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Culture wars? Assessing the impact of affective polarisation on cultural battles

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Abstract

How does division in society along cultural issues influence affective polarisation? This paper argues that affective polarisation expressed as a group identity on the basis of partisanship can enforce inter-group conflicts on cultural and austerity issues. In our study we employ data from a newly collected data in Greece. Our analysis suggests that cultural and austerity issues reinforced divides and inter-group conflicts even today. Our findings have implications for understanding how affective polarisation can be conditional on views towards cultural and economic issues.

Keywords— Affective polarisation, austerity, cultural issues

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1 Introduction

What underlying factors have contributed to the surge of affective polarisation in Greece? In recent years mass polarisation expressed by voters as animosity towards the supporters of the political party they oppose builds up across Europe (Iyengar et al. 2012, 2019). For scholars who are interested in analysing trends in public opinion and attitudes, therefore, it is important to understand the possible causes of partisan animosity and partisan divisions in European societies today. Thus far, possible explanations for the rise of affective polarisation include the salience of the elections (Hernandez et al. 2021), social and territorial cleavages (Torcal & Comellas 2022, Westwood et al. 2018), ideological polarisation (Webster & Abramowitz 2017) and elite conflicts on economic issues reflecting economic disputes, especially during the Great Recession in Europe (Gidron et al. Forthcoming). As cultural and societal issues, including immigration, abortion, LGBTQ+ rights, and environmental concerns, gain increasing importance in the general public discourse, it is not clear yet to what extent these issues influence the rise of group identities and consequently the rise affective polarisation.

As it has already been implied, affective polarisation stems from group identities form in society. What differentiate affective polarisation from other political phenomena involving group conflicts is partisanship. In the case of affective polarisation group identities are progressively integrated into partisanship and they create divisions in society manifested as animosity towards the supporters of the party they perceive as the "opposite" party (Robison & Moskowitz 2019, Westwood et al. 2018).

This article aims at analysing the impact of two distinct categories of political issues namely, cultural and austerity, on the phenomenon of affective polarisation within the context of Greece. An example of a country with high levels of affective polarisation but also an example of a country that that suffered the most financially during the economic crisis years (Katsanidou & Lefkofridi 2020) and witness a cultural-backlash during the European economic crisis years (Norris & Inglehart 2019, Foa & Mounk 2016). But also, the country . We study this phenomenon using recently collected data (2022) in Greece.

This article aims at analyzing the impact of two distinct categories of political issues, namely, cultural and austerity, on the phenomenon of affective polarisation. Greece serves as an illustrative example of a country characterized by high levels of affective polarisation, which also

witnessed a cultural backlash during the European economic crisis years (Norris & Inglehart 2019, Foa & Mounk 2016), and faced significant financial challenges during this period (Katsanidou & Lefkofridi 2020).

Building upon the theoretical framework of affective polarisation, we argue that cultural and austerity related issues generate conflicts in society and as a result they affectively polarise citizens. This polarisation occurs through the establishment of social groups founded upon shared attitudes regarding moral and economic values. Our analysis suggests that affective polarisation, as a phenomenon, does not only materialise on partisanship but it is a by-product of economic and cultural divides cutting across partisan lines.

In the section that follows, we provide an overview of the theory of social identities and affective polarisation. We continue by introducing our data and method of analysis. In the fourth section, we present our empirical results, while in the final section we discuss the implications of our findings.

2 Unpacking Affective polarisation: The Dynamics of Intergroup Conflicts

In their seminal work Iyengar, Sood & Lelkes (2012) developed their argument on affective polarisation - “the tendency of people identifying as Republicans or Democrats to view opposing partisans negatively and co-partisans positively”. An important feature of affective polarisation is the manifestation of intense negative emotions, such as hostility and animosity, directed towards the supporters of the opposing party (Iyengar et al. 2019, Iyengar & Westwood 2015, Iyengar et al. 2012). While affective polarisation has important implications on peoples’ political attitudes there is substantial evidence suggesting that it can also impact attitudes beyond our political life. For example, experimental studies now suggest that affective polarisation can impact various facets of our social and professional choices, including decisions regarding marriage partners and hiring (Hrbková et al. 2023, Huber & Malhotra 2017, Gift & Gift 2015).

The theory of affective polarisation is conceptually rooted in the theories of social identity and intergroup conflicts. This framework traces its origins to Tajfel and his colleagues, particularly their argument that individuals come together to form social groups based on shared character-

istics, as noted in Tajfel’s work (Tajfel et al. 1979). Through the application of experimental studies, Tajfel observed that members of these social groups engage in discriminatory behaviour (Tajfel et al. 1971) and according to Tajfel we do so ”even if there is no reason for it in terms of [our] own interests”.

Tajfel’s theory yields two significant conclusions. The first relates to our perception of the world as citizens, in which Tajfel suggests that we categorize the world into ”us” and ”them”. The second conclusion posits that once we have made this categorization, favouritism towards our own group and discrimination against ”them” – the out-group – will occur even in the absence of substantial justification for such discriminatory actions (Tajfel 1981, 1982).

Drawing from the knowledge acquired through Tajfel’s experimental studies it becomes evident that in the case of affective polarisation group conflicts primarily stem from our partisan affiliations. Our perception of the world aligns with the formation of groups centered around the political parties we support. Once we identify with a specific political party and categorize others based on their party affiliations, a tendency arises to show preference towards our in-group, consisting of individuals who support the same party as us, while simultaneously discriminating against the out-group, representing supporters of the opposing party (Iyengar & Westwood 2015).

To illustrate with a few examples, within the U.S. context, affective polarisation becomes apparent in the form of a sharp division between Democrats and Republicans (Iyengar et al. 2012). In the United Kingdom, the expression of affective polarisation is evident in the animosity between supporters of ”Remain” and ”Leavers” (Hobolt et al. 2020). In both instances, affectively polarized partisans not only exhibit disagreements on cultural or economic matters but also demonstrate an ”identity divide.” This divide is marked by a growing level of inter-group hostility and distrust.

Studies on affective polarisation outside of the USA and in multiparty systems are still scarce, but they all agree that affective polarisation is a feature of several contemporary European countries with Southern European countries (Greece, Spain, Italy, and Turkey) being among the most affectively polarised societies (Orriols & León 2020, Reiljan 2020, Wagner 2021). What distinguishes European multiparty systems from two-party systems, such as the one in the USA, is not merely the perception of partisanship as a multifaceted concept encompassing attitudes

and serving as a social identity. Instead, the key differentiation lies in the tendency for this identity to frequently encompass parties aligned with the same ideological bloc (Thomassen 1999, Thomassen & Schmitt 1997). In a manner akin to other social identities, citizens within this context maintain deep emotional and psychological bonds with their in-group, which, in this case, includes those affiliated with the same ideological bloc.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the period from 1998 to 2019 witnessed an overall rise in affective polarisation in most European countries. However, three countries experienced a decrease in affective polarisation, while nine displayed no significant change. Notably, Greece, Slovakia, and Finland recorded increases of more than one unit in affective polarisation, with Germany standing out as the nation that observed the most substantial reduction in the level of affective polarisation.

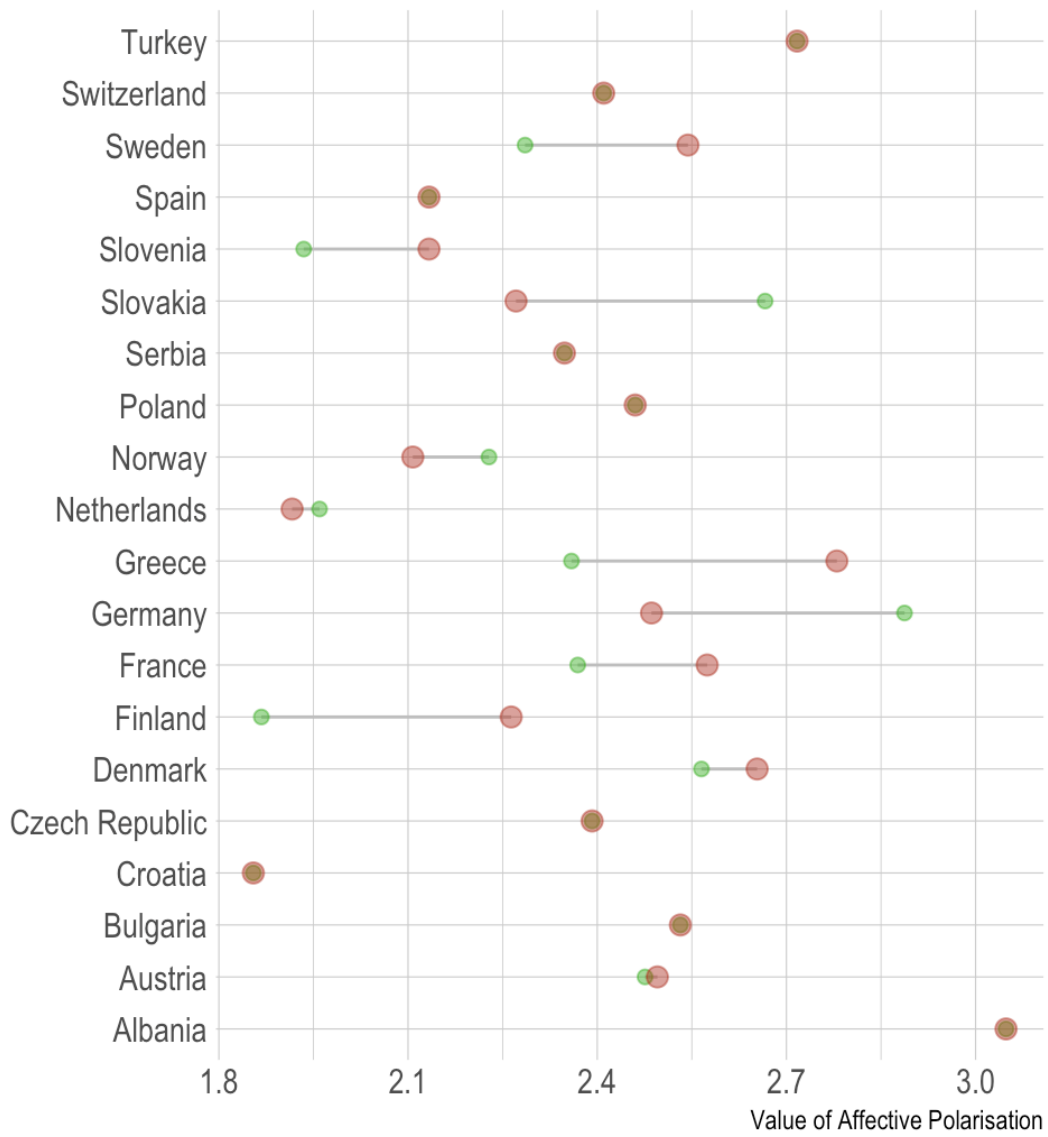
3 The Determinants and Implications of Affective Partisanship

The scholarly debate on affective polarisation initially sought to discuss trends of affective polarisation in the European context and emphasised on how affective polarisation can be accurately measured in multiparty systems - in contrast to the American two-party system (Wagner 2021, Reiljan 2020). Currently, researchers have increasingly started discussing the causes of affective polarisation and its consequences for Western democracies. In the European context studies focused primarily on the salience of the elections (Hernandez et al. 2021), social and territorial cleavages (Torcal & Comellas 2022, Westwood et al. 2018), and elite conflicts on economic issues (Gidron et al. Forthcoming). In this article, we present two alternative explanations. The first is related to the economy, with a particular focus on attitudes toward the austerity measures implemented during the economic crisis. The second explanation is related to cultural issues.

4 Austerity as a driver of affective polarisation

polarisation is not a recent phenomenon in Greece; the country experienced periods of societal division and polarisation long before the economic crisis. The memories of the civil war and the junta era continued to influence voting preferences and fostered ideological alignments along

Figure 1: Affective polarisation in Europe: 1998–2019



Trends on the level of affective polarisation from 1998 until 2019. Calculations are based on Wagner (2021) index with the use of the CSES data.

the left-right spectrum until the early 1990s. During this period, in government, the left was represented by the Panhellenic Socialist Party (PASOK), while the right was represented by New Democracy.

However, during the economic crisis, the strong attachment to these two major parties, PASOK and ND, transformed into negative partisanship, primarily directed towards PASOK, which was in power during the initial years of the economic crisis (Tsatsanis et al. 2020).

At the beginning of the European Sovereign Debt Crisis, the eurozone governments and the IMF agreed upon providing temporary financial bailout assistance to the three-member states mainly hit by the crisis - Greece, Ireland, and Portugal. Soon after the first rescue package and amidst fear that the debt crisis will spread to other EU member states in debt, the financial ministers funded the European Stability Mechanism (ESM)¹. From a political perspective Greece's bankruptcy, the first country to receive financial support, would have been interpreted as the European Union's inability to protect one of its oldest member states, and from this perspective, it would have been a hit to the process of European Integration (Ozturk & Sozdemir 2015). The main aim of the bailout agreements between the European institutions (the European Commission, the European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund - known as the troika) and the national governments was to reduce the debt of the countries hit by the crisis - this was primarily done by promoting a series of austerity measures such as reducing governments spending, an increase in direct and indirect taxes, and property taxation (Nezi & Katsanidou 2014). At the European level, the memorandum intended to prevent the Eurozone from collapsing when Europe's sovereign debt crisis started in 2008.

Since the beginning of the economic crisis, the political discourse was dominated by accusations of who is responsible for the economic crisis and which party is responsible for signing yet another bailout agreement. During that period two antagonistic groups emerged in the political arena; those who regarded the memorandum as a necessity in order to overcome the crisis and those who regarded it as the reason why the crisis has been deep and prolonged (Karyotis & Rüdiger 2015).

Each side, those supporting the memorandum and those opposing it were represented by dif-

¹The ESM is a financial institution funded by contributions from other euro area member states to support other eurozone countries in severe financial distress.

ferent political parties often located at the fringe of the ideological spectrum (Lefkofridi & Nezi 2020, Vasilopoulou 2018, Morlino & Raniolo 2017).

For instance, PASOK, one of the main parties that, along with ND, supported the austerity measures, was perceived by voters as responsible for the economic crisis. Consequently, it experienced a significant decline in both political power and the number of parliamentary members. During the crisis, many MPs from PASOK, which nearly disappeared in the midst of the economic crisis, and from New Democracy, who disagreed with the party line of their respective parties' support for austerity measures, faced consequences. Some were ousted from their parties for not voting in favour of the austerity measures in parliament, while others resigned due to their opposition to these measures and subsequently joined another political party (Gemenis & Nezi 2012).

On the opposing end, the anti-memorandum coalition was led by Syriza on the left, while a collection of radical and extreme right-wing parties, including the Independent Greeks and the Golden Dawn, represented the far right. Notably, the Independent Greeks, a radical right party, and Syriza, a radical left party, formed a coalition government based on their shared stance against austerity policies.

At the individual level, the austerity measures triggered public protests and a notable increase in political discontent. Remarkably, Greece experienced the most substantial rise in affective polarisation in Europe during this period, as evident in Figure 1.

At the time, it was clear that the austerity measures created deep divisions in the Greek society and it has done so by polarising citizens to an extent that it was challenging the national unity.

H1: Affective polarisation is driven by austerity politics.

5 Austerity and the culture wars effect

Crucially, a direct consequence of the economic recession in many European countries was a significant reduction in real income and a simultaneous increase in economic inequality. But the recession also triggered substantial periodic effects, giving rise to a backlash against cultural shifts associated with the promotion of liberal values (Foa 2021, Foa & Mounk 2016). This led to a widespread sense of unease that these cultural changes and the influx of foreigners were

eroding the traditional way of life, as evidenced by various studies (Inglehart 2018, Mudde 2007, Kitschelt & McGann 1997).

In a comparative perspective, Norris & Inglehart (2019, pp.54) observe that cultural issues and the politicisation of social identities divide societies into “Us-versus-Them tribes” similar to the divisions observed in Greece regarding the austerity measures. What this thesis proposes is that cultural issues have the potential to generate tensions and evoke divisions among the general public with people forming group identities on the basis of cultural issues.

While the impact of cultural issues on affective polarisation is not yet clear there are evidence suggesting that cultural, moral, issues can have an impact on polarisation. In Europe, and by using the case of The Netherlands as an example Hartevelde (2021), suggests that affective polarisation is strong among those who express disagreement on cultural issues. On the contrary, Abramowitz & Webster (2018) suggest that in the USA negative affect is linked with economic issues, such as welfare attitudes, than to cultural divisions such as abortion and gay rights. The dominance of economic over cultural issues in the USA is consistent with Iyengar et al. (2012) findings.

H2: Affective polarisation is also driven by cultural divisions.

6 A new survey measuring affective polarisation

In December 2022, we conducted a public opinion survey in Greece with the primary objective of assessing citizens’ attitudes and beliefs concerning a range of political issues. A specific emphasis was placed on understanding affective polarisation within the Greek context. The survey encompassed questions related to various subjects, including politicians, vaccination policies, and austerity measures. To gauge affective polarisation, the survey incorporated multiple questions, including a widely employed like-dislike specific parties question that is a common method for measuring attitudes towards particular political parties and, by extension, the degree of affective polarisation.

Furthermore, the survey included questions designed to assess affective polarisation in the context of group identity. Respondents were asked to express negative emotions and describe stereotypical behaviours toward the out-group. The survey is representative of the entire Greek

population, accounting for socio–demographic characteristics and voting preferences.

One of the key advantages of conducting this survey was that, unlike existing surveys, it assessed affective polarisation not only as an individual sentiment but also as a measure of group identity. To achieve this, we utilised a set of questions designed to gauge a group identity scale, which was adapted from the social identity scale originally developed by Brown et al. (1986). Our measure examines voters’ attachment to their in-group by asking questions about whether they feel members of the group, they share common characteristics with other members of the group, they feel familiar and positive towards the group, and whether they get offended when someone criticises their group.

7 Affective polarisation in Greece: New evidence

In our analysis, we focus on the two principal parties in the Greek party system: the conservative right-wing party of New Democracy and the populist left-wing party of SYRIZA. This choice was informed by the fact that New Democracy and SYRIZA played a dominant role in the Greek party system, and affective polarisation was primarily observed among the supporters of these two parties (Teperoglou & Tsatsanis 2017).

Figure 2: Visualization of Affective polarisation Across Political Parties in Greece

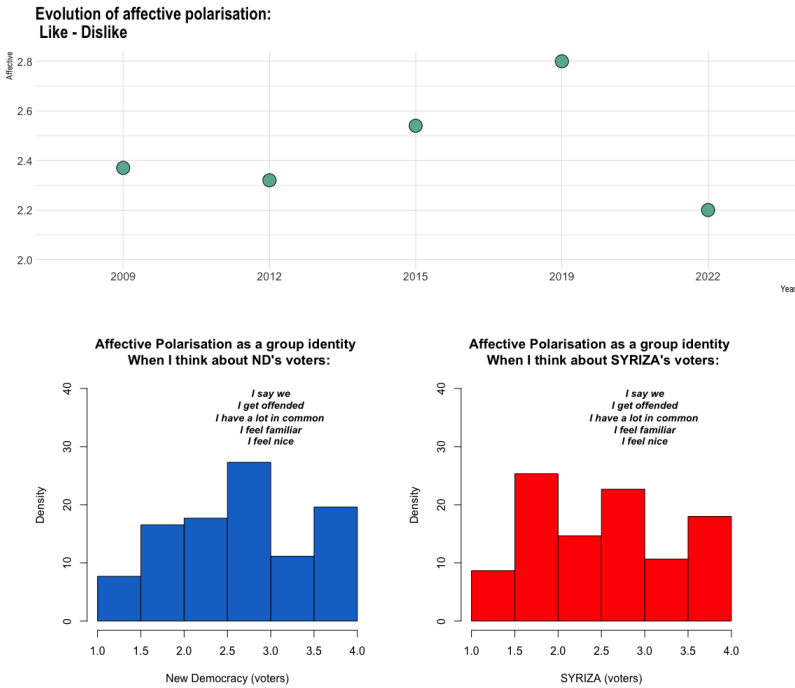


Table 2 presents trends in affective polarisation in Greece from 2009, the beginning of the economic crisis, until 2022, the end of the health crisis, using Wagner’s (2021) index. Calculations for 2009,2012,2015 and 2019 are based on post and pre-election studies while for 2022 on our public opinion study. On average AP in Greece is higher than 2.2 points. While it appears that the affective polarisation (AP) in 2022 recorded a modest decrease, it is worth noting that this observation may be attributed to the fact that data was not collected during the election period, unlike in all other years. It is a well-established fact that polarisation tends to be higher in the months leading up to an election (Hernandez et al. 2021).

In addition to the results obtained using the affective polarisation index, the integrated measure of social identity, as reflected in the emotional significance attached to group membership, provides valuable insights. The analysis sheds light on the supporters of the two main parties, the center-right New Democracy (ND) and the populist center-left SYRIZA, representing distinct groups within society. The group identity battery of questions index the significant impact of individuals’ emotional attachment to their group membership with both the supporters of New Democracy and the supporters of SYRIZA having a very strong emotional attachment to their group as expected by Tajfel’s theoretical framework Tajfel et al. (1979, pp.63).

Figure 3 illustrates the degree of affective polarisation using Wagner’s index for all parties currently holding seats in the Greek parliament. The black circles represent the weighted measure of affective polarisation, considering the size of each party, while the red circles represent the unweighted measure. An initial observation indicates that, with the exception of supporters of the newly established radical right party (Elliniki Lysi), which gained parliamentary representation in 2019, the average level of affective polarisation among supporters of other parties is relatively similar. The weighted measure of affective polarisation suggests that the supporters of the ruling party exhibit slightly higher affective polarisation in comparison to the supporters of all other parties.

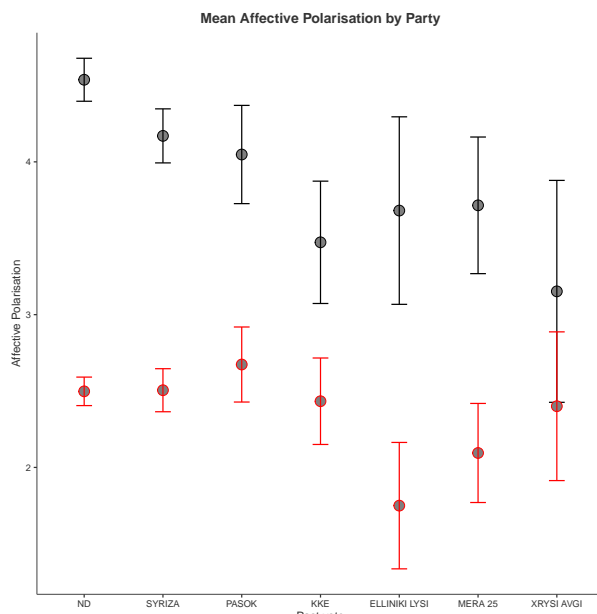


Figure 3: Affective Polarisation across parties in 2022

8 Affective polarisation: Economic and Cultural Issues

In our examination of affective polarisation concerning economic and cultural issues, we employ linear regression models to assess the direct influence of ideology, cultural concerns, and austerity policies on two distinct forms of affective polarisation: party and leaders. We extend our analysis to include both leaders and parties on the basis of comparative studies have demonstrated the significant impact of affective polarisation, both at the party and leader levels, and negative voting on voter choices (Garzia & Ferreira da Silva 2022).

Our dependent variable is measuring affective polarisation for the whole electorate and for each one of the two main parties, the populist left party of Syriza, the right-wing conservative party of New Democracy. Affective polarisation, the key concept under investigation in this study is calculated using Wagner (2021)'s index. The measure represents the average absolute party-like-dislike difference relative to each respondent's average party-like-dislike score.

To measure the effect of the austerity on affective polarisation we utilise a question measuring individual attitudes towards economic austerity ranging from one (1) which means that respondents do not support with the austerity politics, two (2) that they neither support nor they oppose, while three (3) means that respondents completely support the austerity measures.

Cultural battles are measured using three prominent in the bibliography cultural issues namely attitudes towards immigration measured by two variables operationalising the economic and the social dimension of immigration; immigrants take jobs away and immigrants increase the crime rate. Both variables are measured on a five-point scale ranging from one (1) strongly agree to five (5) which equals to strongly disagree. We have also included a question measuring attitudes towards gay rights - same-sex marriages should be prohibited by law- measured on a five-point scale ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5), and finally a question measuring attitudes towards abortion where one means that the respondent strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5).

We have included several control variables in our analysis. Respondents' ideology, quantified on a scale from 0 (representing extreme left) to 10 (representing extreme right). Additionally, we consider their level of interest in politics, gauged on a Likert scale ranging from (1) "Extremely interested" to (4) "Not interested at all." Finally, our analysis incorporates a variable reflecting their vote in the referendum, which was a focal point of polarisation during the economic crisis. In this variable, a value of 1 signifies support for the "No" camp, while 0 represents the "Yes" camp.

9 Results

This section, we analyse the relationship between cultural divisions, austerity, and ideology on affective polarisation. The results of the analysis are presented in tables 1 and 2.

Starting from the first part of the analysis in Table 1, affective polarisation at the party level, our models presents the impact of cultural divisions, immigration, LGBTQ+ rights, and attitudes towards abortion on affective polarisation. Our results suggest that for the whole electorate anti-immigration attitudes, positive attitudes towards the austerity and anti-abortion attitudes, a variable that is marginally significant, fuel affective polarisation.

Table 1 The impact of cultural and austerity issues on affective polarisation: Party level

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	Affective Polarisation whole electorate		
	Whole electorate	New Democracy	SYRIZA
Immigration: Crime	-0.178*** (0.056)	-0.179** (0.079)	-0.200* (0.120)
Immigration: Jobs	0.033 (0.061)	0.060 (0.095)	-0.091 (0.107)
Austerity Politics	0.316*** (0.093)	0.380*** (0.137)	0.098 (0.179)
Same sex marriage	0.030 (0.050)	0.077 (0.069)	-0.174 (0.116)
Abortion	0.098* (0.050)	0.081 (0.067)	-0.016 (0.112)
Interest in Politics	-0.081 (0.066)	0.070 (0.098)	-0.038 (0.125)
Ideology	0.130*** (0.028)	0.185*** (0.044)	-0.179*** (0.062)
Vote NO in the referendum	-0.314** (0.136)	-0.165 (0.190)	-0.387 (0.271)
Constant	3.392*** (0.453)	2.851*** (0.733)	6.358*** (0.978)
Observations	583	208	124
R ²	0.128	0.188	0.138

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

A distinct pattern emerges when we analyze affective polarisation separately among the supporters of New Democracy and the supporters of SYRIZA. In Model (2), we assess the influence of cultural issues and austerity politics on affective polarisation among New Democracy supporters. The findings indicate that economic-related issues, particularly support for austerity policies, are the primary factors contributing to higher levels of affective polarisation. This is followed by anti-immigration attitudes and, as expected, right-wing ideology.

In Model (3), we examine the stance of SYRIZA supporters. Interestingly, neither cultural nor austerity-related issues appear to be significant drivers of high polarisation among SYRIZA supporters. Only the anti-immigration variable is marginally significant- though the same is true for the supporters of New Democracy.

Table 2 The impact of cultural and austerity issues on affective polarisation: Leaders level

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	Affective Polarisation whole electorate		
	Whole electorate	New Democracy	SYRIZA
Immigration: Crime	-0.193*** (0.061)	-0.196** (0.087)	-0.235* (0.140)
Immigration: Jobs	0.046 (0.066)	0.069 (0.105)	-0.108 (0.125)
Austerity Politics	0.299*** (0.100)	0.454*** (0.151)	0.172 (0.209)
Same sex marriage	-0.023 (0.054)	-0.004 (0.076)	-0.202 (0.136)
Abortion	0.129** (0.054)	0.208*** (0.073)	-0.017 (0.131)
Interest in Politics	-0.184** (0.072)	-0.054 (0.108)	-0.219 (0.147)
Ideology	0.110*** (0.031)	0.133*** (0.049)	-0.134* (0.073)
Vote NO in the referendum	-0.203 (0.147)	-0.116 (0.210)	-0.185 (0.317)
Constant	3.931*** (0.490)	3.149*** (0.807)	6.557*** (1.143)
Observations	582	208	124
R ²	0.102	0.177	0.113
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01		

Table 2 presents the results of the analysis, with a focus on measuring affective polarisation at the leaders' level. To compute the level of affective polarisation for leaders, we employed a series of questions asking participants in the survey to indicate how much they liked or disliked, using a 0 to 10 scale, the leader of New Democracy, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, and the leader of SYRIZA at the time, Alexis Tsipras.

The findings closely mirror the results obtained when calculating affective polarisation at the party level, as displayed in Table 1. Across the entire electorate, anti-immigration attitudes, support for austerity policies, anti-abortion attitudes, and the respondent's ideology all contribute to heightened affective polarisation.

Within New Democracy's electorate, anti-immigration attitudes, anti-abortion attitudes, and

pro-memorandum views are key factors leading to increased affective polarisation. Meanwhile, among New Democracy's supporters, anti-immigration and anti-abortion attitudes, along with pro-austerity stances, emerge as the primary drivers of affective polarisation. In contrast, for SYRIZA supporters, affective polarisation remains unaffected by policy-related issues.

10 Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the influence of culture wars and austerity on affective polarisation, using Greece as an illustrative case study. Greece, a country that faced significant financial challenges during the recent European economic crisis, experienced a surge in public protests and political discontent in response to strict austerity measures. This led to the emergence of new societal cleavages, dividing citizens and parties based on their stances on austerity-related issues.

The collapse of Greece's traditional party system in 2012 and the subsequent emergence of new, highly polarised divisions, particularly centered on austerity, provided an ideal context for testing hypotheses related to the drivers of affective polarisation. During the same period, Greece experienced a period characterised by a cultural backlash, during which many citizens adopted attitudes that challenged liberal values.

To test our hypotheses regarding the influence of austerity policies and cultural issues on the escalation of affective polarisation, we utilised newly gathered data on affective polarisation in Greece, collected in late 2022. Our examination of affective polarisation encompassed two distinct levels: at the party and at the party leader level.

Our results emphasise the importance of both austerity and cultural issues in contributing to the rise of affective polarisation. What is noteworthy is that their impact is not uniform among the supporters of both parties, New Democracy and SYRIZA. Specifically, for New Democracy supporters, favourable assessments of the austerity measures result in increased levels of affective polarisation and, subsequently, higher levels of animosity towards the supporters of SYRIZA.

Contrary to New Democracy supporters, SYRIZA supporters, who exhibit equally high levels of affective polarization, do not attribute their affective polarization to policy-related disputes. Two potential explanations can be offered for this outcome. The first pertains to SYRIZA's

experience in government, particularly the fact that it had to implement austerity measures even though its supporters and base of the party held opposing views. This may have mitigated affective polarization among their supporters, as they could perceive their party as capable of implementing austerity measures, like the party of New Democracy, regardless of the anti-austerity discourse it employed even when it was passing pro-austerity policies in the parliament.

The second explanation is associated with the challenging period SYRIZA is facing. The party experienced significant losses in the recent elections that occurred in mid-2023, leading to the resignation of its leader, Alexis Tsipras. As a result, a disintegration at the level of supporters occurred, which may have influenced the factors contributing to the rise of affective polarisation for the supporters of SYRIZA.

In this turbulent landscape of political and ideological shifts, Greece stands as a case study offering valuable insights into the complex interplay of cultural values, austerity measures, and their impact on affective polarisation. As Greece navigates its path forward these findings not only shed light on Greece's unique political journey but also contribute to our broader understanding of the forces that shape or do not shape affective polarisation in contemporary democracies.

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