

Was it Karamanlis who won it or Papandreou who lost it?

The impact of leaders' image in the 2004 Greek election

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Abstract

The electoral landslide of the Greek right-wing party in the 2004 election engendered an extensive discussion about the reasons which brought the party into office after more than ten years in the opposition. Political commentators stressed, among other factors, the role of leaders' appeal, especially during the campaign period. Although this belief seems to be treated as unquestionably true by both public opinion and the media, there has been, until now, no rigorous effort to test this claim against the empirical evidence. With data from a preelection survey, the paper examines the magnitude of leadership evaluations on the 2004 election. According to its findings, although leaders' personal qualities mattered a lot on vote choice, their very close rating prevented any considerable impact of comparative leadership perceptions to the overall result. However, what seemed to be of great importance for the election outcome was the debate. Its powerful aggregate impact demonstrates that a great portion of the electorate established a definite view about the two leaders only after debate was held. And this perception appeared to influence considerably their vote decision.

Acknowledgements

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“It is often claimed that victory has many fathers whereas defeat is orphan. Yesterday’s battle is an exception to this rule. Both friends and enemies of New Democracy are obliged to recognise the fact that the victory bears the personal stamp of its leader [Kostas Karamanlis].” Papakonstantinou (08/03/2004)

“There is no doubt that father of the defeat is Kostas Simitis. Yet, in the beginning of the campaign period, the loss seemed to be much smaller. The fact that it, eventually, took such dimensions is due to the errors of Papandreou during the campaign period.” Ligeros (08/03/2004)

Party competition in almost every democratic country seems to have acquired a dominant presidential character. Elections are viewed ‘as if they were gladiatorial combats between two generals rather than battles between two armies’ (Bartle and Crewe, 2002:72). In other words, leaders are thought to matter. Their personalities are deemed to play a crucial role in voters’ choices and to affect, potentially, the electoral outcome. Both journalists and campaign consultants tend to take it as axiomatic that leaders’ physical appearance, the clothes they wear, their accent and their tone of voice all help to create positive or negative impressions. And, as it seems to be the case in all recent electoral battles, they have convinced politicians that such issues do indeed matter and the latter are willing to undergo ‘makeovers’ in order to improve their appeal (Bartle and Crewe, 2002:71).

This consensus among media consultants, pollsters and campaign managers – all asserting the importance of their contribution by emphasising the role of leaders’ qualities on vote decision (Miller and Shanks, 1996:415) – is justified on the grounds of certain fundamental changes in the social and political context within which party competition takes place. The most impressive one is, undoubtedly, the increasing political importance of mass media. Television has taken a leading role in the dissemination of political information and in the structuring of political discussion. Consequently, party leaders become the principal means by which political parties project themselves and shape their popular images (Bean and Mughan, 1989:1165).¹ In this way, the public more easily associates power and authority with a readily identifiable political personality rather than an abstract institution or political ideal (Graetz and McAllister, 1987a:44).

The parties, in turn, have been rapidly adjusted to this new political reality and have altered profoundly their campaign strategies, encouraging this new tendency. Parties fight

¹ For the presidentialisation of British and German politics see respectively Mughan (1994) and Kaase (1993). For an opposite view in the British case and a theoretical analysis of the dimensions that presidentialisation can take see Crewe and King (1994a;1994b).

nowadays centrally organised leader-centred campaigns. The development of opinion poll techniques and the advent of focus groups in conjunction with the dominance of television have forced parties to re-orientate their campaigns towards their leaders (King, 2002b:217). The latter have for long ceased to be the mouthpieces for the party's values and policies but have become part of the message. Their personality is managed and manufactured by the party organization to project an image of the party they lead. Parties and the media are locked into an interdependent relationship. 'Television craves pictures. The parties, craving exposure for their leaders, provide them' (Bartle and Crewe, 2002:73).

To this rule, Greece is no exception. It is hardly possible to watch, or even participate in, any political conversation which does not, at least at some point, revolve around the traits of the party leaders. The latter become the central point of focus during the whole campaign period. Even in the poll-day, the way, the place and the exact time in which they cast their ballot is given several, thought-to-be important, political interpretations (Bistika, 2004). This tendency was particularly obvious in the last general election, which was held in early March of 2004. Yet, so far there has been no systematic effort to test empirically the common belief, that leadership evaluations shape party support, in the current electoral context. Purporting to cover this gap, the aim of the proposed paper is twofold: first, to evaluate the impact of party leaders on individual vote choice and, second, to estimate the influence of leadership evaluations on the aggregate outcome of the 2004 election. Section I provides a brief description of the major Greek parties which compete for the office and portrays the political setting within which the election took place. The proposed analytical strategies are reviewed in section II and the data used and the exact model specification are presented in section III. Section IV summarises my empirical findings and section V concludes.

I. Political Change in Greece: New Democracy's landslide

Greek political system is dominated by the two parties which emerged immediately after the transition of the country to democracy, in the mid-seventies. On the one side of the political space lies the major socialist party, Panhellenic Socialist Movement (P.A.S.O.K). Founded in 1974 by Andreas Papandreu, it managed to assert itself as the main centre-left party of political spectrum and only four years after its foundation, it succeeded in taking the role of

the main opposition party.² By doubling its share of the vote in three successive elections, the third general election in which the party took part, in 1981, was proven a landslide and provided it with a very comfortable majority in the parliament. Since then, PASOK occupies a key position in Greek political context. With the exception of a short-lived parenthesis (1990-1993), the party remained in office for the whole period between 1981 and 2004. During these years it won five general elections, the first three led by its historical leader, Andreas Papandreu, and the others, after the founder's death in 1996, led by his successor, Kostas Simitis. The latter, following nine years in office, was replaced three months before the poll-day by the then minister of foreign affairs, George Papandreu, who led the party to the election.³ Despite the defeat, the first-born son of the party's initiator is, still, its current leader.

The other side of the political space is covered by the right wing party, New Democracy (ND). Founded by Konstantinos Karamanlis, immediately after the end of the military dictatorship in 1974, it can be seen as the logical successor of the major postwar right-wing parties (Greek Rally in 1952 and National Radical Union – ERE – in 1956).⁴ ND has managed to uphold its hegemony of the centre-right political space in a way unmatched by most European conservative parties. Yet, it has failed to translate this hegemony into broader political domination (Kalyvas, 1998:86).⁵ Although it was constantly in power from 1974 to 1981, until the last general election, it had remained in opposition for twenty two out of the last twenty five years. Since the retirement of its founder, in 1980, the party has experienced five successions in its leadership and is currently headed by Karamanlis' nephew, Kostas Karamanlis. The latter took the lead of the party after its defeat in the 1996 election and drove it into the 2000 election with considerable success. He raised the party's vote share by 4 percentage points, but, still, did not succeed in leading it to office. In one of the most intriguing elections of the last thirty years, PASOK enjoyed what was the most marginal victory of its history and renewed its maintenance in office.

That pattern was not repeated in March of 2004. The last general election concealed no serious surprise. Since, the June of 2000 and during the mid-term period, ND enjoyed a safe

² For a comprehensive review of the first term in the party's political trajectory see Spourdalakis (1988). For a critical view of the party's ideological evolution see Grabaris (1998) and Papagarufallou (2002).

³ In a politically intensive period, three months before the poll-day, PASOK, and personally Kostas Simitis, were severely criticised with regard to the procedure by which the succession took place (Iordanidis 2003; Agelopoulos 2003).

⁴ Apart from the clear partisan roots that connect the two parties whose political story ends before the *Junta*, with the ND, this political continuity is also made obvious by the leading figure of Konstantinos Karamanlis, who having entered in politics with Greek Rally, went on to found E.R.E. and returned to Greek politics with ND

⁵ For a review of the right-wing party's political trajectory see indicatively Katsoudas (1987), Kalyvas (1998) and Loulis (1981).

lead in vote intention, as that was captured by opinion-polls.⁶ No significant change qualified this established picture after the campaign period. The same party that was viewed as the most likely to win the election before the campaign was the one that celebrated in the night of the 7th of March its return to office after eleven consecutive years in opposition.⁷ With an increase of 4 percentage points, ND's 45.36 share of the vote was sufficient to give to the party a safe majority of 178 out of 300 seats, whereas PASOK's 40.55 per cent was its lowest share of the national vote since 1990 and gave to the party no more than 112 MPs. A new era in Greek politics had just opened.

Several remarkable aspects of this electoral battle make it a very fertile field to test the perception that leadership evaluations determine vote choice. First, the increased belief of many Greek electoral analysts that the influence of ideological predispositions and party identification has weakened considerably during the last decade, has forced students of Greek politics to focus on short term electoral factors (Loulis, 2001). Consequently, as is already the case in many other European countries (indicatively see for the British case Graetz and McAllister, 1987b; Clarke et al., 2004), party leaders and political issues (as basic components of the dynamic elements of voting behaviour) have gradually acquired an enhanced role in determining political outcomes. In the last general election, both parties' campaigns concentrated on their leaders to an unprecedented degree. It is thus an interesting task to examine whether the decline of sociopsychological forces gave room to the emergence of leadership effects to such an extent that it can justify the increased focus on leaders' appeal.

The second reason is related to the particular role of Karamanlis. The latter was projected as the strongest electoral asset of ND. His friendly and conversational image matched with his ability to present himself as a strong and competent leader made him the factor upon which the party sustained its electoral fortune. Thus, even intuitively, great portion of the electorate has largely attributed the party's landslide to its leader. Finally, the change of leader by the socialist party in the beginning of the campaign was implemented on the grounds that it would alter radically the image of the party, improving in this way its chances to reverse public opinion on its favour.⁸ On its own, this fact reveals the consensus within the bosom of

⁶ See indicatively Mauris (2000b;2003), Fanaras (2003).

⁷ In a critique against the extraordinarily great concentration of the media and politicians on the electoral campaign, a political commentator noted that, during the nearly thirty years of the third Greek republic there has been no instance in which the winner of a general election was different from the one that was seen as the most likely to win before the campaign period (Pretenderis, 2004).

⁸ Such a tactical manoeuvre took place for the first time in Greek parliamentary history. It is not something totally new for other European voters, such as the British, though, since they have already experienced it a couple of times, most notably in 1990 with the change of the Conservative leader. However, there are again serious differences. In the case of Margaret Thatcher, she left the party much earlier before the election than Simitis did.

PASOK that leadership evaluations are important and may potentially affect the overall outcome.⁹ Under that perspective, it might be useful to estimate not only the absolute impact of the new leader's appeal on the overall outcome, but also to assess whether this choice had any substantial effect at all on socialists' share of the vote. Would the result be any different, had Simitis run the party until the election?

II. Analytical strategies

In their path-breaking work, Butler and Stokes justified their concern about leadership effects on the grounds that it constitutes a potentially significant determinant of vote choice, since it meets all preconditions for a political issue or object to influence the individual voter. Party leaders are undoubtedly extraordinarily salient in modern Greek politics: electors are not only aware of them and differentiate between them on a party basis but they also have some strength of feeling, or what Butler and Stokes name a 'genuine attitude' (1974:360). Thus, potentially leaders' perceived personal qualities are capable of affecting the individual vote. And to the extent that they produce unbalanced evaluations about their relative personal qualities, the 'pull of the leaders' is potentially capable of affecting the aggregate outcome.

Under that perspective, the principal aim of electoral students has been to examine the net effect of leadership evaluations at both the individual vote and the aggregate outcome. That can be principally done with individual-level data, since they provide an insight about the causal processes that link beliefs, attitudes and behaviour (Sanders, 1997).¹⁰ Within the micro-level framework, two different but complementary strategies have been employed. Both

That gave to the new Conservative leader much more time to expose his political ideas and reveal his personal leadership virtues than Papandreou had. Perhaps this might be one reason that whereas this move resulted in the 1992 third consecutive Conservative victory, it was not crown with success for the party that inspired it in the Greek case. Apart from that, in the case of the Conservatives Thatcher did not leave the party voluntarily; she was rather ousted by the party. On the contrary, in PASOK the change was simply a voluntary 'sacrifice' of its leader as a final effort to secure that the party will retain its limited chances to win the election.

⁹ Of course, such a move had also other motives apart from the need to propose for the election a popular politician whose image had not been eroded seriously by the socialists' long period in office. On its own, such a decision could potentially serve as a useful heuristic device, capable of producing an immense political shock in the wake of the campaign. Especially during the first days that it was announced, PASOK seemed to be the principal agenda setter since its change of leader was the primary focus of media coverage. Thus, such a move was assumed to have a pertinent positive effect on its own, without accounting for the relatively more positive evaluations of voters toward the new leader.

¹⁰ Fairly recently, many scholars have purported to capture the dynamics of leadership effects by the use of aggregate (or pooled cross-sectional) time series data. (Clarke and Stewart 1995; Clarke et al. 1997;1998; 2000; Lanoue and Headrick 1996; Nadeau et al. 1996). Government popularity is regarded as a function of prime minister's popularity while controlling for other variables (typically indicators of subjective or objective economy and other non-economic factors). These models have been originally driven by the extremely good fit of the series of prime ministerial approval to government popularity (Clarke and Stewart, 1995:156). Their findings though speak ambiguously about the impact of leadership evaluations on individual voting behaviour.

of them are used in this study. The most common one has been called the ‘improved prediction.’¹¹ It has its roots in the notion of the ‘funnel of causality,’ which was first introduced by the authors of the *American Voter*, and further developed by Miller and Shanks (1990; 1991; 1996). The principal assumption in this multistage approach is that there is considerable continuity in voters’ political preferences, such that they approach an election already predisposed toward one party rather than another (Bartle, 2002:79). The potential determinants of vote are classified in causal stages, according to their long term stability and distance from vote decision (Bartle, 1998:504). So, the choices of individual voters are best understood as the cumulative consequences of temporally ordered sets of factors (Miller and Shanks, 1996:192). Within this structure, all of the variables in a given stage may have been influenced by variables in earlier stages, (as well as by other variables in the same stage), and may have had some direct or unmediated impact on the vote, which is supposed to be a function of all the explanatory variables.¹²

The alternative strategy, which has been called ‘thought experiment strategy’, approaches the question of leader effects from another angle. It weights the appeals of individual party leaders not against other aspects of their party’s appeal to individual voters, but against the appeal that their party would have had if it had been led by someone else. This strategy emphasises the asking and answering of explicit ‘what if?’ questions, exploiting what the historians call ‘counterfactuals’ (King, 2002:19; Crewe and King 1994a; 1994b). The questions usually asked in that approach are: What if the competing leaders were evaluated equally or (which is the logical equivalent) had no perceived personal characteristics at all? What if the two rival parties interchanged their leaders (Bean and Bughan, 1989)? In general, the questions this approach purports to answer evolve around the pattern: ‘How would election X have turned out if A or B, rather than C, had been the party leader or the presidential candidate at the time?’ (Crewe and King, 1994a:187) What would be for example the outcome of the 2004 election if Kostas Simitis rather than George Papandreou had led PASOK or, alternatively, what would have happened in 2000 election if Souflias or Bakoyanni rather than Karamanlis had been the leader of ND?

Both methods, though, irrespectively of which does better in assessing the relative influence of leaders’ appeal on voting behaviour, share the same flaw: they both make the ques-

¹¹ The distinction between different methodologies follows precisely King’s framework (see King 2002a; Crewe and King 1994a; 1994b and Bartle et al. 1997). The same terminology has been also employed.

¹² The basic difference of this recursive multi-stage model with the conventional regression approach is that in the latter vote is considered to be an effect of a list of explanatory variables – most of them based on largely different and, essentially contradicting, theoretical underpinnings – which are assumed to be spatially and temporally coordinate that is, none is supposed to be the cause of the other (Bartle, 1998:503).

tionable assumption that causal flow is only one-way, from leader-preference to party-preference. Yet, the causal arrow may just as easily point to the other way, from party preference to leader-preference. As it is logical to assume that a party leader might well affect a voter in her final voting decision, it is equally plausible to argue that voters tend to offer assessments of candidates' personal qualities, which are biased by their prior partisan sympathies. Voters do not form their evaluations about leaders in an intellectual and emotional near-vacuum (King, 2002a:14). On the contrary, most of time they enter in the campaign period with already well-shaped perceptions about the parties and their policies. In many cases, the relevant aspects of a given candidate are either invisible or, at least, not well known, so that voters' evaluations of that candidate concerning those qualities are influenced by voters' own partisan affiliations (Miller and Shanks, 1996:417). As Bartle et al. (1997:9) put it,

'Every survey reveals a very strong association between leader preference and party preference: given the intimate association between leader and party, any other statistical pattern would be surprising. Cause and effect is almost certainly two-way: in 1997 some voters came to support Labour because they admired Blair while others admired Blair because they had become – perhaps years or decades before – Labour supporters'.

Having outlined the methodological techniques which are employed in this study, and having acknowledged their inherent limitations which stem from the assumption of causal priority, I now proceed to the empirical analysis.

III. Data, model specification and measurement

The extent of leadership evaluations' influence on the March election is tested by using data from a nationwide preelection survey, which was conducted in early February of 2004, that is, less than a month before the poll day.¹³ Examining the impact of leaders by the use of preelection data has certain advantages. First it avoids the problem of rationalization, whereby voters bring their reported attitudes, opinions and evaluations into line with their vote decision (Bartle, 2004:325). Apart from that, respondents' answers are not affected by the election outcome as may be the case in postelection surveys in which voters are prompted to overrate the leader whose party has won the election and underestimate the qualities of the leader of the

¹³ The study, implemented by the research company OPINION, was funded by the National Centre of Social Research (EKKE), as the result of its participation in the Comparative National Elections Project. I am grateful to the research group of the Centre for proving me with the data. Neither OPINION nor EKKE are responsible for the data analyses and interpretations of the data presented here.

opposition, since their own personalities might be deemed to have played an important role in the electoral fortunes of their parties. The chosen data, though, are far from being without flaws. Their basic limitation regards the lack of items which are of great theoretical interest in analyses of electoral behaviour. To begin with, no questions of economic evaluations are included, yielding thus impossible to gauge the impact of leaders net of such influences. Apart from that, the survey contains neither retrospective evaluations of governmental performance nor indicators of issue proximities. The omission of all these sets of variables naturally produces suspicions of serious specification error which might inflate estimates of leaders' image net effect. Finally, and most importantly, assessment of leaders is captured only through a synoptic measure of the extent to which voters like each of the two candidates. Unfortunately, no battery of questions about specific leadership traits is available and, consequently, there is no opportunity to examine which exact qualities are most influential in vote decision, a research topic of increasing academic interest (see Mughan, 1993; Stewart and Clarke, 1997; Bean and Mughan 1989; Jones and Hudson 1996). Moreover, since one single item is hardly sufficient to tap the multidimensional aspects of personality, the measurement of the key variable is of rather questionable validity.

Besides assessments of the two leaders, the main explanatory variables used in this analysis are voters' proximity with the parties in the left-right scale; party identification, as it is usually measured in Greek studies;¹⁴ and degree of religious commitment.¹⁵ There are substantive theoretical and empirical reasons to include the first two variables in a model of vote choice. Ideological predispositions constitute a relatively stable electoral factor which has a steady bearing on political attitudes. Party attachment, viewed either under the traditional spectrum of the Michigan School (Campbell et al. 1960) or under the valence perspective of the revisionist school (Fiorina, 1981; Clarke et al., 2004) is considered to shape voting behaviour in a long-term fashion. Furthermore, over the past half-century previous research has accorded pride of place to both variables. The religious factor is added for two reasons. First,

¹⁴ Party identification in most Greek surveys is measured by how close a voter feels to each party. In this study, voters were classified as either PASOK or ND identifiers (from a scale of -1 to +1) according to their relative closeness between the two parties. So, for instance a voter that felt very close to PASOK and very far from ND scored '-1'. If a respondent showed to be equally far from or close to both parties s/he scored '0'. Since the questions for each party included four options (very close/close/far/very far) the term of partisanship also captures the relative *strength* of closeness to each of the two parties.

¹⁵ Degree of religious commitment is measured by frequency of church attendance. Following Achen's (1992) argumentation I do not add in either vote or leaders' models demographic indicators. I, thus, implicitly assume that vote (and leadership evaluations) is formed by beliefs and attitudes (such as party identification, ideology and policy issue perceptions) and those beliefs are, in turn, formed by political socialization and experience with the parties and not by purely positional indicators (Achen, 1992:206). As Franklin (1984: 467, quoted in Achen, 1992) puts it, 'occupying a particular social niche may help us guess the voter's experiences and beliefs, but they are not themselves explanatory.'

unlike most western democracies, where the separation between church and state is well established and embedded in both the political system and the political culture of the countries, in Greece the church still retains an intervening role in political affairs. That, in conjunction with the fact that the Greek church has managed to project itself on a cultural and historical rather than dogmatic base (Nikolakopoulos and Georgiadou, 2000), makes its influence on political attitudes much stronger than it would be predicted on the basis of religiosity within Greek society. Second, the dispute between the clergy and the government, which started in June 2000 and lasted almost during the whole interelection period, with respect to the appearance of religious denomination in the new identity cards, polarised public opinion in terms of this issue and made religion a potentially pivotal factor of this election (Mauris, 2000a). It is believed that the power of all three parameters in predicting the probability of voting either ND or PASOK is sufficient enough to compensate for the lack of other covariates so that the proposed model does not suffer from serious omitted variable bias. Yet, due to the small number of control variables, it is logical to assume that what is estimated here is probably the upper limits of leadership effects.

Before proceeding to the analysis a final point needs to be made. Respondents from the preelection survey of February were also interviewed two months after the election. Yet, the second wave of the panel is not very useful in this study since it primarily focused on media campaign effects. Therefore, no questions about either closeness to a party or church attendance were used. However, an interesting aspect of this survey regards voters' perceptions of the performance of leaders in the debate that took place only a couple of weeks before the election and was not captured by the first wave of the panel. Consequently I only make use of the postelection wave in order to gauge the impact of the leaders' debate both in individual vote decision and the aggregate electoral outcome.

From a preliminary analysis the survey does not seem to suffer from serious sampling error. As it would be expected from a preelection survey, it substantially underestimates the eventual level of both major parties, since more than seven per cent of the respondents either declared that they did not know what they would vote (2.4 per cent) or refused to reveal their intentions (5 per cent). That said, the relative share of the sample vote was matched well with the actual share of the vote either PASOK or ND received in the March elections. Indeed, coding the undecided voters as missing, the percentages obtained by the survey are:

ND 44.4 (official result: 45.36)

PASOK 39.9 (official result 40.55)

KKE¹⁶ 6.4 (official result 5.9)

Synaspismos¹⁷ 3.5 (official result 3.26)

Since my aim is to focus only on the leaders of the two major parties, I follow previous research (Finkel 1993; Finkel and Schrott 1995; Bartels 2002; Bartle 1998; 2004; Bartle and Crewe 2002) and restrict my analysis to the 995 respondents who claimed that they would vote only for one of the two major parties. All explanatory variables are scaled from +1 (the most pro ND option) to -1 (the most pro PASOK option), with '0' representing a theoretical neutral point on the scale. Vote was coded 1 if ND and 0 if PASOK.

IV. Results

The position of leaders in the causal chain

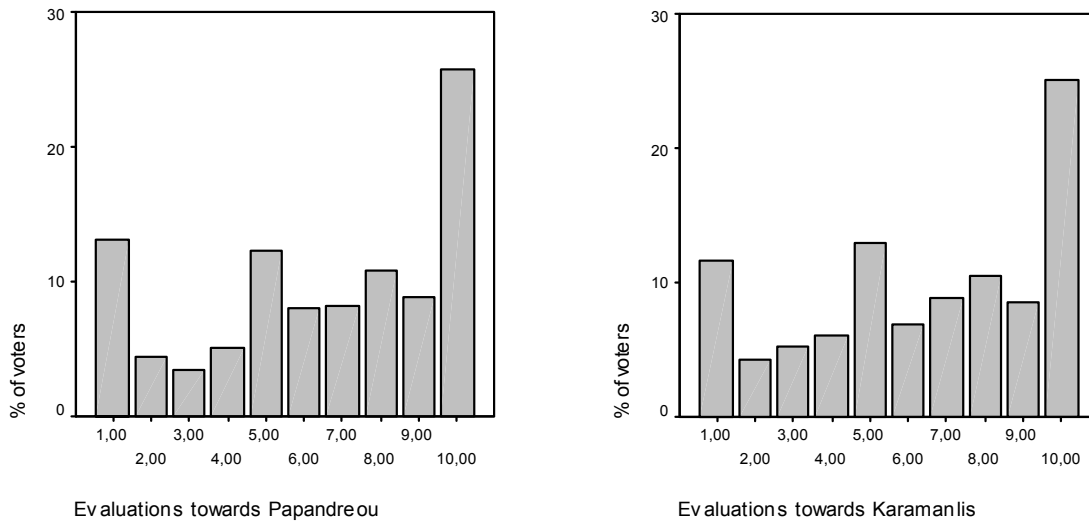
Figure 1 presents the distribution of voters' perceptions about each of the two leaders. The most striking feature of the graph is the great degree of similarity which characterises evaluations about the two leaders. Of course, judging from their mean values (6.39 for Karamanlis and 6.42 for Papandreou), it can be argued that if either of them is to be treated as more favourably assessed by voters, this would be Papandreou and not Karamanlis. But since the average difference in voters' evaluations is so minuscule (and, thus, within the bounds of sampling error), it would be too risky to make such counterintuitive out-of-sample inferences. For the moment it is sufficient to highlight the extreme balance of views for the two candidates, which were both slightly positively evaluated by the public.

However, as Bartels notes, those modest aggregate differences might conceal a good deal of disagreement *among* survey respondents (2002:50, emphasis in the original). The most important source of such differences is, undoubtedly, respondents' more general political predispositions. In trying to evaluate short-term electoral influences, such as party leaders' personal qualities, voters are likely to make use of political cues which stem from their more stable and general political attitudes (party identification, ideology, issue evaluations). Consequently, their assessment of leaders' personalities is very likely to suffer from such partisan

¹⁶ KKE stands for Greek Communist Party.

¹⁷ Synaspismos (Coalition of the Left, the Social Movements and the Ecology) is a leftist party which is primarily distinguished by its postmaterialist views and its focus on new politics. It could be roughly regarded as the equivalent of the German Greens in Greek politics, in the sense that it is located to the left of the socialist party but it clearly distinguishes itself from the Communist left (at least that was the case until its change of leader which took place after the election). However, its electoral appeal is much smaller than that of the German party.

Figure 1: Distribution of respondents' evaluations about Karamanlis and Papandreou (1-10 scale)

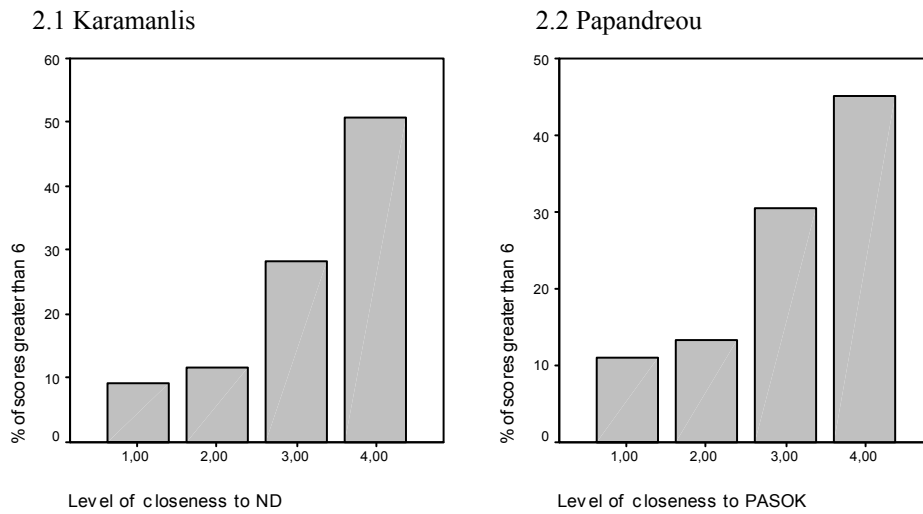


bias. That is evident in Figure 2, which presents leadership evaluations in terms of strength of party bias. It is clear from the figure that impressions of leaders are strongly conditioned by prior political loyalties.

The effect of ideological predispositions and religious commitment on candidates' assessments is presented in Figures 3 and 4 respectively. Again, the distribution of voters' perceptions about both Papandreou and Karamanlis seems to have been strongly affected by their ideological long-standing views. Under that perspective, respondents did not evaluate the two leaders only with respect to their personality characteristics but seem to have based their assessments, even partially, to the fact that the two politicians lead the centre-left and centre-right party respectively. On the other hand, religious commitment does not seem to exert any significant impact on the evaluations of the two candidates. Figure 4 shows that church attendance, as a proxy for the intensity of religious beliefs, did not appear to have played a crucial role in judgements of leaders.

The influence of political biases on leadership evaluations becomes evident by regressing relative leaders' rating against the three key variables which represent general political predispositions: party identification, ideology and church attendance. The results of this OLS regression are presented in the second column of Table 1. As was indicated by the Figures 2-3, party identification and ideological proximity exert a very significant impact on leadership evaluations. Religious commitment also constitutes a significant predictor of evaluations

Figure 2: Percentage of voters giving to Papandreou/Karamanlis a score greater than 6 by level of closeness to PASOK/ND



about the leaders and is also correctly signed. Its relative impact though is rather limited in comparison with the indicators of political predispositions. In total, the fit of the model is quite impressive, implying that more than seventy per cent of the variance in leadership evaluations can be attributed to voters' enduring political biases.

Another interesting aspect of column 2 of Table 1 regards the sign and the magnitude of the intercept. Given the coding of the variables (from -1, pro PASOK, to 1, pro ND), the constant of this regression reflects relative leaders' ratings by voters who score '0' in all other three independent variables (see for similar approaches Achen, 1982; Bartels, 2002; Finkel 1993; Markus 1982). So, among 'neutrals', i.e., non identified voters who have moderate ideological views and retain an ordinary relationship with church, Karamanlis is shown to be more highly evaluated than Papandreou, a result which is in line with widespread political intuition. The same pattern is also observed when two separate regressions are run, one for each leader. By comparing columns 3 and 4 of Table 1, the intercept of the regression which examines views about Karamanlis is higher than the equivalent estimate for his counterpart, reflecting, in this way, the lead of the ND's leader among neutral voters.¹⁸

These two separate regressions can be also employed to test another hypothesis about the relative influence of political predispositions on voters' assessments. Since Papandreou took

¹⁸ The intercept of column 2 measures the relative evaluations of neutrals about the two leaders. Since the dependent variable ranges from -1 to 1, the positive value of the constant implies that evaluations of 'neutrals' towards the two leaders were slightly skewed towards Karamanlis. Columns 3 and 4, which measure voters' perceptions about each leader separately (again ranging from -1 to +1 for each leader) imply that although both leaders were evaluated slightly positively by voters of ND and PASOK, Karamanlis did somewhat better.

Figure 3: Distribution of respondents' evaluations about Papandreou and Karamanlis by ideological predispositions.

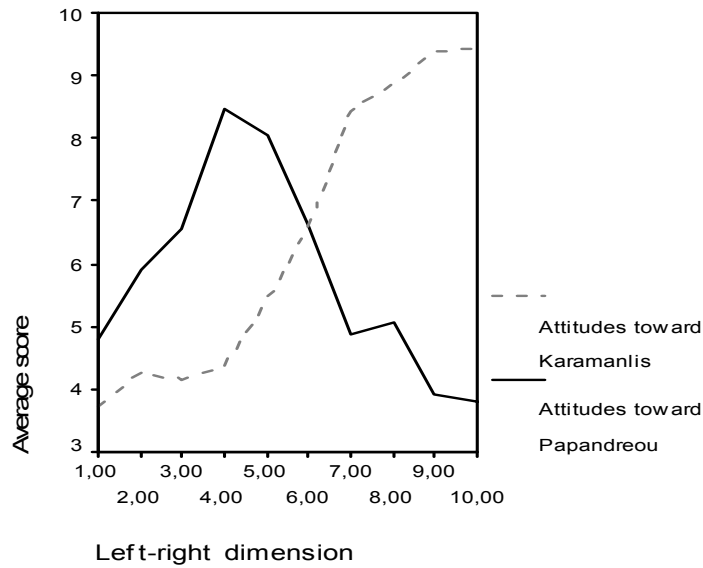
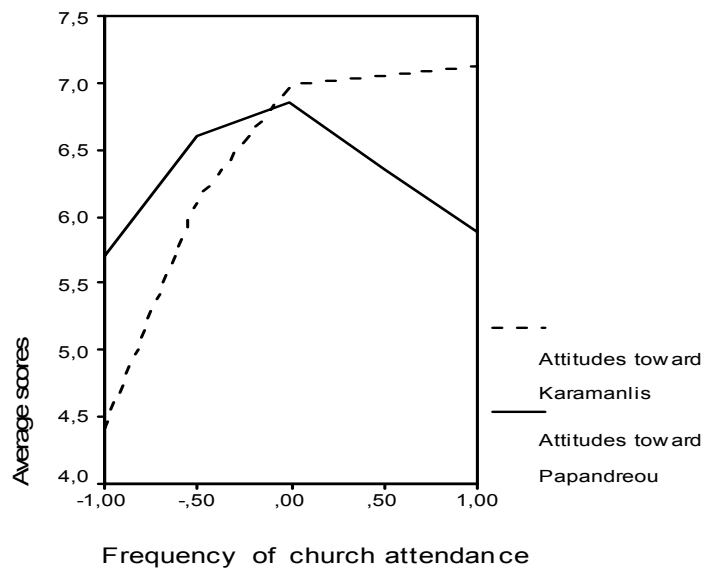


Figure 4: Distribution of respondents' evaluations about Papandreou and Karamanlis by frequency of church attendance.



the lead of the party only three months before the election, it is logical to assume that he did not have enough time to elaborate and present to the public certain characteristics of his personality. Consequently, it is likely to presume that voters had not acquired until the poll day a complete picture of his leadership qualities. On the contrary, by the time of the election the opposition leader had already fulfilled almost eight years in that post and, hence, the electorate had already established a more thorough view about his personality traits. If this argumentation is true then we should observe greater tendency by voters to assess personal qualities by

Table 1: OLS estimates of relative leadership ratings/evaluations of Karamanlis/evaluations of Papandreou against party identification, ideological proximity and intensity of religious beliefs

	Comparative Evaluations B (Std.E)	Evaluations towards Karamanlis B (Std.E)	Evaluations towards Papandreou B (Std.E)
Party Identification	.611* (.017)	.587* (.026)	-.635* (.027)
Ideological proximity	.224* (.037)	.264* (.057)	-.190* (.080)
Church attendance	.033* (.016)	.134* (.025)	.070* (.026)
Intercept	.013 (.010)	.237* (.015)	.213* (.015)
N (Adjusted R ²)	1128 (.737)	1128 (.538)	1128 (.517)

Note: All variables range from pro-PASOK to pro-ND values. Entries are unstandardised coefficients. Standard errors in parentheses, * p<.05

making use of political cues offered by partisan biases in the case of Papandreou than in the case of Karamanlis. Yet, as columns 3 and 4 of Table 1 indicate, political predispositions are no better predictors of evaluations toward Papandreou than toward Karamanlis. Whereas party identification and church attendance seem to be approximately equally important in evaluating both leaders,¹⁹ ideological proximity appears to affect leader ratings much more strongly in the case of Karamanlis than in the case of Papandreou. The unclear political views of PASOK's new leader, together with his decision to extend the political appeal of the party towards both to the left and the right of the political spectrum, seems to have confused the electorate making ideological proximity a not so adequate cue for the assessment of his personality.²⁰

¹⁹ Church attendance appears to improve Papandreou rating, something which seems contrary both to the assumption that religiosity is positively correlated with the conservative party and leader and to what is indicated by Figure 4. The figure shows that although for Karamanlis the relationship can be regarded approximately as linear and is clearly positive, the relationship between Papandreou rating and frequency of church attendance shows to be bell-shaped, implying that it cannot be adequately estimated if assumed to be linear. Thus, I also run a regression of feelings toward Papandreou in which apart from the three explanatory variables entered here, a variable of squared church attendance was added in order to capture the possibility of non-linearity. Guided by the graph, my expectation is that this new variable will be negative (as it has to be so long as the bell-shaped pattern in Figure 4 is significant). Indeed, the parameter proved to be significant and negative, increasing the adjusted R² to .521. Hence, the positive sign of the term of church attendance here is most probably an artefact of specification error.

²⁰ The most striking example of Papandreou's effort to broaden the appeal of his party both toward the left and right of the political centre was to incorporate in the bosom of the party two of the most prominent neo-liberal ex-members of ND (Andrianopoulos and Manos) together with two distinguished political figures of the non-communist left (Androulakis and Damanaki). That move, though, did not seem to yield any substantial electoral benefit to PASOK since instead of extending its electoral base it rather provoked a chain of reactions within the grassroots of the party.

The results presented so far imply that leadership evaluations are not entirely the outcome of voters' idiosyncratic reactions to candidates' personal traits, since they seem to be strongly affected by more basic political predispositions. Thus, following the logic of the funnel of causality which was outlined above, the estimation of the impact of leadership evaluations on vote choice will have to take into account all these general political attitudes which are regarded as causally prior to leaders' image, on the grounds that they constitute more stable and persistent influences on vote choice. Yet, before moving to that step, a final point needs to be made. An alternative reading of the observed pattern so far would be that assessments of leaders' qualities are shown to be conditioned by partisan and political predispositions because they shape such attitudes rather than are affected by them. As Bartle and Crewe state, leaders represent relatively enduring elements in the political context and since they control party organization, they shape their parties' images (2002:81). Under that perspective, it could be argued that personal impressions of leaders influence prospective voters' partisanship and their political predispositions. If that were the case, then trying to estimate the magnitude of leadership influences on vote by controlling for all these political attitudes would understate the final impact of leaders' images by misattributing to party identification and ideological proximities a portion of leadership qualities' direct effects (Bartels, 2002:58).

Yet, as appendix shows, exogeneity testing between voters' assessments about the two candidates and ideological proximity gives no credit to this alternative hypothesis. In line with common belief, evaluations of leaders' qualities seem to be endogenous to ideological views.²¹ That constitutes a good sign that the findings presented up to now show that leaders' ratings are influenced by voters' predispositions rather than the other way round.

The impact of leadership evaluations on individual voting behaviour

The analysis follows at this point the 'improved prediction' strategy in trying to assess the impact of candidates' ratings after controlling for prior influences on vote. However, in contrast with Miller and Shanks' multistage analyses, the model tested here bears resemblance to that of Bartels (2002) and does not distinguish between more than two causal categories of potential influences on vote. The three control variables – partisanship, ideology and religious commitment – are located at the same causal block which encompasses parameters of political

²¹ Given the relative complexity and the space needed to describe properly the exogeneity test, I prefer to report only the outcome of the test in the main text and provide the whole analysis of the procedure in the appendix in order to save space and avoid moving the discussion to more technical issues.

predispositions. This is the only block of variables which is used in order to control for all the determinants of vote decision that can be regarded as causally prior to leadership evaluations. Both practical and methodological reasons impose this formulation. On the one hand, the lack of data impedes the inclusion of other potential predictors of vote. On the other hand, the construction of a much richer causal model with finer differences between the causal stages can only be done at the cost of making problematic assumptions about causal ordering (Bartels 2002, 58).²²

Given the dichotomous nature of the dependent variable, OLS is no longer appropriate for the estimation of the parameters.²³ Instead, I use probit analysis which is a more adequate technique for the efficient estimation of binary response models, at the cost, though, of a more complex presentation and interpretation of the estimates (see Aldrich and Nelson, 1984). Table 2 presents the results. As it is noted by column 2, which presents the probit b-coefficients, with the exception of church attendance, all other parameters are non-trivially significant and correctly, as predicted by theory, signed.²⁴ With respect to the term of relative leadership traits, it appears to exert a significant impact on vote choice even when more stable political values which influence feelings about leaders are taken into account. However, on its own, this observation does not say anything about the magnitude of leadership effects on individual voting behaviour. How strongly did evaluations of leaders' qualities affect voters' decisions?

Given the nonlinear nature of probit analysis, the column 2 of table 2 cannot give a faithful answer to this question. In fact the b-coefficients can only inform us about the statistical

²² For instance, Miller and Shanks' models contain six temporally ordered sets of factors. In sequence these are: 1) stable social and economic characteristics; 2) partisan identification and policy-related predispositions; 3) preferences concerning current policy issues and perceptions of current conditions; 4) retrospective evaluations of the incumbent leader; 5) evaluations of the personal qualities of the candidates and 6) prospective evaluations of the potential future effectiveness of the two parties and candidates. However, the treatment, for example, of retrospective evaluations of parties as potential causes and not consequences of leadership impressions is not very convincing on the base, solely, of theoretical speculation. The same is also true for the assumed causal ordering in the relationship between leaders' and parties' images. As Bartels notes, 'in the absence of good evidence' it might be preferable to limit the number of causal stages, making thus fewer assumptions about causal priority.

²³ Since the effects of independent variables on the probability of a given outcome are often assumed to be dependent of the value of P(the probability that the dependent variable attains a specific value, say y), logit or probit models are more adequate depictions of the underlying process than the linear specification (Finkel and Denk, 1992: 788). Using the Linear Probability Model produces unreliable standard errors and 'floor' and 'ceiling effects' as a result of the non-linear nature of the relationships (Bartle, 2004:328).

²⁴ With respect to model diagnostics, the Likelihood ratio test, which can be roughly regarded as the equivalent of the F-test in OLS, shows that the model, as a whole, is significant. MacFadden R², which constitutes a measure of the goodness-of-fit of the model and ranges, as the OLS R², between 0 and 1 (for a detailed interpretation of the logic upon which it is based see Wooldridge 2003:560), shows that the explanatory power of the model is indeed impressive. As a way to deduct possible specification error, I run the regression without the term of leaders. LR remained highly significant and MacFadden R² remained to surprisingly high levels (.68), designating that leadership evaluations enter in an already well specified model. Thus, it is fair to believe that only small portion of its predicting power is likely to be an artefact of omitted variable bias.

Table 2: Probit estimates of vote intention against leadership evaluations, party identification, ideological proximity and church attendance

	B (Std.E)	dFx/dx, marginal effects (Std.E)
Leaders	2.31* (.396)	.898* (.155)
Party Identification	1.90* (.275)	.739* (.105)
Ideological proximity	2.31* (.396)	.704* (.177)
Church attendance	.156 (.236)	.060 (.092)
Intercept	.363* (.126)	—
N (MacFadden pseudo-R ²)		880 (.86)
LR (Likelihood ratio)		1053.41*

Note: All variables range from pro-PASOK to pro-ND values. Standard errors in parentheses. * p<.05

significance and the direction of the impact of each explanatory variable on the probability of voting ND (Nelson and Aldrich, 1984:43-44). In order to have an insight about the relative impact of each variable on individual vote decision I focus on column 3 which presents the rate of change in the probability of voting ND as a result of a unit change in each explanatory variable.²⁵ As this column indicates, the effect of leaders on vote choice is the greatest among all other independent variables. According to the model, other things being equal, one unit increase in the rating of Karamanlis relatively to Papandreou boosts the probability of voting ND by almost 90 percent. This effect exceeds the effects of both party identification and ideological proximity. Thus, it seems that, at least at the individual level, leadership effects did play a significant role among the electorate.

Of course, the results presented in Table 2 are the outcome of a very simple model which makes some rather dubious assumptions regarding the uniformity of the magnitude of leadership effects among the electorate. Apart from that, each candidate is assumed to exert an equally salient impact on the electorate regardless whether he runs its party three months or eight years. Trying to examine such differences, I also estimated some complementary models in which some of these assumptions were relaxed. First, two interactions were introduced: the first was between leaders' rating and level of decidedness by the respondent about what to vote, allowing undecided and decided voters to attach different weights to leaders' qualities; the second was between leaders' ratings and strength of party identification testing whether independents are more likely than partisans to base their vote upon their perceptions of lead-

²⁵ For a formal representation of this procedure see Aldrich and Nelson (1984:41-44).

ership differences. Then, a model in which the term of leaders' rating is replaced by two terms that measure feelings toward each leader separately is tested in order to examine whether the effect of candidates' evaluations is not uniform between the two leaders. However none of these alternative models showed to perform significantly better than the simple model presented here.²⁶ Apart from that, none of these specifications alters significantly the magnitude of leadership effects that was found in the core model.

²⁶ Table 3: Alternative models of leadership effects on vote choice

	1 st model B (Std.E)	2 nd model B(std.E)	3 rd model† dF/dx (Std.E)
Leadership evaluations	1.67* (.439)	2.19* (.432)	–
Party Identification	1.89* (.280)	1.95* (.291)	.948* (.092)
Ideological proximity	1.89* (.467)	1.78* (.452)	.791* (.149)
Church attendance	.206 (.239)	.158 (.238)	.166 (.382)
Leadership evaluations*level of decidedness about which party to vote	-1.25* (.527)	–	–
Leadership evalua- tions*strength of party identi- fication	–	.340 (.665)	–
Evaluations toward Papandreou	–	–	-.531* (.092)
Evaluations toward Karamanlis	–	–	.503* (.095)
Intercept	.377* (.127)	.371* (.127)	–
N (MacFadden pseudo-R ²)	880 (.87)	875 (.86)	880 (.87)
LR (Likelihood Ratio)	1058.27	1048.01	1055.23

† Since the model tests the hypothesis of different weights attributed to each leader's qualities, the change of rate in P by a unit change in each variable is reported, since it is more appropriate measure of the relative magnitude of effects than b coefficients

Note: Estimates are Probit coefficients. All variables range from pro-PASOK to pro-ND values. Standard errors in parentheses. * p<.05

Table 3 below shows the results from these alternative specifications. First, the importance attached to party leaders varies between decided and undecided voters. The interaction between leadership evaluations and level of decidedness seems to exert a significant effect on vote choice but improves the fit of the model only modestly since it produces only a small increase in McFadden R². Yet, strength of party identification does not seem to distinguish the weight people attach to leaders' qualities in their vote decision. The term shows to be non-significant and its contribution to the model is infinitesimal. Moreover, the replacement of the term of leaders' ratings by two separate terms which measure voters' assessments for each leader shows that the assumption of different weights attached to either of the two leaders (most likely to Karamanlis since he was a more stable agent in Greek political environment) is not confirmed by the empirical evidence. Voters appear to weight equally their evaluations about both leaders.

The aggregate impact of leadership evaluations on the 2004 election

The identification of considerable leadership effects on individual vote choice, although useful on its own right, says nothing about the role both leaders played in the outcome of the March election. This is because affecting individual voting behaviour does not, and should not, automatically imply any influence on the overall outcome. As King points out, ‘large number of individual voters may be influenced by an issue, but their individual votes will not affect the overall outcome if, in effect, they cancel each other out’ (King, 2002a:11). Under that perspective, we should expect discernible effects of ‘image’ considerations only when public opinion is sufficiently skewed toward one of the candidates. Yet, as was indicated by Figure 1, views about the leaders were particularly balanced among the electorate, making thus plausible to expect only modest leadership effects on the overall electoral outcome.

Since probit coefficients cannot be interpreted as if they were normal OLS coefficients, it is impossible to gauge the aggregate impact of leadership evaluations by simply connecting a variable’s estimated coefficient with its sample mean.²⁷ For that reason, I resort to the method of counterfactuals. In specific, I follow Bartels (2002:64) in trying to estimate the impact of leaders’ ratings by examining the difference that it would make to the overall outcome if both leaders were equally liked or disliked by the electorate. Did Karamanlis’ more favourable rating among ‘neutrals’ have any substantial effect on his party’s landslide? The answer to that question requires the comparison of the probability of casting a ballot for ND, as that can be predicted by the simple model described above, with the probability of opting for the party that the same model would predict given that both leaders were equally rated by all voters. The difference between these two predicted probabilities for each voter is, then, regarded as the net effect of leaders’ personal qualities on individual vote choice and the sample mean difference of these two probabilities is taken to be the net aggregate impact of leaders’ ratings

²⁷ Coding the variables in such a way that ‘0’ reflects a neutral population, it is relatively easy to evaluate each variables effect on the ‘level’ of the dependent variable by multiplying its unstandardised coefficient with its mean (See Achen, 1982; Finkel and Denk, 1993:789). In that way, the estimation can be viewed as an implicit comparison between the outcome on the overall vote produced by the independent variable against a population which remains neutral with respect to the specific variable. Furthermore, authors engaging in the analytic strategy of the ‘funnel of causality’ recognise that the distribution of every variable on public opinion is, at least in part, the result of the distribution of causally prior variables. Consequently they do not multiply the unstandardised coefficient with the mean of the variable but with what they call ‘adjusted residual’ which is taken as follows: after regressing the variable in question against all its preceding variables one saves its residuals which constitute the variance in that variable that cannot be attributed to causally prior influences. The mean of that residual constitutes the ‘adjusted residual’. This approach is feasible in the linear probability model since the model is linear and the effect of X_k on $P(Y=1)$ is taken to be the same for all values of X_k . In probit analysis, though, the nonlinearity of the relationship between $P(Y=1)$ and X_k impedes such an interpretation of the coefficients (Aldrich and Nelson, 1984:42).

Table 4: Impact of leadership evaluations on the overall outcome of the 2004 Greek election

Estimated share of ND vote* with real leaders' ratings	Estimated share of ND vote* if leaders' ratings identical	Estimated ND loss	Decisive Impact
50.8	52.5	1.7	No

*This is an estimation of ND's vote share if the election were held only between the two major parties.

on the electoral outcome. Table 4 presents the result of this counterfactual at the aggregate level. As it is seen, leaders' ratings seem to have had only a modest contribution to the election. Bearing in mind that the limited number of regressors should raise suspicions about the potentially inflated estimation of candidates' ratings impact on vote choice, the aggregate net effect of only 1.5 per cent is rather trivial and can by no means be regarded as decisive in an election which ended with a margin of almost five percentage points. Even more intriguingly, the net electoral impact of leaders appears to favour Papandreou and that indicates that, if not anything else, the reason for the defeat of the socialist party cannot be found in its leader's personal appeal.²⁸

However, given the almost equally favourable public picture of the two leaders, any estimation of the impact of their relative personal appeal on the election would be bound to produce only moderate leadership effects. A potentially more interesting, then, task would be to evaluate the extent to which the change of leader by PASOK had any substantial impact on its electoral performance. Since its former leader was unanimously its greatest electoral asset until his replacement by Papandreou, it is interesting to test whether the need for a preelectional shock had as a result the party to lose in terms of the direct appeal of its leader. Fortunately, the preelection wave of the survey asks people to locate their feelings toward the ex-Prime minister, Kostas Simitis, in a 1-10 scale. By making use of this question, we can test the aggregate effect of the socialist party's change of leader.

Even by first sight, Figure 5 implies that the clear lead that Karamanlis (mean value 6.39) enjoyed over Simitis (mean value 5.07) among the electorate is good sign that we could expect clearer aggregate leadership effects in this counterfactual. This expectation is somewhat

²⁸ It has to be noted though that this finding is to be treated with caution since it is likely that it is partly produced because of serious sampling error with regard to the distribution of voters' assessments about the leaders. This is because the preelection survey has not captured people's feelings about the performance of leaders in the televised debate. Since PASOK's leader was only recently placed in this post, it is logical to expect that his first debate as leader of the party would influence substantively voters' evaluations toward him. As is demonstrated below, his performance in the debate was quite disappointing and there are good reasons to believe that this poor performance resulted in a sharp fall of his rating. So, since the debate effect is missed by the preelection survey, estimates about leadership evaluations are likely to be biased in favour of Papandreou.

Figure 5: Distribution of respondents' evaluations toward Kostas Simitis and Kostas Karamanlis

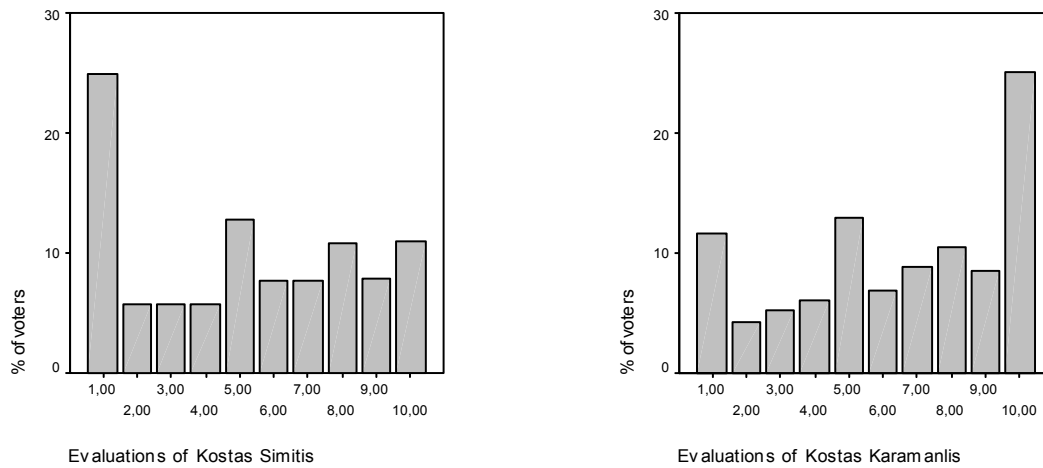


Table 5: Probit estimates of vote intention against leadership evaluations, party identification, ideological proximity and church attendance

	B (Std.E)	dFx/dx, marginal effects (Std.E)
Leadership evaluations†	1.37* (.279)	.535 (.109)
Party Identification	2.28* (.248)	.887 (.094)
Ideological proximity	1.69* (.412)	.658 (.159)
Church attendance	-.134 (.180)	-.052 (.070)
Intercept	.170 (.118)	—
N (MacFadden pseudo-R ²)		886 (.84)
LR (Likelihood ratio)		1030.30*

† In this analysis the term of leadership evaluations measures voters' relative rating between Karamanlis and Simitis.

Note: All variables range from pro-PASOK to pro-ND values. Standard errors in parentheses. * p<.05

Table 6: Impact of leadership evaluations on the overall outcome of the 2004 Greek election

Estimated share of ND vote* with real leaders' ratings	Estimated share of ND vote* if PASOK had fought the election with Simitis	Estimated ND gain	Decisive Impact
50.8	51.4	0.6	No

*This is an estimation of ND's vote share if the election were held only between the two major parties.

qualified by the findings of Table 5, though, which show that the impact of relative rating between Karamanlis and Simitis was not so influential on vote choice as was the case for Kara-

manlis and Papandreou.²⁹ The result of the mean sample difference in the estimated probabilities is shown in Table 6. Indeed, the difference between the two probabilities is strikingly small. Although Karamanlis appears to be the net winner in terms of leaders' personal characteristics, the extremely small effect of his more favourable relative rating is a very good demonstration of the limited potential of leadership traits to determine electoral outcomes. That said, the same finding reveals that the change of leader might have improved PASOK's image in other aspects, but the new pattern that it produced in relative leadership ratings did not alter substantially its electoral position. According to the model, its share of the vote increases by less than one point as a result of change in leader. It is clear that the difference of five percentage points in the share of the vote between the two parties could by no means be compensated for by such a marginal improvement in its leader's perceived personal qualities.

The effect of the debate

Similarly to other western democracies, during the last decade the debate between the party leaders has been deemed a constant feature of the campaign period in Greek parliamentary elections. In the case of the last election, the debate did not constitute a battle between the leaders of the two major parties, but included the leaders of all five parties that enjoyed representation in either the national or the European parliament. Since the preelection wave of the panel was held few days before the debate took place, it could not capture either explicitly with a separate question or indirectly via respondents' leadership assessments, the impact of this event on voters' perceptions about the leaders. However, since the postelection wave of the panel incorporated a relevant question, we can gauge the effect of this television battle, regarding it as an indirect way of measuring the influence of leaders' appeal to the electorate.³⁰

²⁹ This finding is not surprising since at the time of the interview voters had an already established idea about who were the two competing leaders and thus were consciously evaluating Simitis under a different, and not so competitive, perspective, which might not have had a crucial effect on vote decision. However, different weight does not mean that these men were evaluated in a relatively less comparative sense than Karamanlis and Papandreou (for the argument that leaders are assessed under a comparative perspective see Nadeau et al. 1996). In fact, as is shown by the data, assessments between Karamanlis and Simitis were more zero-sum than between the former and Papandreou, since correlations between the first pair of leaders (-.381) appears to be higher than the correlation between the second pair (-.348).

³⁰ The first wave of the survey was implemented to a sample of 1639 respondents whereas the second wave had a sample of 1307. Preliminary data exploration indicated that panel attrition was not a serious problem since the loss of about 20 per cent of all cases by the second panel did not seem to have created new biases to the data (in terms of gender, educational level, and cohort). Yet, the postelection wave, as would be expected if seen under the political context within which it was held, significantly boosted the ND's lead over PASOK with respect to the share of the vote. That bias might be partially responsible for some of the results shown below.

Table 7 depicts the distribution of respondents' assessments about the performance of the two leaders. It is clear that the balanced view which characterised voters' synoptic evaluations of the two leaders bears little resemblance to their perceptions about leaders' performance in the debate. Electorate was clearly skewed toward Karamanlis, indicating that ND's leader performed much better than his counterpart of the socialist party. Unfortunately, the lack of party identification item makes it impossible to examine whether the observed pattern of table 8 is an artefact of prior partisan biases. Yet, since the same people who rated both leaders so closely in the preelection panel are shown to evaluate Karamanlis much more favourably than Papandreou with respect to the debate, it is logical to assume that great part of this difference is most likely due to the perceptions of voters about the leaders' relative performance in the night of the debate rather than an artefact of a rapid change in the distribution of party identifiers.³¹

Given this large difference in people's perceptions, the debate must have exerted a positive influence on ND's share of the vote. A precondition for that, though, is that it affected individual voting behaviour. In trying to assess the impact of the debate on party support, I employ the following specification:

$$V_t = f(\text{Leaders}_{t-1}; \text{Pid}_{t-1}; \text{Ideology}_{t-1}; \text{Church}_{t-1}; \text{Debate}_t)^{32}$$

where

V: Recalled vote from the postelection survey

Leaders: Voters' relative leadership evaluations as measured before the election

Pid: Party identification before the election

Ideology: Ideological proximity between voters' and parties as measured before the election

Church: Frequency of Church attendance as measured before the election

³¹ That said, it has to be noted that the results of the postelection wave might be somewhat biased in favour of the final winner since respondents are prompted to believe that his own personal appearance must have been an important factor for the victory of his party. Thus, the estimate of satisfaction with the performance of the two leaders in the debate is probable to inflate in a postelection survey the relative lead of Karamanlis if compared to a survey that measured voters' perceptions of the two leaders' appearance the following day of the debate.

³² I also employed another specification which follows more closely the causal logic of Finkel (1995). In specific, vote intention, as measured before the election, is assumed to differ from postelection reported vote (besides from measurement error) only to the degree that the debate had any impact on voters' decisions. Unfortunately, there are no other relevant items in the post election survey that could help control for other short-term influences on vote. That makes the results exaggerate about the impact of the debate. Yet, the underlying logic that drives this specification is straightforward: Since vote intention encompasses all pre-debate influences on vote, any substantial difference of recalled vote must have been produced by events that took place after the preelection wave. Unfortunately, here we can only control for the debate. This specification, which is sustained on the same logic with the specification that is proposed in the main part of the text, gives identical results regarding the influence of the debate on both individual vote and aggregate electoral outcome and thus it is not presented here for reasons of brevity. The results can be made available by the author upon request.

Debate: -1 Papandreou did better in the debate; 0 neither did better; +1 Karamanlis did better

The argumentation for the proposition of that model is again based on the logic of ‘the improved prediction’ strategy which implies that in order to estimate the net impact of the debate on voters’ perceptions, we need to control for all other prior influences that might shape reactions to the leaders’ performance on the debate. Thus, to see whether voters’ judgements about the debate had any net substantial impact on vote choice, there is need to account for their, causally prior, assessments of the leaders. People do not watch the debate free from partisan and other political biases. Besides, it is likely that they are predisposed to overestimate the performance of the leader that they already prefer. Thus, the estimation of its net impact has to take all these prior influences into consideration. Under that perspective, I let the influence of the debate appear as adding some more information about voters’ electoral choice once having accounted for pre-debate political predispositions and evaluations of leaders’ qualities.

The results shown in Table 8 indicate that, even when voters’ partisan and leadership biases are taken into account, the debate still exerts a very significant impact on vote choice. Even more interestingly, column 3 of the table implies that with the exception of party identification, the effect of the debate is the strongest in the model, implying that a unit increase in voters’ evaluations about the performance of Karamanlis is capable of enhancing the probability of voting ND by almost forty per cent. Yet, this result has to be viewed with caution because of the fact that the debate is the only variable that enters the model at time t and that is highly likely to overestimate its impact. It is logical, for instance, to expect the effect of leadership evaluations to appear seriously deflated since they are now added in the model with a lag, something which diminishes their impact on the response variable. That said, the picture in Table 8 makes it impossible to resist the interpretation that this decline of the variable’s magnitude once the term of voters’ perceptions about the debate has been added is a good indication that the effect of leadership evaluations on vote choice is strongly mediated by their assessments of leaders’ performance in the debate and, thus, their exaggerated direct impact in vote intention was, in part, the outcome of the omission of this variable.

Up to now, leaders’ debate satisfies both conditions in order to affect the overall electoral outcome. Not only does it exert a strong influence on electoral choice, but it also produces highly skewed reactions by the public. But did it really exert a substantial impact on the election? The answer to that question is based again on a counterfactual. The hypothesis which will serve as a baseline for the comparison regards the extent to which the aggregate outcome

Table 7: Distribution of voters' perceptions about leaders' performance on the debate.

<i>Voters perceptions about who did better on the debate</i>	%
Karamanlis did better	47.1 (460)
Neither Karamanlis nor Papandreou did better	31.9 (311)
Papandreou did better	21 (205)

Table 8: Probit estimates of recalled vote against evaluations of leaders' performance on the debate, leadership evaluations, party identification, ideological proximity and church attendance.

	B (Std.E)	dFx/dx, marginal effects (Std.E)
Debate	.880* (.115)	.339* (.045)
Leadership evaluations	.674* (.254)	.259* (.097)
Party Identification	1.05* (.203)	.406* (.077)
Ideological proximity	.591 (.340)	.227 (.130)
Church attendance	.292* (.144)	.113* (.055)
Intercept	.036 (.092)	—
N (MacFadden pseudo-R ²)		735 (.69)
LR (Likelihood Ratio)		696.55*

Note: All variables range from pro-PASOK to pro-ND values. Standard errors in parentheses. * p<.05

Table 9: Impact of leaders' performance on the debate on the overall outcome of the 2004 Greek election

Estimated share of ND vote* with real leaders' debate performance ratings	Estimated share of ND vote* if leaders' performed equally on the debate	Estimated ND gain	Decisive Impact
53.69	48.08	5.61	Yes

*This is an estimation of ND's vote share if the election were held only between the two major parties.

would be significantly different, had leaders' performances in the debate been evaluated equally by the electorate. The difference in the mean probabilities for voting ND is presented in Table 9. Indeed, the finding is quite impressive. According to the proposed model, ND's share of the vote increased by more than five percentage points because of the difference in people's views about the Karamanlis' and Papandreou's performance on the debate. That estimate is large enough to have determined the overall outcome. However, before reaching to

inferences about the importance of the debate on the 2004 election, several points need to be made.

First, the inability of the model to control for other factors which could potentially affect vote at the same time-period, boosts the effect of the debate on individual voting behaviour and, effectively, measures what could be called as the ‘upper limits’ of this term’s impact on vote.³³ Furthermore, the problems of rationalization and intuitive inflation of the characteristics of the winner that are evident in every postelection survey are partly responsible for the great difference in the public’s views about the appearance of the leaders in the debate. This overestimation of Karamanlis’ performance is bound to have attributed considerably greater aggregate effect to the debate than it would have been the case if voters’ reactions were measured before the election. All these problems in the measurement of the parameters and the specification of the model might be responsible for the exaggeration of the debate’s aggregate impact.

However, even accounting for these caveats, the estimate is surprisingly large to ignore it. If leaders had any considerable impact on the March election, this was mediated through voters’ assessments about the debate. It seems that for some voters the debate served as a device to establish a clear comparative view about the two competing leaders. And that had two consequences. First, it must have changed sufficiently people’s view about the two leaders’ relative personal qualities. Second, it seems to have helped some undecided voters form an opinion about the relative competencies of the two leaders and base upon this judgement their personal vote. The fact that Karamanlis appeared to be more confident and with better knowledge of the problems than the, essentially not very well prepared in this new role, socialist leader, was most probably important enough to facilitate voters already inclined to switch to ND to do so.

³³ In effect, the impact of the debate would have been very unlikely to remain so large, once control for contemporary leadership evaluations could have been made. This is because perceptions about the debate are bound to affect the vote by influencing voters’ leadership perceptions. So, in the absence of a postelectoral question about the leaders, what is observed here is probably the upper limit of leadership effects at time t , as measured by voters’ assessments of leaders’ performance on the debate. That said, the debate is very important on its own right since it seems to be the most important reason for differences in leadership evaluations during the campaign. In other words, given this pattern with regard to the debate, it is highly unlikely to expect from a postelectoral question about leaders’ qualities to bear much resemblance to the preelection pattern. Without being able to make use of such a question, we can certainly assume that since public distribution about the two leaders’ appearance on the debate was so different from the preelection distribution of voters’ leadership assessments, leadership evaluations have changed during the campaign period in favour of Karamanlis. The debate seems to have mattered a lot in that change.

V. Conclusion

The idea that leaders determine elections is embedded in Greek party competition. In both serious commentary and saloon bar conversation, electoral contests between the two major political parties are transmogrified into contests between the two parties' leaders (King et al., 2001:3). Nevertheless, arguing that leaders matter is totally different from demonstrating that they, indeed, matter. And political scientists are obliged to do the second. However, any effort to gauge the net impact of evaluations towards party leaders on elections is bound to sustain its findings on certain assumptions, many of which might be of questionable validity. In this analysis, the effects of leaders may have been treated as endogenous to partisan and ideological biases but were regarded as exogenous to vote. Consequently the results presented here can be considered reliable only if we previously accept the hypothesis that voters' perceptions of leaders only influence – and are not, simultaneously, influenced by – party support. Furthermore, the lack of various theoretically important variables makes leadership effects seem somewhat overrated. Finally, the adoption of the counterfactual strategy for the estimation of leaders' aggregate impact is not without flaws since it implicitly assumes that all other factors remain constant. As Fiorina (1975:155) nicely puts it, in social life, 'other things are rarely equal.' A change in voters' evaluations of leaders can never be attributed only to leaders themselves. Causally prior variables, such as the balance of identifiers or voters' judgements of the incumbent record are likely to have been altered as well. All these changes cannot be captured by simply concentrating on voters' rating of leaders. In other words, if Simitis had fought the election instead of Papandreou then many other factors in voters' perspectives would have changed (or would have not changed as they did after the succession). All these caveats indicate that, as is often the case in electoral modelling, the findings of this analysis can only serve as (either good or not) approximations of real political life.

That said, some interesting conclusions can be drawn about the role of the two leaders in the last general election. First of all, the direct personal appeal of either of them did not prove to have determined either the victory or the defeat of his party. New Democracy would have won the election even if it was led by a relatively less charismatic leader. Maybe that would have cost to the party some seats, but no more than that. Other more politically substantial reasons would have secured the party's return to office anyway. On the other hand, the preelectoral succession in PASOK may well have served as a way to set the agenda and deviate public concern from other campaign issues, but was by no means sufficient to alter the electoral stream simply because Papandreou was more likeable than Simitis. The electoral

benefit for the party on these grounds seems to be rather trivial. So, a general pattern emerges. Despite the fact that leadership evaluations appear to be strong predictors of individual voting behaviour, they cannot determine electoral outcomes. The reason for that, I suspect, lies on the fact that parties are rational enough to promote to their presidency persons who, if not anything else, acquire a minimum of communication skills. Consequently, public opinion can never be seriously skewed towards either one of the two leaders.

That said, the great impact of the debate in the electoral outcome, even though exaggerated, is a good indication that Greek voters pay attention and may be potentially influenced by leaders' campaign activities. It is probable that this effect of 5.5 percentage points captures more general reactions of voters towards the appearance of the leaders during the whole campaign period. Even so, personal qualities of the leaders attain a great potential to affect swing voters. Thus, to the extent that one of them seriously outstrips the other, a charismatic president can provide its party with a substantial electoral advantage. And that seems to have been the case in the 2004 election. Karamanlis' imposing appearance in the debate seems to have convinced even the most suspicious voters about his competencies, whereas the picture of Papandreou answering by reading from his notes was a rather strong disappointment for a great portion of undecided voters. If Karamanlis won it and if Papandreou lost it, then they both did it by their performance in the debate.

Unfortunately this analysis is very limited in order to facilitate conclusions about the role of leadership evaluations in Greek politics. It is impossible to assess the relative magnitude of the impact of leaders on the 2004 election unless we can compare it with previous findings of the same context or with other findings in different settings. That is a good sign that further research is needed. Only when a series of elections are studied, will we be able to ascertain whether Greek elections become more presidentialised or not. Apart from that, the extent of leadership effects in the Greek case cannot be compared with existing findings in other parliamentary systems unless a good deal of relevant cases are analysed. It is only in this way that the comparative method will reach to safe inferences, without being conditioned on outliers, as could be, for example, the weight of the debate in this case. To know if what has been found here is a constant characteristic of Greek politics or the outcome of a series of idiosyncratic reasons, there is great need for systematic future research. That research could also give answers to questions about which particular aspects of personality seem to be weighted most by voters. Do integrity and competence constitute, as they do in other countries, the two principal dimensions according to which Greek leaders are evaluated? Is one of these dimensions more powerful than the other in the Greek case? Are voters' evaluations comparative in na-

ture, as previous research implies for other parliamentary countries or do Greek voters form their evaluations under a certain schema of what would make an ideal leader? Only further research can give robust answers to these admittedly interesting theoretical questions.

A final point needs to be made. The aim of this paper was to examine leaders' immediate effects, those that stem from their personalities and images. Leaders, though, do not only affect voting behaviour by virtue of who they are and how they comport themselves publicly (Crewe and King, 1994b:127a, fig.8.1) but, most importantly, of what they do (King, 2002a:5). So, a leader can determine the electoral outcome by changing the image and the policies of the party s/he leads. Under that perspective, the case of Kostas Karamanlis acquires a special interest in the analysis of the 2004 election. Arguing that his personal appeal did not affect the victory of his party leaves unanswered the question about his indirect effect, that is, his contribution to the improvement of the party image. Indeed, if someone looks for a Karamanlis-effect on the ND's landslide that would be principally found on his great contribution to the moderation of the party's discourse and its allocation towards the centre of the political spectrum, the success in setting the agenda and introducing and making salient a new dimension of moral values in Greek politics. All these initiatives might have convinced unsatisfied PA.SO.K. voters that now, in contrast with the election of 2000, there is a credible political alternative which can be trusted to run office. Under that perspective, Papakonstantinou might be correct. The father of the victory is probably Karamanlis but not by virtue of his image rather than of his record in the opposition.

Appendix: Exogeneity test between assessments of leaders' qualities and political predispositions

It is notoriously difficult to examine causal order by use of cross-sectional data, since causal priority is only tested properly when a time-dimension is taken into account. However, since the postelection wave of the panel survey does not include measures of predispositions, I try to disentangle the causal arrow between leadership evaluations and political predispositions by conducting a Hausman test of weak exogeneity between these variables. This test, which can be employed with cross-sectional data, is widely used in economics but is still of controversial value in political science.³⁴ It is, in principle, capable of determining the causal structure of two (or more) variables which from a purely theoretical point of view are likely to influence each other (Sanders, 2004:3).

In a quite intuitive sense, a variable X is said to be weakly exogenous to a variable Y if when regressing Y on X , Y also does not, at the same time, explain X . In this case, estimation and testing of the regression model can be done, conditionally on the values of X (Gujarati, 2003:701).³⁵ If the conventional view that enduring electoral influences, such as party identification and ideological beliefs, are causally prior to more volatile electoral forces, such as voters' assessments of the leaders, is true, then the latter will have to appear weakly exogenous to the latter.

Hausman test of weak exogeneity is based on the idea of avoiding simultaneity bias. The procedure is the following (Wooldridge, 2003:483): after regressing X on the reduced form equation of the system (which includes all predetermined variables of both structural equations) and saving the residuals of X , one adds the residual from the equation of X in the structural equation of Y . Then, the focus is concentrated on the residuals. If the coefficient of V attains statistical significance, the unmeasured influences of X (which are encompassed in the error term) are correlated with the error term of Y , that is, with the unmeasured influences on Y . So, Y and X are affected by the same omitted variables. Consequently, X cannot be weakly

³⁴ For a demonstration of the inherent weaknesses of exogeneity tests with political data see Sanders (2004).

³⁵ More formally, a variable x is said to be weakly exogenous for a set of parameters of interest, say ψ , if the marginal process for x contains no useful information for the estimation of ψ , that is, if an inference for ψ can be efficiently made conditionally on x alone and its marginal process contains no relevant information (Charemza and Deadman, 1997:225). Weak exogeneity is all that is needed for unbiased estimation and thus it constitutes the focus of this study. Other kinds of exogeneity are strong- and super-exogeneity (for a distinction between the three types of exogeneity see Engel et al. 1983). However since the strong exogeneity is only required for forecasting purposes and super-exogeneity is primarily needed for policy analysis, neither of them will be further examined in this analysis.

exogenous to Y. The opposite is of course true if the residual of the X equation is non-significant in the equation for Y (Sanders, 2004:6; Wooldridge, 2003:483).³⁶

The test involves the term of relative leaders' rating and ideological predispositions (as a proxy of enduring political attitudes). Given the serious data limitations, the proposed specifications are entirely based on methodological concerns. In particular, in simultaneous equations systems like the ones employed here, the equation of each endogenous variable has to include at least one instrumental variable in order the system to be identified. Those instrumental variables (IVs) have to satisfy two conditions. First, they must be significantly associated with the endogenous variable in whose equation they are included. When poor instruments are used, the estimation of the parameters is likely to suffer from inconsistency (Wooldridge, 2003:470). Second, IVs must not be correlated with the endogenous variable in whose equation they are not included. Again, failure to meet this condition produces inefficient estimates and invalidates any inference.³⁷

Under that perspective, the proposed specifications are presented in equation form below:

Leaders = f(Ideology; Pid; Church; Europe; Bakoyanni)

where

Europe: Feelings toward Europe

Bakoyanni: Feelings toward Dora Bakoyanni³⁸

and

Ideology = f(leaders; Pid; church; police; Synaspismos)

where

Police: Feelings toward police

Synaspismos: Feelings toward Synaspismos³⁹

³⁶ A slightly different version of the test can be found in Gujarati (2003:701) and Brooks (2002:312). The difference in that approach is that in the reduced form equation of X one saves both the residual and the fitted values of X. Then these two terms (Xhat and Vhat) replace the actual term of X. Again, inference about exogeneity depends on the t-test of Vhat. The virtue of this version is that it overcomes the problem of collinearity between X and its residual (Xhat is much less correlated with Vhat than X is). However, as Pindyck and Rubinfeld (Gujarati, 2003: 754) show, regressing Y on X and not on Xhat produces more efficient estimation of the parameters. In this analysis, Hausman test for weak exogeneity is implemented as it is described in the main part of the text and follows precisely the method presented in Wooldridge.

³⁷ Bartels (1991) refers to these two conditions as the efficiency and exogeneity criteria respectively. As he demonstrates, failure to satisfy the second provides greater bias to the estimates than failure to satisfy the second (783-84).

³⁸ Evaluations (-1 to +1 in a ten-point scale) of the ND politician Dora Bakoyanni.

³⁹ Evaluations (-1 to +1 in a ten-point scale) of the left party Synaspismos.

The selection of the instrumental variables is primarily based on the methodological criteria described above. Given data limitations, the selection of variables which could both satisfy, at least partially, these criteria and, at the same time, have a substantial explanatory power in each model was not possible. So, since the aim of this analysis is not the proposition of meaningful models of ideological proximity and leadership evaluations, but the efficient implementation of the test, my priority was to adhere to these methodological rules at the cost of adding analytically uninteresting parameters.

Each model contains two instruments (one would be sufficient for the test) because this is the minimum number of IVs that can be used in each equation so as to be able and test empirically the adequacy of the instruments, with respect to the criterion of exogeneity.⁴⁰ That is done with the following procedure: Let X,Y be two endogenous variables. After regressing, with 2SLS procedure, Y on its structural equation (in which X as the independent endogenous variable is “constructed” by its instruments), one saves the residual of that regression and regresses it against all exogenous variables of the system. Then, by multiplying the resulting R^2 with the total number of cases, under the null hypothesis that all IVs are uncorrelated with the error term, one compares the final number with the critical value of an X^2 distribution with the number of degrees of freedom being the number of overidentifying restrictions, that is, the number of IVs minus the number of the endogenous independent variables (see Wooldridge, 2003:484-86).⁴¹

Table I presents the results of Hausman test. As it is seen in column 3 of the table, the residual of the regression of Leaders against all the predetermined variables of the system is significant when it enters in the core equation of Ideology. Thus, the two terms are affected by the same omitted variables. On the other hand, the disturbance of the reduced form equation of Ideology is non-significant when it is added in the core equation of Leaders. That yields Ideology weakly exogenous to Leaders. So simultaneity bias in the estimation of the parameters should be taken into account only in the case of Leaders. Furthermore, the tests of overidentifying restrictions show that in both cases the instruments were valid since, in each

⁴⁰ The criterion of efficiency can be easily tested by correlating the potential instruments with the endogenous variable. Here, all IVs are significantly correlated with the dependent variable in whose equation they are added.

⁴¹ The intuition of this procedure is straightforward. The assumption of no correlation between the instruments of X and Y means, practically, no correlation between these instruments and the error of the equation of Y (since, by definition, the error term represents all non-measured influences on Y). So, by running a 2SLS regression of Y, in which X is constructed by its instruments, the residual represents all the other influences (apart from those which have been controlled for) which affect Y. If this residual is even slightly explained by the exogenous variables of the system (and basically the IVs which are the only exogenous variables which were not included as independent variables in the 2SLS regression) the IVs are taken to be correlated with the error of Y and thus can be regarded as inadequate instruments.

Table I: Hausman tests of models of leadership evaluations and ideological proximity

	Core Leadership Model	Hausman-test for leaders→ideology hypothesis	Core Ideological proximity model	Hausman test for leaders→ideology hypothesis
Leadership evaluations		.312* (.087)	.149* (.024)	
Ideological proximity	.200* (.035)			.634* (.239)
Party Identification	.539* (.018)	.092* (.039)	.203* (.019)	.414* (.070)
Church attendance	.016 (.015)	.013 (.013)	.018 (.013)	.006 (.016)
Attitudes toward Europe	.200* (.035)			-.001 (.001)
Attitudes toward Bakoyanni	.035* (.004)			.031* (.004)
Attitudes toward Police		-.003 (.003)	-.003 (.003)	
Attitudes toward Police		-.012* (.003)	-.012* (.003)	
Intercept	-.219* (.028)	-.010 (.024)	-.009 (.024)	-.153* (.044)
What Leadership evaluations		-.178* (.081)		
What of Ideological proximity				-.438 (.242)
N (Adjusted R ²)	1127 (.756)	1092 (.489)	1093 (.488)	1092 (.757)
N*R ² ~X _q ² †	1092*.001=1.09<X ² (3.84 for 1 df) Null not rejected. IVs valid		R ² from the OLS regression of the residual infinitesimal (8,34e-005). So, N*R ² <X ² . IVs valid	
Result	Leaders endogenous to Ideology		Ideology exogenous to Leaders	

Note: All variables range from pro-PASOK to pro-ND values. Estimates are OLS coefficients. Standard errors in parentheses. * p<.05

† The Null hypothesis is tested at .05 level of significance.

equation, the resulting R² of the OLS regression of the residual (from the 2SLS regression of Ideology/Leaders) against all exogenous variables is small enough so that when multiplied by the number of observations does not exceed the critical value (at .05 level of significance) of a X² distribution with one degree of freedom (two instruments minus one endogenous explanatory variable). The findings of Hausman test, thus, are in accordance to widespread belief: evaluations toward leaders are causally affected by political predispositions rather than the other way round.

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