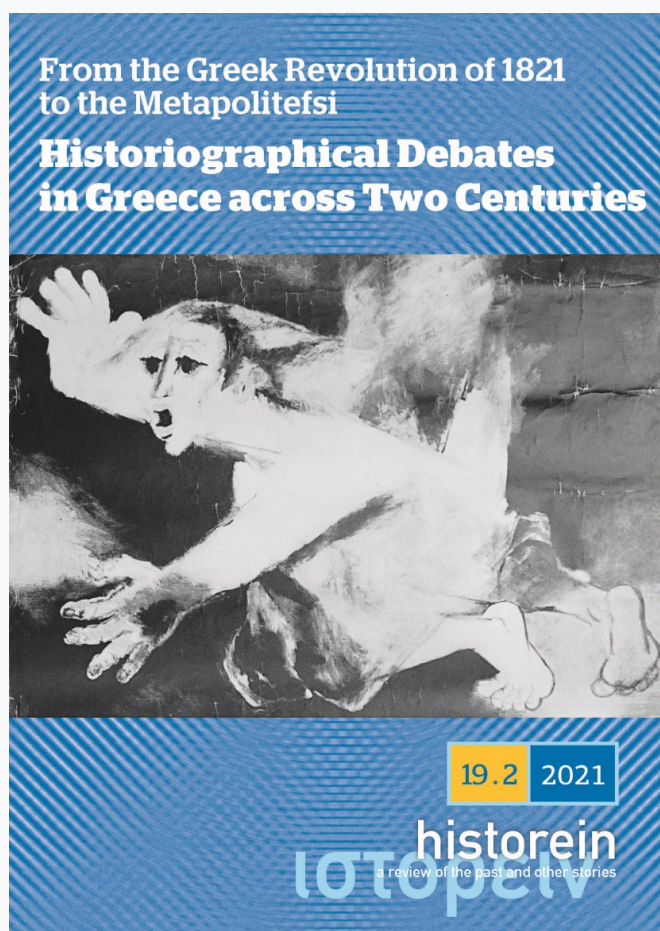


Historein

Vol 19, No 2 (2021)

From the Greek Revolution of 1821 to the Metapolitefsi: Historiographical Debates in Greece across Two Centuries



Vassilis Asimakopoulos and Chrysanthos Tassis, eds., ΠΑΣΟΚ 1974-2018: Πολιτική οργάνωση – Ιδεολογικές μετατοπίσεις – Κυβερνητικές μεταβολές [PASOK, 1974-2018: political organisation, ideological shifts, government policies]

Eleni Paschaloudi

doi: [10.12681/historein.21968](https://doi.org/10.12681/historein.21968)

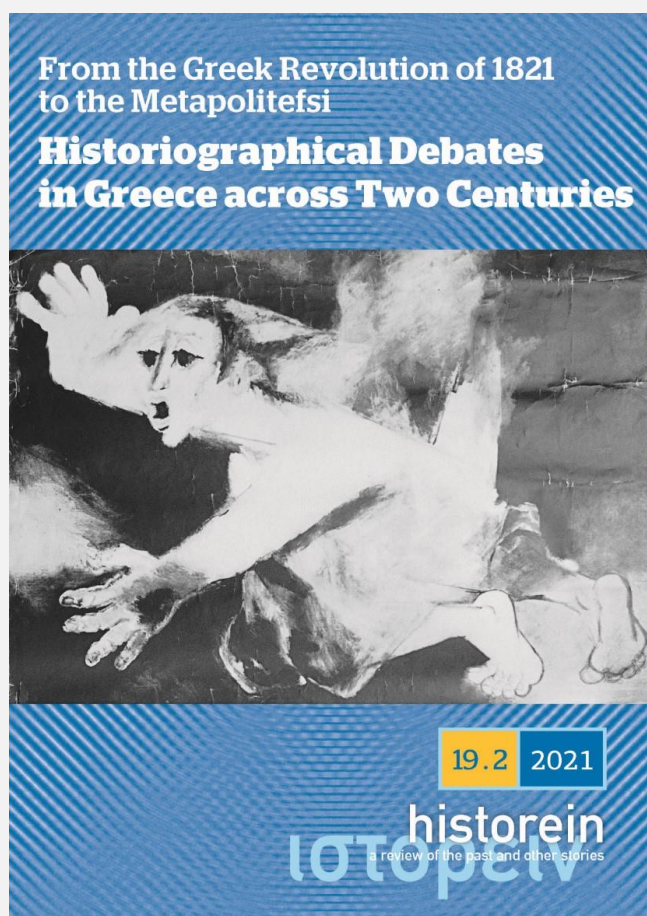
Copyright © 2021, ΕΛΕΝΗ ΠΑΣΧΑΛΟΥΔΗ



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

To cite this article:

Paschaloudi, E. (2021). Vassilis Asimakopoulos and Chrysanthos Tassis, eds., ΠΑΣΟΚ 1974-2018: Πολιτική οργάνωση – Ιδεολογικές μετατοπίσεις – Κυβερνητικές μεταβολές [PASOK, 1974-2018: political organisation, ideological shifts, government policies]. *Historein*, 19(2). <https://doi.org/10.12681/historein.21968>



Vassilis Asimakopoulos and
Chrysanthos Tassis (eds.)
*ΠΑΣΟΚ 1974–2018: Πολιτική
οργάνωση – Ιδεολογικές
μετατοπίσεις – Κυβερνητικές
μεταβολές*
[PASOK, 1974–2018: political
organisation, ideological
shifts, government policies]

Eleni Paschaloudi

doi: 10.12681/historein.21968

To cite this article:

Paschaloudi, Eleni. 2021. "Vassilis Asimakopoulos and Chrysanthos Tassis (eds.), *ΠΑΣΟΚ 1974–2018: Πολιτική οργάνωση – Ιδεολογικές μετατοπίσεις – Κυβερνητικές μεταβολές* [PASOK, 1974–2018: political organisation, ideological shifts, government policies]". *Historein* 19 (2). <https://doi.org/10.12681/historein.21968>.

Vassilis Asimakopoulos and Chrysanthos Tassis (eds.)

ΠΑΣΟΚ 1974–2018: Πολιτική οργάνωση – Ιδεολογικές μετατοπίσεις – Κυβερνητικές μεταβολές

[PASOK, 1974–2018: political organisation, ideological shifts, government policies]

Athens: Gutenberg, 2018. 822 pp.

Eleni Paschaloudi

Hellenic Open University

The Panhellenic Socialist Movement (Pasok) has attracted the most scholarly scrutiny within the Greek party system. This attention is due to the fact that in Greece the development of political science as a separate field coincided with the emergence of Pasok in political life. Moreover, the fact that Pasok dominated political life for many years stirred the interest of many researchers, especially in the fields of political science and history, who studied in detail many aspects of the party's journey. Pasok's ideological principles and beliefs, its ideological shifts, government policies, the "charisma" of Andreas Papandreou, and the party's political rise and decline have been central issues in the many articles and monographs published on the party over a period spanning three decades.

This was, of course, not coincidental. As Takis Pappas aptly notes in the preface to his own book, "we are all Pasok followers",¹ that is, Pasok's influence on Greek society and politics has been all-pervasive. The emergence of the new party amid the democratisation after the fall of the military junta was identified with major changes in Greek politics and culture. In October 1981 Pasok formed the first socialist government in Greece since 1924, thus wresting political power from the traditional conservative Greek right, which had dominated politics for decades, and shifting to a more populist and centre-left locus. Massive changes were initiated immediately following Pasok's landslide victory: the (left-wing) national resistance movement of 1941–1944 against the Axis powers in the Second World War was granted long overdue recognition while political refugees of the Greek Civil War were finally allowed to return to Greece. The National Health System was created and various repressive laws of the anticommunist postwar establishment were abolished, wages were boosted, an independent and multidimensional foreign policy was pursued, and many reforms in family law strengthened the rights of women. The rigid and conservative era of "national-mindedness" was finally over.

The fall in Pasok's popularity at the end of the 1980s (due to corruption scandals) and its nadir in 2012 due to its identification with the economic crisis and the memorandums have been equally loud and important events for Greek politics. Many in 1989 talked about the end of an era. In 2012, Pasok's electoral demise, along with the financial crisis, paved the way for Syriza's emergence as a government party. Therefore, the study of Pasok's political and electoral course essentially traces the political history of the country from 1974 to 2018.

This edited volume attempts a comprehensive study of Pasok's political course from its foundation to its re-emergence in the new guise of the Movement for Change. As the editors themselves point out, the present volume forms a sequel along the lines of the volume edited by Michalis Spourdalakis in 1998 under the title *Pasok: Party–State–Society*.² In relation to the past, the 22 young researchers hosted in this volume, mainly from the field of political science, have the advantage of hindsight, which allows for a better view of the party's political activity and its integration into one of a wider international context. Hindsight may not always be an advantage in political science (as it is the case in history), but in this case some of the issues that have been raised in the past can be readdressed.

Up to the beginning of the economic crisis, the dominant narrative placed greater emphasis on the fact that the transition to democracy took place in an exemplary manner, and then it was quickly established. The political, social and economic conquests that followed prompted a better future. During this process Pasok claimed a leading role in the democratisation process and ensuring a range of rights that qualitatively changed the lives of Greek citizens in many aspects. During the time of the economic crisis, several journalists, politicians, numerous political scientists and historians developed a negative critique of the political culture that was formed during the *metapolitefsi*, the postdictatorship period in Greek politics. In this new narrative the *metapolitefsi* and the so-called culture deriving from it was deemed responsible for many, if not all, of the ills of the Greek body politic: political corruption, clientelism, violence and lawlessness and populism to name just a few. This negative view that diminishes the entire *metapolitefsi* era inevitably pulls down with it the political legacy of Pasok itself. In this context the volume to hand is a dispassionate assessment that avoids either the idealisation or the deprecation of the role played by Pasok in Greek society and politics.

The volume begins with an extensive account in which the editors present the main stages of Pasok's ideological shifts. From the socialist transformation project of the 1970s, the party entered the 1980s promising "change" and, finally, reached Giddens' modernising "third way" in the 1990s. Throughout this course, Pasok adapted to the necessities of the political conjuncture, governance but also electoral efficiency. The last stage of this stormy course was the period of economic crisis. At this point, the party adopted, for the first time

since it was founded, an extreme anti-left-wing rhetoric. As a result, and since it could not identify with the right, it moved towards the political centre in an attempt to occupy and widen the distance between Syriza and New Democracy.

The election results in 2015 confirmed the party's decline and condemnation to political and electoral depression. At this point, we have to note that the editors use the very contemporary term "Pasokification". The term expresses the decline of social democratic political parties in the 2010s and the simultaneous rise of nationalist, left- or right-wing populist alternatives. It originates from Pasok, which experienced a decline in its share of the vote in national elections from 44 percent in 2009 to 5 percent in 2015 due to its handling of the Greek government debt crisis. This electoral decline, though, is not just about Pasok. It also concerns other socialist parties in Europe which, at the time of the crisis, either supported policies with neoliberal characteristics that hurt precisely the groups that had supported or collaborated with social democratic parties.

Subsequently, separate thematic categories follow: The first one, entitled "Organisational developments: Party and political system", covers Pasok's relations with trade unions, social movements and the two parties of the Greek left. The articles in this chapter also focus on the party's elite and electoral sociology. Chrysanthos Tassis' text explains the roots of dependency theory and the way it influenced the party's ideology until the beginning of the 1990s. Andreas Papandreou was apparently connected academically and personally with the editors of *Monthly Review*. This connection shaped his political ideology and decisions in a very evident way. Panagiotis Koustenis offers a brief but excellent analysis of the party's electoral sociology from its foundation to the founding of the Movement for Change. It mainly highlights how the party once associated with the *metapolitefsi* progressively appeared to be cut off from the very social groups that were once constitutive elements of its social alliance. Noteworthy also is the text of Kostas Kanellopoulos, which focuses on the radical movement character of Pasok and analyses its association with other social and political movements over time. It focuses on the Panhellenic Liberation Movement (PAK)³ and the antidictatorial movement as well as the antiausterity movement that began in 2010. Kanellopoulos' main thesis is that Pasok was born of the antidictatorial movement and was strengthened by supporting the postdictatorial political mobilisations. Several years later though, during the economic crisis, the uprising against economic austerity and mainly the Indignant citizens' movement (*Aganaktismenoi*) helped to marginalise Pasok and reduce its electoral appeal.

The second part of the volume focuses on the shifts in the party's ideology. Zinovia Lialiouti's contribution focuses on anti-Americanism. She underlines that expressions of anti-Americanism in the party's rhetoric must be understood and interpreted in their historical and social context and not as a single isolated phenomenon. However, anti-Americanism, which was a major element of the party's political identity for many years, at specific times led to the party's ideological or political entrapment.

The third part addresses government policies in various fields such as agriculture,

economy, education, labour, security, health, foreign policy, etc. Sotiris Roussos analyses Pasok's foreign policy using Greek and foreign literature. In the first eight years of Pasok in government, the country in fact reached out to the world. Papandreou avoided a foreign policy engraved exclusively by the Greek Civil War and the Cold War. The new strategy was built on the basis of global association and aimed at upgrading Greece's role in the world as well as fostering relations with countries that did not belong to either the EEC or Nato. In this way, as he rightly points out, the position of the country did not change. What really changed was the way in which the country perceived its place in the international community.

In the same section, Vasilis Logothetis points out in his article that the economic policies of the 1980s are generally interpreted from the point of view of Greek particularity. More specifically, many believe that the economic policy of Pasok governments was a unique phenomenon that only appeared in Greece. This view, however, as he contends, obfuscates academic research and places the matter in the realm of political controversy. On the contrary, recent international research allows us to find common points and common places with the experiences of other countries that also transitioned to democracy. In this process, which was neither simple nor guaranteed to succeed, a subsidised economy in all its forms aimed to balance inequalities and promote social cohesion. Along the same lines, Aristomenis Syngelakis examines the establishment of the Greek National Health Service as an act of establishing the welfare state and fulfilling the historical demand for social equality and democracy.

In conclusion, this volume to hand provides the opportunity to historicise Pasok and its policies. Apart from its idealisation and beyond its decline, Pasok was integral to Greece's transition to becoming a stable democracy. On the other hand, in the 1980s civil rights were both enhanced and solidified after a long period of suppression which followed the outcome of the civil war.

¹ Takis Pappas, *Το χαρισματικό κόμμα: ΠΑΣΟΚ, Παπανδρέου, Εξουσία* [The charismatic party: Pasok, Papandreou, power] (Athens, Patakis 2009), 15.

² Michalis Spourdalakis, ed., *ΠΑΣΟΚ: Κόμμα–κράτος–κοινωνία* [Pasok: Party–state–society] (Athens: Patakis 1998).

³ Established in 1968 in Sweden by the exiled Andreas Papandreou. PAK was one of the antidictatorial movement organisations that campaigned against the 1967–1974 military regime.