (1962) found that members of the majority party were more apt to believe decision-making is democratic and open to the influence of a variety of groups than are members of the opposition. Klorman (1978) found only very limited support for Form and Rytina's hypothesis that perceptions of institutional power structures are closely linked to one's stratification position. He did, however, find support for Dye's idea that the political majority and minority evaluate groups differently. Klorman (1978:786) suggested that the perceived distribution of power is contingent upon one's 'affective orientation towards the group stimulus.' There may be a particular tendency to attribute great influence to a groups that one dislikes.

### DATA COLLECTION, RESEARCH PROCEDURES AND HYPOTHESES

The data were collected during the spring and summer of 1977. Sociology students from Pierce-Deree College, an American sponsored institution, and University of Athens students were trained to administer the interview schedule. A random sample of 80 blocks in the Greater Athens area was drawn with the cooperation of the National Statistical Service of Greece (similar to the U.S. Census Bureau). In each block ten households were chosen for the interviews based on a specified interval between houses. Interviews were completed with 712 people.

As part of our interview schedule, we devised a list of 19 major groups in Greek society. Using a reputational method of sorts we asked a number of persons to name the dominant groups which exert influence in politics. Based

on their responses we compiled this list that reflected the makeup and diversity of the Greek society. (Table One provides a list of all these groups.) We asked each respondent to evaluate how much influence each group had on the outcome of the 1974 election. Respondents could reply no influence (0 points), a little (1 point), some (2 points) or a great deal (3 points). Means were calculated to determine the average amount of influence each dominant group had. We combined certain variables to make indicators of three broad types of groups. More specifically, the industrialists, multinationals, bankers, and shipowners formed the capitalist dominant group while the newspapers, radio, and TV composed the mass media, and the rural and urban police forces and military made up the security forces. In this paper we deal primarily with the combined dominant groups and only secondarily with the other forces.

Following Klorman's notion that a person perceives groups he dislikes as having lots of influence, we tentatively suggest the following general proposition: People who possess certain social characteristics which predispose them to be conservative are more likely to support the pluralist conception of influence and thus not see influence concentrated in the hands of conservative groups such as the capitalist dominant group, the church, and the security forces.

Socio-demographic characteristics predisposing one to be conservative are older age, being female, birthplace in the Peloponnese (southern region of Greece), and higher socio-economic status (SES). Groups considered to be conservative in Greek society are industrialists, bankers, shipowners, multinational corporations, the military, the police, the CIA, church, bureaucracy, farmers, and civil servants. Groups considered to be left are the trade unions and students. The mass media--newspapers, radio, and television--were not considered either left or right although the TV stations in Greece are state controlled. The major Athenian papers represent a variety of political opinions. Merchants, political personalities and political programs were not considered left or right also. Merchants are normally small owners and are caught between the forces of the right and the left (see Wright, 1977). Political personalities and programs could represent any ideological persuasion although parties of the right and center are more often associated with the personalistic and clientelistic aspects of politics (Legg, 1969) while the parties of the left may be more concerned with the objective aspects of party platforms.

The specific hypotheses we are most interested in are the following: Those belonging to the higher SES and those with a conservative sociodemographic background will be less likely to perceive the capitalist dominant groups and other conservative forces as exerting much influence in society. Those of higher education and SES are more likely to attribute influence to political personalities. (For example, the more educated will tend to resent a politics based on charisma rather than on rationality and thus will attribute to political personality important influence.)

Those who perceive a threat to democracy from the right are more likely to attribute greater influence to conservative dominant groups. Conversely, those who perceive a threat to democracy from the left are more likely to attribute greater influence to leftist groups. Concerning the political leadership, those who perceive a threat to democracy from the right tend to attribute greater influence to political personalities while those who perceive a threat to democracy coming from the left tend to attribute greater influence to political programs. We can also compare relationships between perceptions of political influence and voting. More specifically we would expect to find a positive correlation (not necessarily a causal relationship) between attributing influence to conservative groups and voting leftist. Both of these indicators are manifestations of dislike for conservative forces. For a brief description of the operationalization of the social stratification and political variables used in the analysis, see the appendix.

### FINDINGS

Respondents' Perceptions of Dominant Groups. Below are the means of our 19 groups and the combined indicators of the capitalists (industrialists, shipowners, bankers, and multinationals), the mass media (newspapers, TV, and radio), and the Greek military and paramilitary forces (the officer corps of the armed forces and police).

Political personality had the greatest amount of influence on the outcome of the election of 1974. According to t-tests of means, it was significantly greater than all other groups. TV which ranked second was not significantly different from the influence of industrialists, the entire mass media or newspapers. The industrialists were not significantly different from the influence of newspapers, radio, TV, and the entire mass media. In other words, the next five factors were very closely related to each other.

TABLE 1

MEAN SCORES OF PERCEIVED POLITICAL INFLUENCE OF DOMINANT GROUPS

<u>Groups</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Pol. Personality	2.286
Television	2.095
Industrialists	2.088
Mass Media	2.051
Newspapers	2.039
Radio	2.016
CAPITALISTS	1.860
Shipowners	1.847
Political Programs	1.812
Military	1.790
Multinationals	1.785
Bankers	1.718
MILITARY AND PARA- MILITARY ELITES	1.694
Police	1.598
Bureaucracy	1.593
CIA	1.507
Farmers	1.433
Church	1.397
Civil Servants	1.291
Merchants	1.287
Students	1.219
Trade Unions	1.100

The political personalities had greater influence than all other factors including political programs. The mass media in general had greater political influence than the capitalist group. Within the capitalist group it was the industrialists followed by the bankers that seemed to have great influence.

We identified those who were at or near the top as the most dominant groups. Those high-ranking groups were the politicians (especially the personality or charismatic aspects), the mass media, and the capitalists. The supportive groups were made up of the security forces, the bureaucracy, and the politicians' political programs. The military, the police, and the bureaucracy carry out the wishes of the dominant groups. The party programs were the formal strategies of the politicians suggesting how to improve the Greek social and political scene. While they

did not have the greatest amount of influence, they were still important in the Greek realm of politics. The other groups (in Table 1) played minor roles in politics. According to the people's perceptions these included the merchants, civil servants, farmers, CIA(1), labor unions, students; and the church.

Social Correlates of the Perceptions of Dominant Groups.

We used Pearson correlation coefficients to show the associations between perceptions of influence of dominant groups and the social and political characteristics of the respondents. We hypothesized that the higher the socioeconomic status, the less the tendency to view economic and other conservative forces as having political influence. Overall the correlations strongly support this hypothesis. People with higher income, education, occupation, prestige and subjective class are less likely to view the capitalists as having political influence. The correlations of capitalists with income, education, and prestige are above .20 while with occupation it is .19 and .18 with subjective identification. Also the higher the SES, the less the perceived influence of the church, the bureaucracy, the military, police, CIA, civil servants, farmers, and merchants. Occupational prestige and education are most strongly related to the influence of these groups. There is a weak to moderate relationship between the socioeconomic variables and the influence of political personality. Occupational prestige (.11) and education (.11) are positively related to perceiving political personalities as influential in politics. The socioeconomic characteristics are not related to the perceived influence of the mass media, party programs, or trade unions.

Regarding the sociodemographic characteristics, having one's birthplace in Athens is somewhat negatively related to viewing the capitalists (-.08) and the police (-.07) as having political influence, but it is positively related to the belief that the mass media (.09) (especially the TV) has political influence. People born in the Peloponnese region are somewhat less likely to believe the TV is influential in Greek politics (-.09). This may in part be because not everyone has had equal access to the television in Greece and the migrants to Athens are probably less exposed to TV than the Athenians. Birth in Athens is positively associated with the belief that political personalities (.13) and political programs (.09) are influential in Greek politics. More direct exposure to the major politicians would be greater for those who lived all their lives in Athens. Native-born Athenians are less

likely to view merchants (-.20), civil servants (-.12), farmers (-.13), and trade unions (-.09) as politically influential while those born in the Peloponnese are slightly more likely to view merchants (.08) and trade unions (.08) as having political influence.

Political Characteristics and Perceptions of Dominant Groups. People who vote left are much more likely to see the capitalists (.28), the multinationals(.31), the security forces (.30), the church (.19), the bureaucracy (.20), and the CIA (.43) as having strong influence on politics. Also those who see the threat to democracy coming from the right are more likely to attribute influence to the capitalists (.18), the security forces (.24), the church (.14), the bureaucracy (.19), the multinationals (.24), and the CIA (.30). The correlations with voting are generally stronger than the correlations with threat from the right. The CIA, police, and multinationals have the highest correlations with vote and perceived threat from the right. Leftist voters are less likely to believe that the students and political programs have influence in politics. There is no significant difference between voting left and perceptions of the mass media or political personalities.

Those who see the threat as coming from the right are more likely to see the mass media (.10) as influential in politics. (The correlation is stronger for television and radio than for newspapers.) Those who view the threat as coming from the left are less likely to view the capitalists (-.11) and the security forces (-.19) as influential. The students (.11), political programs (.09), and the labor unions (.09) have somewhat more influence according to those who fear threat from the left. In general there is support for the hypotheses with the correlations tending to be strongest between vote and perceptions of dominant groups. Those who perceive threat from the right or those who vote left attribute influence to the conservative forces in Greece. This tends to confirm the idea that people ascribe a great deal of influence to groups they dislike.

## DISCUSSION

We believe that the views of Athenians regarding the dominant groups are consistent with our view of the reality of Greek society during the 1970's. The data were collected in 1977 and thus reflect the attitudes prevailing at that time. In 1981 the socialist party PASOK led by



Andreas Papandreou came to power. The interpretation of the data must be seen in the context of the prevailing attitudes of the Athenians in the 1970's.

Legg (1969:110-111) has pointed out that there is constant communication between bankers, publishers, ship-owners, state officials, and politicians. The politicians or state officials need political support while the other groups need governmental favors. Greek politics is still strongly influenced by clientelistic or patronage relations. The major Greek deputies normally have important family political ties and personal clients. They concentrate on satisfying unaggregated individual demands and their concern with the issues is usually minimal (Legg, 1969:273). Since the victory of PASOK, politics are becoming more issue oriented however.

Deputies in the parliament need the mass media in order to become known to the public. In his study of political communication in Greece between 1965-1967, Carmoclias (1974) felt the Athenian newspapers were the most important source of political information. (The influence of television was minor because at that time there were few televisions in Greece.) He concluded that most Athenian newspapers were bellicose and politicized especially in periods of crisis. The mass media was basically dysfunctional in linking the ruled and the political rulers. Our findings support this somewhat for we see a great distrust of the Athenian dailies. Twenty-six per cent of the Athenians did not believe any of the Athenian papers accurately portrayed reality and another 8% didn't know or didn't answer.

According to Mouzelis (1978:121-125) foreign capital, working closely with Greek capital and the state, has reinforced a growing degree of capitalist concentration. The state has granted especially enormous benefits to foreign capital. At the same time, however, a large number of small industrial units with family-oriented values continue to exist. This results in a dominant capitalist mode of production still linked to the simple commodity mode of production (small industry and small farms). Great inequalities are present both within the capitalist sector (e.g. between wage earners and owners) and the simple commodity mode sector and between the two. For example, McNall (1980:118) has pointed out that the Greek shoe industry is dominated by small family firms. These firms, however, do not sell their shoes directly to U.S. stores such as Macy's or K-Mart but rather to a middleman who may often be a buyer for international corporations. The Greek entrepreneur becomes in many ways like a wage-laborer for

the multinational corporations.

The Greek state and foreign investors have developed capital-intensive areas in part because the local capitalists were not attracted to investments in iron, coal, and oil because they lacked access to world markets. Greece encourages investment of foreign capital and has created a virtual "free trade zone" for multinationals in part to create jobs for many Greeks (who often have migrated from the rural areas to the urban ones) (McNall, 1979). Forty-six of the largest 150 companies in Greece are multinationals. They employ over 113,000 Greeks (The Vima Newspaper, March 6, 1977).

Shipping interests have received special considerations because it is "crucial to Greek politics" (Legg, 1969:113). Members of parliament receive free transportation on domestic lines and politicians from the islands need connections with major shipowners not only to transport themselves but also voters from the mainland to their home constituencies. Shipping has received important tax benefits in part because as Mouzelis (1978:120) notes, the international aspects of shipping could move elsewhere if the Greek state places too many restrictions on the shipping interest. The use of Greek seamen help reduce unemployment and provide an important source of foreign currency when they send money back home.

The two major banks, the National Bank of Greece and the Commercial Bank of Greece, have been especially involved in Greek economic development. Each banking group has had persons associated with the major political parties and has its own group of industries affiliated with it (Legg, 1969: 111). Banks tend to favor large companies when they give long-term industrial loans (Campbell and Sherrard, 1968:375). Mouzelis (1978:118) points out that since World War II and the Civil War, the two major banks, working closely with the state, "played a major role in the growth and direction of the productive forces."

The dominant groups which we identified (the personalities of politicians, the mass media, and the capitalist class) have considerable political power in Greece. The political party programs of politicians are also important but are more likely to be associated with leftist politicians. The bureaucracy and the Greek security forces also play a supportive role.

The bureaucracy in Greece is shaped by clientelism which essentially refers to a political relationship or exchange which involves economic or political favors (e.g. jobs)

from a politician or notable in return for that person's loyalty and support (e.g. vote). Rousfeti, a colloquial term for such political pull, has been called the "monster of bureaucracy" and the "curse of the nation" (Eleftherotypla Newspaper, 1967:7). Bakogainnis (1977) did research on major appointments to banks and large public bureaucracies and concluded that the criteria of selection and promotion were based on political expediencies. Haralambopoulos (1976), PASOK's minister of foreign affairs, believes rousfeti is used by the establishment to intimidate the people and thus maintain its power. Mouzelis (1978) believes political clientelism goes hand in hand with Greek underdevelopment.

In our survey, the people distinguished between the bureaucracy and the civil servants by giving the complex institution significantly more political power than the civil servants. Skiadopoulos (1976) has suggested that the bureaucracy makes the civil servants and the citizens enemies of each other. According to him, both the civil servants and the people suffer from the problems of bureaucracy. Often the rules are vague so that the civil servant has broad discretion in decision making. People may have to return several times before a decision is reached.

Since Greece has experienced five international wars, two civil wars, ten military revolts, and three periods of military/authoritarian rule in the twentieth century (Coulombis, 1980:24), it is not surprising that the military is important. The military perceives itself as a cultural preserving institution with strong elements of nationalism and anti-communism (Kourvetaris, 1971 a,b,c; Campbell and Sherrard, 1968). At the same time it is clear that the military and police have been repressive forces as well (Clogg and Yannopoulos, 1972; Amnesty International, 1977; Mouzelis, 1978; Petras, 1977; Clogg, 1979). Clogg (1979:191) notes the important role of the security and military police in breaking up resistance groups and any mass-based opposition during the military rule,

In the past both the military and police have been instrumental in helping create files (records) on many individuals of perceived questionable character. These files may be used to identify suspicious or left-leaning individuals and can cover several generations of families. Chances for acceptance or advancement within the bureaucracy and officer corps are greatly influenced by the contents of the files.

Even when the military withdrew from politics in 1974,

it was they who invited Karamanlis to return from his self-imposed exile in France and form the restoration government. A slogan heard at the time of the 1974 election was "Karamanlis or the tanks" suggesting that if the left parties instead of Karamanlis gained too much support, the military could again take over.

The Greek perception of its dominant groups is not all that different from the American one with one exception. In Greece trade unions appear to have little influence. For the U.S. Klorman (1978) found that big business, politicians, labor unions and newspapers were the most influential while the military ranked seventh. Other studies consistently show big business and labor unions are both highly ranked (Form and Rytina, 1969; Rose, 1976). Overall, Jecchiniis (1978) suggests that the influence of trade unions in Greece has been negligible. The government has dominated trade union policies throughout time. Trade unions have played only a minor role in introducing legislation for improving the situation of the workers. The ineffectiveness of trade unions has been due to both internal disunity and to the political patronage system as well as major historical events including dictatorship and wars. In 1975-76, new labor legislation was introduced which limited the workers right to strike (Petras, 1977; Petropoulos, 1977--interview with John Katris) and thus restricted the power of workers.

### CONCLUSION

The various dominant groups identified in Greece enjoy special privileges. For example, the high ranking military officers have special private resort areas, reduced prices for traveling, and very favorable retirement programs. They often live in exclusive areas of residence. Other groups receive special visiting privileges to see members of parliament. According to Legg (1969) the powerful Union of Journalists had been granted an annual lottery which provided an important source of revenue for their pensions. Journalists have been able to bring in foreign cars without paying the high surcharges. Thus occupying a high ranking position, who you know, and to which political personality you are loyal are often major considerations for getting ahead in Greek society.

It seems reasonable to us that the average person would attribute power and indeed privilege to the dominant and supportive groups we have mentioned. These groups are quite separate and distinguishable from the masses. As we

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have tried to show, it would not be surprising that part of this evaluation of the dominant groups is based on dislike of the various groups who have considerably far more power and privilege than the average person. The power structure (like that of many other countries) does not work to the advantage of the "common man".

### FOOTNOTE

1. Although the CIA was not given a great deal of influence in Greek society, we should note that the no answer and don't know response rate for the influence of the CIA was almost 14% higher than the average refusal rate for all the other groups. This suggests that many more people either found this groups difficult to assess or were unwilling to evaluate it.

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### APPENDIX: MEASUREMENT OF MAJOR VARIABLES

For the measurement of our major variables we employed the following procedures:

Stratification Variables: Respondent's occupational prestige was coded according to Treiman's (1975) international scale. Education was given for number of years of schooling completed. Income was based on total monthly family income (in drachmae) and the respondent was asked to select one of thirteen different income categories. For occupation we used four levels--upper white collar, lower white collar, skilled and semi-skilled workers, and unskilled workers.

Subjective class identification was measured by asking a Center's type question with the close-ended answers of upper, middle, working and lower classes. (Respondents were also asked to distinguish levels within the middle and working class, e.g., upper middle class, lower working class, etc.)



Political Variables: Voting preferences were based on the responses to the question of which party the respondent would vote for if the elections were held that day (when interviewed). Since we are trying to predict left vote, responses of Papandreou's Socialist party PASOK, EDA (United Democratic Left), and the Communist Parties of the Interior and Exterior were all coded one. Replies of New Democracy, Union of the Democratic Center, and pro-royalist parties received a zero.

We asked the respondents if they believed that democracy was threatened more from the extreme right or extreme left. Two hundred sixty-one persons said from the right while only 79 said from the left. The others either said there was no threat from either side, there was an equal threat from the right and the left, or gave no answer. We created two dummy variables--one with the threat to the right coded one and all other responses coded zero and the other with threat from the left coded one and all others coded zero.