

Former Greek Prime Minister and Syriza leader Alexis Tsipras launches new party ELAS

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Alexis Tsipras, notorious for his ruthless austerity policy in Greece, is back on the political stage. One year before the next parliamentary elections in 2027, the former Prime Minister and Syriza leader has founded a new party called ELAS (Greek Left Alliance).

Following the announcement on 26 May, Tsipras' party overtook the previously strongest opposition party, the social-democratic PASOK, in the polls and moved overnight into second place, directly behind the right-wing governing party Nea Dimokratia (ND).

Tsipras' comeback inevitably calls to mind Karl Marx's observation that all great world-historical facts and figures occur twice: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce. That the man whose name is linked, like almost no other in Europe, with the deceit and betrayal of the working class is once again standing for election must be understood as a warning.

In his founding declaration, Tsipras calls for a "new patriotism" and "a sovereign, democratic, strong and secure Greece." He combines this crude nationalist rhetoric with a handful of social phrases about justice and democracy, designed above all to pull the wool over the eyes of young people and workers who are searching for a political alternative to the ND government.

In 2015, more than ten years ago, Tsipras won the elections on a wave of mass protests by promising to end the austerity measures of his predecessors. It took only a few weeks for this pseudo-left standard-bearer to jettison all his social promises and turn them into their opposite. The attacks on social and democratic rights under Tsipras' stewardship far eclipsed the austerity that had come before.

During his four-year term in office, he implemented every austerity dictat demanded by the so-called "Troika" of the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund. He ordered multiple rounds of wage and pension cuts that destroyed the lives of thousands of working class families. Sweeping privatisation led to the collapse of public services and infrastructure. The widespread disillusionment and anger at his policies strengthened the right and paved the way for ND's return to power, where it has now remained for seven years.

Now Tsipras is returning to the scene of his crimes, once again offering himself as capitalism's saviour in a period of deep political and economic crisis. As across Europe, social conditions in Greece are stretched to breaking point. The ND government is engaged in a massive military build-up, while workers, families, pensioners and students can barely make ends meet. Public discontent is above all fuelled by the high cost of living, which has risen sharply again with the Iran war.

In a current survey by GPO for the online newspaper *iefimerida.gr*, the economic situation and cost of living is by far the most important issue, cited as decisive by the majority of respondents (68.5 percent), followed

by corruption (around 50 percent) and social issues such as health, education, housing and work (41.8 percent).

It is reported that 68.6 percent of respondents rate the government's performance negatively. Notably, the official opposition has been unable to benefit from this rejection: 79.6 percent also view PASOK's work in opposition negatively.

Syriza has by now sunk into irrelevance, polling just 1.4 percent. Following its electoral defeats in 2019 and 2023, its disintegration has continued unabated. Tsipras stepped down and, with Stefanos Kasselakis as the new leader—a former Goldman Sachs employee and supporter of the Democratic Party in the United States—Syriza made its pro-capitalist character abundantly plain. It lost ever more ground; Kasselakis left Syriza in 2024 and founded his own party, "Democrats—Progressive Centre."

The various Syriza splinter groups are all polling below 5 percent, among them Plefsi Eleftherias (Course of Freedom) led by Zoi Konstantopoulou, Nea Aristera (New Left) and Mera25, led by former Syriza Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis.

ELAS — a party of the upper middle classes

Into this political vacuum steps Alexis Tsipras. His party received 14.5 percent in the most recent poll, making it the second strongest force behind ND at 25.7 percent. The founding of ELAS is a transparent attempt to revive a well-known, bankrupt project under a new label.

The choice of name is no coincidence. ELAS is not only a nationalist allusion to Greece ("Hellas"), but above all a reference to the Greek resistance army ELAS, which, under the leadership of the Stalinist Communist Party, fought Hitler's *Wehrmacht* (military) during the Second World War.

Under this new banner, Tsipras is attempting to politically reorganise the same social layers that already formed the base of Syriza—the affluent urban petty bourgeoisie, academics, cultural workers and the self-employed.

For the Greek news website *ThePressProject*, political scientist Giannis Mavris has examined the social and political background of the first 300 founding members of ELAS. Of these, 72 percent come from the Syriza milieu—former members, government staff, advisers or sympathisers. And 69 percent are geographically concentrated in the capital Athens or the surrounding Attica region.

In its social composition, ELAS is a party of the upper middle classes. According to the analysis, 6 percent belong to an

entrepreneurial/bourgeois layer, 57 percent to the upper middle classes, 29 percent to the middle petty bourgeoisie and only 8 percent to the working class/popular layers. The absence of workers from the productive sector is striking, Mavris emphasises. They are symbolically represented by just four individuals, most of whom hold a higher-level position as trade union officials. There are additionally only three farmers. Mavris concludes: “The new party is launching without any elementary presence in the world of labour.”

For “patriotism” and “dedication to the fatherland”

Tsipras’ new party is a calculated manoeuvre to bring the social discontent that has erupted over recent years in large strike and protest movements under control and channel it into nationalist directions. Its programme, moreover, does not differ fundamentally from Syriza’s.

At a pompously staged ELAS founding event against the backdrop of the floodlit Acropolis in Athens, Tsipras delivered a tub-thumping speech in which he outlined the main features of the programme. He drew on the 13-page founding declaration entitled “Alliance for Greece, justice, democracy—for a life of dignity.”

The text opens with a critique of social inequality, the concentration of wealth and the climate crisis, without however naming the actual cause—capitalism. In the sections that follow, Tsipras openly denounces the genocide in Gaza and the attacks on Lebanon and Iran and invokes the toothless instrument of international law as the answer to the “law of the strongest.”

What is revealing are Tsipras’ omissions: on the question of the Ukraine war, he laments the hundreds of thousands of deaths resulting from the Russian invasion but says not a word about NATO’s escalation against Russia, Greece’s enormous military expenditures, or the expansion of US military bases in Greece, which play a strategic role in NATO’s war policy. Instead, he stokes anti-Turkish nationalism, promising that his party will never accept the occupation of Cyprus.

As he did ten years ago, Tsipras presents himself to the world as a shrewder statesman and foreign policy operator. He promises to restore Greece’s “international standing,” weakened by “corruption and lack of credibility,” and to pursue national interests more effectively: “In a period of intense geopolitical upheaval, the country urgently needs a new national compass and an active, multi-layered foreign policy.”

What stands out particularly is the gushing nationalism of ELAS, only perfunctorily disguised by a pro forma critique of right-wing tendencies. The declaration claims that “oligarchies” manipulate social discontent, pit workers and peoples against one another, and foment racism and nationalism. “Neoliberalism,” it adds, embraces “neo-fascism.”

But what is Tsipras’ answer to this fascist danger? Not the mobilisation of the working class to overthrow capitalism, which gives rise to war and fascism, but... “the dedication of all to the fatherland”!

The declaration states:

Greece needs a moral revolution today. A new vision. A democratic plan for the 21st century. A new patriotism that, in today’s globalised environment, corresponds to the modern needs of a sovereign, democratic, strong and secure Greece. It is founded on the non-negotiable dedication of all to the fatherland, but also the support of all by the fatherland, without any discrimination.

The lie of a “just fatherland” that benefits everyone is pure chauvinism,

designed to conceal the deep class antagonisms in Greek society. Buzzwords such as a “sovereign” and “secure” Greece are aimed directly at the capitalist elites at home and abroad and are veiled threats in the direction of Turkey.

The declaration ends with seven pledges—to a “life of dignity,” a “strong economy,” a “welfare state of rights against the profit motive,” combined with high-sounding promises such as adequate wages, affordable housing, comprehensive and equal healthcare, and so on. On immigration policy, however, it speaks in the vocabulary of the right, “border security” is demanded as the first priority, ahead even of the “humanitarian reception” of refugees. The final pledge is to “a strong Greece” that “defends its sovereignty.”

Nowhere is there a single word to the effect that Tsipras and a large proportion of ELAS members bear substantial responsibility themselves for the social decline in Greece. They wash their hands of all guilt and present themselves as a blank slate.

Alexis Tsipras in government—betrayal and social counter-revolution

But the working class is far from forgetting Syriza’s betrayals. During his time in government from 2015 to 2019, Alexis Tsipras, under cover of a “left-wing” policy, intensified the social counter-revolution of his predecessor governments and wrought catastrophe.

Syriza came to power in January 2015 with the promise of ending the EU-dictated austerity. Tsipras, presented in the international media as a “left-wing” rebel, immediately forged a coalition with the ultra-right “Independent Greeks” (Anel). In July 2015, he called a referendum on his government’s austerity policies in order to gain backing for his capitulation to the international creditors. Yet contrary to his expectations, 61 percent of the people voted “No” (Ochi). He ignored the result and pushed through a 13-billion-euro austerity package in parliament. The WWS had exposed the referendum as a “political fraud.”

The consequences were devastating: economic output shrank by a quarter, pensions were decimated, youth unemployment remained above 40 percent and hundreds of thousands left the country. Syriza drove forward an aggressive privatisation policy—the port of Piraeus, fourteen regional airports and the rail network were sold off. Spending on the already decrepit health system was cut, and the fire service and civil protection provisions hollowed out, contributing to the Mati wildfire disaster of 2018 in which over 100 people died.

When pensioners protested against the cuts in 2016, the police under Syriza responded with brutal violence—a foretaste of Tsipras’ law-and-order policy. Spending on public order and security rose under Syriza from 3.9 to 4.5 percent of the total budget. Tsipras deliberately brought ultra-right hardliners into key positions.

In the refugee crisis from 2015 onwards, Tsipras acted as a gatekeeper for Fortress Europe. His government erected concentration camps on the islands, concluded a criminal deportation agreement with Turkey, and used tear gas against refugees in Idomeni.

In foreign policy, his government pursued rearmament and war: military spending rose to 2.7 percent of GDP in 2018 and preparations were made for the expansion of the US military base at Souda Bay in Crete. Tsipras concluded military cooperation agreements with the most reactionary regimes: the United States under Donald Trump, Egypt under dictator Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and Israel under Benjamin Netanyahu. In 2017, he paid homage to Trump at the White House.

The list of Syriza’s crimes could be extended at length. The experience with Syriza is a strategic lesson for the working class of world-historical significance. It has proved what the International Committee of the Fourth

International (ICFI) tirelessly explained from the beginning of Syriza's rise in 2012: it is impossible to resolve the deep social and political problems confronting society by voting for pseudo-left parties that promise reforms within capitalism.

The WSWS warned even before Syriza took office: "Despite its left-wing façade, Syriza is a bourgeois party that rests on affluent layers of the middle class." This analysis was completely confirmed and applies equally to Tsipras' new party ELAS. It stands ready to impose capitalist interests in the coming confrontation with the working class with the same brutality as Syriza.

In recent years, Greece has already seen explosive class struggles. A decisive catalyst was the Tempi train disaster of February 2023, in which 57 people—predominantly young students—lost their lives. The catastrophe was no tragic accident but social murder, caused by years of austerity and the privatisation of the rail network carried out by Syriza in 2017.

On 28 February 2025, the second anniversary of the disaster, the largest protests in the history of Greece took place. A general strike brought the entire country to a standstill. Particularly significant was that the Tempi movement developed in direct opposition to all the major parties—ND, PASOK and Syriza alike. Banners at the demonstrations read "Syriza, PASOK, ND—Tempi has a history."

The Tempi movement was an outlet for the accumulated resistance to 15 years of austerity. It arose largely outside the trade union structures and was carried forward by the Association of Relatives of the Tempi Victims. The major trade union federations, which for years had suppressed every effective form of resistance, found themselves compelled to belatedly jump on the bandwagon.

The wave of strikes continued: in 2025 alone, four one-day general strikes were called. Workers and young people demanded not only justice for the Tempi victims but also higher wages, and demonstrated against the ND government's new labour law, which legalises the 13-hour working day. Greek dock workers have blockaded arms shipments to Israel to prevent support for war and genocide.

The Greek working class is attempting to break free from the stranglehold of pro-capitalist parties and trade unions. And it is precisely in this situation that Tsipras is launching his new party—not to support workers' struggles, but to intercept and stifle them once again.

The same goal is being pursued by another new party: a few days before Tsipras, Maria Karystianou—the mother of a young Tempi victim who became a figurehead of the Tempi protest movement—launched her own party called Elpida (Hope). It is polling between 6 and 9 percent.

Karystianou's party, which presents itself as an "independent citizens' movement" setting itself apart from the establishment parties, is a catch-all for disillusioned former left-wingers and open right-wingers, including former members of the right-wing nationalist, religious party Dimokratiko Patriotiko Kinima—Niki (Democratic Patriotic Movement — Victory). Its programme—much like ELAS—is a mixture of eclectic social demands and a right-wing course for the "defence of national sovereignty." It even openly advocates the strengthening of the domestic arms industry and the defence of "national and cultural identity."

Both ELAS and Elpida represent a dangerous nationalist dead end. Greek workers are part of an international class and must not allow themselves to be chained to the reactionary system of nation states. The only progressive perspective lies in the mobilisation of the Greek working class for an international and revolutionary politics. This requires the building of a Greek section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI).

In 2015 in its statement "The political lessons of Syriza's betrayal in Greece" the ICFI wrote:

Faced with a global economic crisis unprecedented since the

1930s and a savage onslaught by the entire capitalist class, the working class cannot defend itself by electing new, "left" capitalist governments.

The only way forward is through a genuinely revolutionary policy, mobilizing the working class in Greece and internationally in struggle. It requires a direct assault on the capitalist class, the confiscation of their wealth, the seizure of the major banks and productive forces, in order to place them under the democratic control of working people, and the creation of workers states across Europe and the world. Such struggles require the building of Marxist parties to offer political leadership to the working class, in ruthless struggle against parties like Syriza.



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