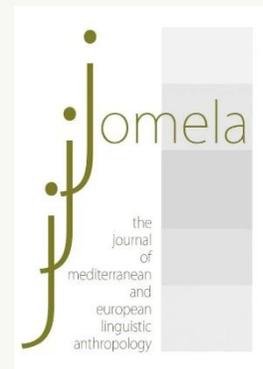


The Attire of Politicians in Modern Greece: A Language of Communication

Nadia Macha-Bizoumi
Democritus University of Thrace, Greece

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Abstract

Roland Barthes' work on clothing as a language of communication, which he developed by transposing Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic semiotic analysis to fashion, has become a point of reference for much academic work. New approaches to the study of material culture, and more specifically clothing, have recently shifted attention from the functional or symbolic significance of clothing to the effectively embodied capacity of garments to function as specific social and cultural markers.

In the political climates of Greece, dress and the body become elements that frequently motivate political and social change, such as, for example, the presence of the turtleneck in the attire of President Andreas Papandreou and the absence of the necktie in President Alexis Tsipras' dress code. Throughout the second half of the 20th century, under the favourable political conditions of the early post-junta years, and during a period of social, economic and ideological reshuffling, the appearance in parliament of socialist Andreas Papandreou sporting a jacket over a turtleneck signalled a questioning of the symbolically-named 'establishment,' which, in terms of attire was, until then, symbolized through the wearing of a suit with a starched white shirt and a tie, the attire of right-wing politicians as represented by Constantine Karamanlis. Influenced by his stylistic profile, Papandreou reached out in a familiar way to the political subjects of the early post-junta years, with a view to peacefully achieve revolution in the

name of 'change.' In the Greek political scene, the first ever left-wing government was associated with the rejection of the necktie in male politicians, exemplified in the attire of prime minister Alexis Tsipras. Finance minister Yannis Varoufakis combined this stylization with a jacket with red piping, and became the subject of global conversation, seen as a revolution in the elite's 'must' clothing. The absence of the tie became the distinctive garment around which, with the help of the media, the prime minister's narratives on the handling of the Greek economic crisis was constructed.

Building on these two examples, the article focuses on highlighting dynamic intersubjectivities between the body and dress, and on how this interaction is symbolically drawn on by Greece's contemporary politicians to exercise political power.

Introduction

Roland Barthes' (2006) approach of clothing as a language of communication, which he developed by transposing Ferdinand de Saussure's (1916) semiotic analysis of linguistics to fashion, has been a point of reference in many studies. In the recent past, new approaches to the study of material culture have shifted the focus of the study of clothing from its functional or symbolic significance to its effective capacity, to its societal contributions, to the shaping of embodied selves and relations with social and cultural markers.

In the realm of politics, in Greece, there are a number of examples where dress and the body become instruments for political and social changes, the most noteworthy being the presence of the turtleneck in the attire of Andreas Papandreou and the absence (or lack) of a tie in Alexis Tsipras' dress code. In the second half of the 20th century, under the favourable political conditions of the early post-junta years, which corresponded to a period of social, economic and ideological reshuffling, the appearance in parliament of socialist Andreas Papandreou, the then leader of PASOK (acr Panhellenic Socialist Movement), wearing a jacket over a turtleneck, signalled the questioning of the symbolically-named 'establishment,' which, in terms of attire, had until then been expressed by wearing a suit with a starched white shirt and a tie, i.e. the attire of right-wing politicians as represented by Constantine Karamanlis. Owing to his stylistic profile, Papandreou reached out in a familiar way to the political subjects of the early post-junta years, so as to achieve to peaceful revolution in the name of 'Change' (Allaghí, his party's slogan).

Then, in the early 21st century, the 'first ever left-wing government,' led by SYRIZA (the Coalition of the Radical Left) was associated, by Greek society, with the rejection of one particular item of clothing in the dress code of male politicians: The absence of a tie in the attire of Alexis Tsipras in his role of prime minister, combined (for a short while) with the stylistic fixation of his finance minister Yan(n)is Varoufakis on a jacket with red piping, became a subject of

conversation worldwide and was seen by the media as being the equivalent of a revolution in the elite's 'must have' clothing. The absent tie became the distinctive garment around which, with the help of the media, the Prime Minister's narrative on the handling of the economic crisis in Greece was constructed.

On the basis of these two examples, the article focuses on highlighting the dynamic interaction between the body and dress, and on how this interaction is, consciously or unconsciously, used as a symbol by contemporary Greece's politicians when exercising political power. The sociological vision of dress as a socially-situated bodily practice, a perspective elaborated by sociologist Joanne Entwistle (2000a, 2000b), focuses primarily on the study of clothing in relation to the body, proposing an approach that recognises the body as a social entity, and attire as the interrelated outcome of both social factors and individual action. Through the conjugation of a broad range of theoretical concepts of fashion (Barthes 2006), dress (Lurie 1981; Davis 1992; Hollander 1993), the body (Douglas 1970; Mauss 1973; Merleau-Ponty 1976, 1981; Foucault 1977, 1986; Csordas 1994; Arthur 1999), the embodied experience and how it is carried out (Goffman 1971; Crossley 1995), the theoretical framework of a socially-situated bodily practice offers a multilevel understanding and analysis of the clothed body in its cultural context as a field of experiential practice. In particular, through her exchange with the theoretical work of both Erving Goffman (1971) concerning the presentation of self in everyday social interaction and Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1990) on habitus and practice, Entwistle (2000a) highlights the need, when studying dress as an embodied practice, to also take into account the ways in which social structures are reproduced on the level of body practices.

The above theoretical approaches present an extremely useful methodological tool in the study and analysis of Greek political uses of dress (Pantouvaki and Petridou 2015; Petridou 2015), which is exemplified by the vestimentary choices of Andreas Papandreou and Alexis Tsipras. On the basis of these methodological tools, I shall approach the garb of these two Greek politicians in comparison to a similar example from the international scene, focusing on the way each of these uses their body and attire as a field of formulating political discourse. After this, focusing particularly on the example of Tsipras, I shall highlight the role of the media worldwide in connecting the absence of a tie from his attire's with the approach of the financial crisis in Greece on the international political scene. For, as Bhandari (2019:194 and 193) in his attempt to define the difference between anthropological ethnography and mass media ethnography points out, in the 21st century "the media becomes a separate discourse and influential tool in society," meaning that "there is urgency in developing a new ethnography of mass media because of the extensive reach and access of mass media and technologies."

The Symbolic and Social Function of Dress

Attire has a clear social function, as it indicates a person's position in the social system of any given period, and reflects their obligation and efforts to adapt to this system and to the relationships that govern it (Roach and Eicher 1973; DeLong, Salusso-Deonier and Larntz 1980). Attire is not only the material means of connecting individual identity to the body as, being a social phenomenon, it also functions as a link between individual identity and social inclusion (Arvanitidou and Gasouka 2011). Roland Barthes stressed the intense social significance of clothes, and defined dress, or attire, as "a systematic, normative reserve, from which the individual draws their own clothing," and dressing as the expression of a personal act, through which "the individual enacts on him/herself the general institution of costume" (Barthes 2016: 18-19)

Apart from their gender-related and sexual dimension (Crawley 1965; Eicher and Roach-Higgins 1992; Kunzle 1982; Steele 1985; Butler 1990; Tseëlon 1995), clothes constitute a particularly important system of symbolic communication (Perkins Gilman 2002; Baumgarten 2003). Clothes signify the manner or the degree of participation of the wearer (group or individual) in a system (Barthes: 2016 [1960]), revealing a society's cultural codes and structures (Roche 1994). The work of the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies on 'subculture' highlights this capacity of clothing, as the dress of marginalised social groups (such as hippies, skinheads, punks) is approached as a language of creative consumption and resistance to established mass culture (Hebdige 1979; Polhemus 1994; Hodkinson 2002). Consequently, through their materiality (Küchler and Miller 2005), clothes play a role in shaping both social and power relations, functioning not only as a mechanism of social discrimination, ostentatious consumption (Simmel 1905) and social control, but also as a means of resistance to social control (Arthur 1999). In recent years, approaches to the study of material culture have shifted focus from the functional or symbolic meaning of clothes to the study of their active capacity and their contribution to the creation of embodied selves (Banerjee and Miller 2003) and of relations with a social and cultural seal. The interest of social research thus focuses on the interaction of clothing with those who produce and those who wear it, as well as on the effects that clothes have on those who use or possess them (Petridou 2014).

The social world is a world of dressed bodies (Entwistle 2000b, 2001), where the approaches to clothing that are disconnected from the body resemble the clothes of dead people that, after the death of their owners, serve only as reminders of their presence. In this respect, Elizabeth Wilson (1985) states:

The living observer moves, with a sense of mounting panic, through the world of the dead... We experience a sense of the uncanny when we gaze at garments that had an

intimate relationship with human beings long since gone to their graves ... clothes hint at something only half understood, sinister, threatening; the atrophy of the body and the evanescence of life.

(Wilson 1985:1)

Delineating a theoretical framework for studying the dressed body, Entwistle (2000b) argues that this framework should promote, on the one hand, the social nature of clothing and the idea that the active subjects are active, and, on the other, that clothing is actively produced through repeated body-oriented practices (Makrinioti 2004). Indeed, Entwistle adopts the positions of Csordas (1994) regarding the use of the concept of 'embodiment' instead of 'body' (Entwistle 2000a; Petridou 2013), a concept which, according to Strathern and Lambeck (1998) also indicates, among others,

the penetration of the biological and cultural in the field of lived experiences (...) [as well as] an acting subject/agent who deliberately undertakes body-related actions and does not fulfil roles in a passive manner.

(Makrinioti 2004: 19)

During the late 20th century, in the context of historical and socio-political changes linked to fluid situations and continuous transitions (e.g., the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the civil war in Yugoslavia, immigration flows, the end of the Cold War), and to the economic and financial repercussions of these political events (Collinson 1994), academic interest shifted towards attire's political uses. According to Elia Petridou (2012), this interest focuses on the participation of clothing in the construction of

national (Bada 1995; Macha-Bizoumi 2012, 2014), ethnic, religious or gender-related identities, as well as on its role as a means of social control or resistance and negotiation in the face of hegemonic discourses.

(Petridou 2012: 365)

The construction and use of verbal and virtual symbols are an important component of the political game, as is their dissemination among the general public through the intermediation of the mass media (Edelman 1988). David Kertzer (1988) maintains that

to understand the political process, then, it is necessary to understand how the symbolic enters into politics, how political actors consciously and unconsciously manipulate symbols, and how this symbolic dimension relates to the material bases of political power.

(Kertzer 1988: 2-3)

In the international political arena, one of the most significant examples of the political use of dress, where clothing and the body become the field of national public debate in the context of the struggle for national independence, is that of Gandhi's use of the loincloth. Indeed, in the

1920s and 1930s in India, by choosing to wear a simple cotton loincloth (langot) made of pure Khadi (i.e. hand spun and hand-woven cloth), Mahatma Gandhi placed his clothing and body at the centre of India's political struggles for independence from British rule (Bean 1989; Tarlo 1996; Mishra 2012). Studying the symbolic content of Gandhi's use of the loincloth, anthropologist Emma Tarlo (2002) maintains that this particular sartorial choice was "the culmination of years of personal experimentation with the political symbolism of clothing" (Tarlo 2002:18-19). Thus, despite having adopted the Western style of dress in the 1880s, in 1919 Gandhi invited all Indians to dress in handmade garments of hand spun yarn (Khadi), while three years later he reduced his garb to a simple loincloth. This gesture was received with mixed feelings by both Indians and the British (Tarlo 2002).

Through Gandhi's presence on the political scene, "personal dilemmas about the possible alienating effects of European-style dress" (Tarlo 2002:18) were indirectly linked to the country's economic and political goals in its struggle for independence. The display of the nakedness of Gandhi's body aimed to publicise the poverty that prevailed in India during British rule. Concurrently, though, the nakedness also proposed a solution to poverty by encouraging hand-spinning and the return to a generalised use of the Khadi dress. Gandhi himself believed that the revival of the waning technique of handloom weaving would lead India to an economic renaissance and increase self-respect (Mishra 2012). Like a second skin, the loincloth was Gandhi's garb for the rest of his life, despite the failure of his attempt to clothe the whole country in Khadi, or to persuade India's new post-independence leaders of the soundness of returning to a society structured around cottage industry. According to Tarlo's apt observation (2002:23), Gandhi's loincloth eventually became "the symbol of the growing gap between his personal concerns and the emerging nation's desires".

Andrea Papandreou's Turtleneck

In a similar yet different manner, in Greece, in the second half of the 20th century, under the favourable political conditions of the first post-junta years corresponding to a period of social, economic and ideological reshuffling, the appearance in Parliament of socialist Andreas Papandreou (Zorba 2014) wearing a jacket over a turtleneck signaled the questioning of the symbolically-named 'establishment' (Diamantouros 2000). Up to then, in terms of attire, political presence had been expressed by wearing a suit with a starched white shirt and a tie. By contesting politicians' prevailing dress code, Papandreou allowed 'ordinary Greeks' to project themselves onto the political scene as active citizens. The fact that he shattered the rigid mould of the 'business suit' as a prerequisite to holding a position of power in the realm of politics (whether as a parliamentarian, a minister or even a prime minister) allowed his supporters to identify with him more easily and to dream of being part of the 'change' he proclaimed he was

bringing to the country and their way of life. Thus, in exchanging the previous symbol of power that a suited presence connoted for a turtleneck, Papandreou also manifested the promised 'change' in terms of clothing, bringing himself closer to the wardrobe of his voters and symbolically bridging the distance between a leader and his electoral base. According to sociologist Myrsini Zorba (2009:274), Papandreou "colonised the emerging culture of the middle and popular strata of society, which had just started appearing in the 1960s". By choosing the role of a leader who communicates directly with the masses (Zorba 2009), Andreas, as he was commonly called by both the PASOK party's supporters and his opponents, resorted to the construction and use of verbal and material symbols, such as the turtleneck, while simultaneously using his body to communicate with the 'sovereign' people (Vamvakas 2009). With his communication charm, Zorba (2009: 262) noted that Papandreou "exonerates, legitimises and promotes all that he himself embraces as popular elements", and which his detractors simultaneously have denounced as populist.

This particular vestimentary choice, initially entirely connected to Papandreou's personal daily practice, soon acquired a political symbolism in the context of the interaction between the leader and his base. The presentation of his own self (to use Goffman's term 1971) focused on the art of manipulating impressions, with a view to achieving his personal political goals. Regarding this, his son Nikos Papandreou, states:

Therefore, it now seems very strange to me that my father's return to the Greek political scene in 1974 was determined as much by his political speeches as by his appearance. At the time, he had evolved into a more elegant version of his previous, academic self: he wore a turtleneck, a black leather jacket and, at times, jeans. Although many considered it to be a mature political choice representing a break with the politicians of the past, their suits and ties, in actual fact it was nothing other than part of his wardrobe, which was created while he was in exile, constantly surrounded by students and by men and women much younger than him. When his stylistic identity suddenly functioned on the level of political symbolism, he realised its value and the ensemble of the turtleneck with the leather jacket also became part of his political armoury.

(Macha-Bizoumi 2018: 523)

Consequently, Papandreou's appearance in a jacket over a turtleneck was part of his communication and political leadership that contributed to his closeness to the voters amassed beneath the balconies that he was in the habit of using to deliver his pre-electoral speeches. His sartorial image stood in stark contrast to the dominant Greek bourgeois culture of the times, as reflected in the elegant but deeply conservative, wrinkle-free, stylised suit of Constantine Karamanlis (Macha-Bizoumi 2018). Through the synergy of his stylistic profile, Papandreou reached out in a familiar way to the political subjects of the early post-junta years, with a view to peacefully achieving a revolution in the name of 'Change', both a rallying cry and the core concept

of his party.

However, the use of this particular attire did not last as, in the late 1970s – early 1980s, in his appearances as leader of the PASOK movement and later as Prime Minister of Greece, Papandreou's turtleneck was superseded by a suit with a shirt and tie (Zorba 2009), possibly signalling, the transition of PASOK from a radical social movement to a party in power. As Zorba (2009: 272) characteristically notes about this change:

Accepting that «the subject acquires different identities at different points in time, identities that aren't unified around a consistent 'self'» and that «inside us there are contradicting identities, which pull us in different directions» we addressed, without being scandalised but, rather, following their fluidity, many of the trace elements of his explosive cultural alloy. As [PASOK politician] Angela Kokkola would remark about the period of his life from the fall of the Junta onwards, «both he changed, and we changed. He changed from when he appeared in a leather jacket ...

Nevertheless, the symbolically charged stylistic choice of Andreas Papandreou – a leather jacket over a turtleneck, a suit with a turtleneck, or just a shirt with rolled-up sleeves – contributed to shaping a specific 'Papandrian', or better still, Pasokian, look, a style adopted by politicians of the centre-left. Over time, this attire morphed into a specific form, preserving until the present its symbolic content. Confirmation of this is found in the appearance of SYRIZA chairman, Alexis Tsipras, in a jacket and turtleneck at the Gorgopotamos ceremony (November 2013), held to commemorate the 1942 sabotage mission against the Axis forces by British and Greek resistance fighters, which was interpreted politically as an attempt to identify with Andreas Papandreou and his rhetoric. At the same time, the adoption of this more 'casual' look by members of Greece's political class marks the beginning of a relaxation of strict dress codes in Greek society more broadly (as testified, for instance, by the abolishment of the school dress overall in primary education or of a specific dress code for children in secondary school, or yet by the suit's gradual disappearance from the wardrobe of civil servants and bank employees), thus overturning longstanding stereotypes.

The Tieless Attire of Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras: Its Social, Political and Symbolic Content

The tie (Colle 1974; von Eelking 1976; Mosconi and Villarosa 1985; Chaille 1994; Goldberg 1997; Ettinger 1998; Gibbings 1990; Hart 1998; Tortora 2003; Stall-Meadows 2004; Čapo Žmegač 2009), or necktie, is a men's polysemous accessory (Ferla 1986), linked to the enforcing mechanisms of a professional dress code. The tie is a powerful weapon in dress strategies in the context of 'elegant' and extremely 'sober' attire and, combined with a suit, contributes to the sartorial expression of power (Brush Kidwell and Steele 1989) and success, both in the

workplace and in broader society (Kang, Sklar and Johnson 2011; Carter 2012). A number of dress manuals and articles in fashion magazines (Dizik 2014; Hughes 2013) record and advise on those features of the tie that contribute to the creation of “power dressing” (Entwistle 1997, 2000). Indeed, as Roland Barthes observes, “the phrasing used in a fashion magazine always has a subtle tendency to transform the linguistic status of the clothing item into one of naturalness or usefulness, to invest an effect or a function in the sign” (2016: 54-55). This item of clothing, in its historical trajectory as a sign of social and financial distinction, a symbol of masculinity (Huun 2008), an emblem of the elites, an image of professionalism (Rubinstein 1995), through its presence in men’s dress, serves the purpose of a “uniform/outfit” (Brush Kidwell and Steele 1989). As such, its objective becomes, on the one hand, to establish disciplined bodies in the broader public space and, on the other, to discourage the public expression of emotions (Rubinstein 1995:68), through the choice of sombre colours (Roach-Higgins and Eicher 1992) in tones of blue, grey and black. Discussing the symbolism of a tie’s colour, Roach-Higgins and Eicher (1992: 4) note that:

Meanings communicated by dress may emanate from its basic type, one of its properties (e.g., color, shape), or a composite of its component types and/ or properties. Thus, the color (a single property) of a businessman’s tie may be a more important indicator of his identity than is his total ensemble of suit, shirt, tie, socks, and shoes.

More recently, the tieless attire of Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras (2015-2019) and the conversion of this particular sartorial behaviour into a symbol contesting the established order became a subject of discussion on an international level. The presence of Tsipras and members of his Cabinet in a suit without a tie at the swearing-in ceremony of the new government (January 26, 2015), combined with the choice of taking a civil (rather than the traditional religious) oath of office, was seen as a symbolically-charged deviation from what had been a standardised ritual for decades, and was commented on at length both in the Greek and foreign media. For example, in her article entitled ‘The Wardrobe Politics of Greece’s New Prime Minister,’ Friedman compares the symbolism of Tsipras’ particular vestimentary choice (dress without a tie) to the corresponding choice of John F. Kennedy (dress without a hat) in 1961. As she mentions:

Think of it as the contemporary version of John F. Kennedy’s decision at his 1961 inauguration to take off his traditional silk top hat, which he had dutifully worn, for his swearing-in and address, with all the new-generation symbolism that that entailed. After all, Mr. Tsipras, at 40, is the youngest Greek prime minister in almost 150 years. Sometimes what you don’t wear is even more potent than what you do.

(Friedman 2015: xxx)

Alexis Tsipras’ perseverance with this particular dress practice during both his election campaign and his tenure as prime minister highlights the dynamic involvement of body and attire in power relations (Foucault 1980). The (absent) tie, in combination with other tangible

and intangible symbolic arrows in Tsipras' political quiver, was the determining factor in defining demarcation lines between 'us' and the 'others'. Indeed, together with the organised reminiscence about shared experiences, this symbolic differentiation is one of the two elements that, according to political scientist Nikos Demertzis (2006), contribute to the preservation of collective identities.

Nonetheless, in the context of this particular political and social reality, the introduction on the political scene of the concept of a 'tieless' sartorial identity signalled the existence of a broad sartorial 'tie-wearing' alterity, which, on the basis of attire, encompasses a large portion of the opposition's male population, but also a number of Cabinet members. Consequently, in the antithetical 'tieless'/'tie-wearing' model above, the sartorial identity's relation to alterity acquires a negative or positive charge depending on the ideological identity of the subjects of this alterity or otherness (Kostopoulos, Psara and Psaras 2015). As Tsipras stated during the interview he gave to Russian television before his 2018 official visit to Moscow (lifo.gr, 6.12.2018):

I have managed to be perhaps the only European leader to enter the most important, let's say, summits and the most important seats of government, from the Kremlin to the White House, and from the Vatican to Downing Street, and all around the world, and in China and elsewhere, without a tie. Therefore, I consider this a conquest. [He then went on to add:] What is particularly important is that with the success we marked, it is truly as if a noose, a tie, had been removed from around our neck. I mean the success we marked regarding Greece's debt. The debt may not have been written off – however, a way was found, through the extension of the repayment period and the grace period, to give Greece a clear 15-year passage, which is something investors acknowledge, and which creates a very positive investment climate in Greece.

During this particular moment of economic, social and political reorganisation in Greece, Alexis Tsipras uses his body and dress as dynamically-generated fields, where personal and political identities are acted out and articulated. Here, the lack of a tie in Tsipras' vestimentary behaviour is the result of a combination of individual habit favouring specific forms of sartorial consumption (Campbell 1996) and of structures that defined and determined this choice. I use the term habit in the sense that Bourdieu does in his habitus, which is primarily corporeal, to highlight the manner in which the social structure, i.e., the political environment in which he was nurtured since childhood, is imprinted in his body (Bourdieu 1995), his way of thinking and behaving. Looking at Tsipras' action in the normatively-structured (see Lopez and Scott 2000 for a description of this term) political field, where politicians 'must' always appear in public wearing a tie, and examining in parallel the structures that subject his body to social processes because of dress concerns, his differentiation is striking.

On the Greek political scene, the slogan "Left for the first time" (in government) (Milios,

Papastamou, Papas and Prodrromitis 2016) was associated with the rejection of a garment from the attire of male politicians. The absence of a tie from the 'look' of Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, combined for a short period with the stylistic fixation of his Minister of Finance Yan(n)is Varoufakis on a jacket with red piping, became a topic that occupied public opinion worldwide, and was considered as being a revolution in the sartorial 'musts' of the elite worldwide. Through the media, the lack of a tie became the distinctive sartorial sign around which the narrative on the prime minister's handling of the financial crisis in Greece (Pryce 2012; Catsambas 2016; Bistis 2016) was constructed.

In contrast, Katerina Malshina (2016) stresses that the tie is a powerful accessory in the attire of male politicians and diplomats, and analyses the importance of its colour in their careers. On the basis of the clothing of George W. Bush and Tony Abbot, she reaches the conclusion that politicians can influence their country's position not only through their actions, but also through their sartorial choices, especially on the basis of the tie's colour (Malshina 2016:187-188). Consequently, in accordance with the entertainment industry's rules, the absence of a tie in Alexis Tsipras' wardrobe was that distinct element with which he managed to draw attention, initially at least, away from the purely political issue – Greece's debt – to the image of Tsipras himself, transforming himself into a protagonist. "Where is his tie?", announced Washington Post journalist, Adam Taylor on February 4, 2015, in an article entitled "Greece's new leftist prime minister is shaking up Europe – by not wearing a tie". On this subject, Greek journalists commented:

The aesthetic contrast between them and their European interlocutors "says" a lot... Until very recently, most Americans did not know what SYRIZA advocates. But now, seeing the unconventional attire of Alexis Tsipras and Yan(n)is Varoufakis, they have grasped a lot about their politics. It is quite possibly foolish to attach great importance to what politicians wear, but, if that ensures publicity for your government and possibly the sympathy of an ever-growing part of international public opinion, who cares? The benefit is undeniable.

(Eptakoili and Danou 2015)

As would become apparent to those interested in Greek politics, the young, forty-year-old, photogenic prime minister, in a suit without a tie, or without wearing a jacket over a white or pale blue or pale pink shirt open to the base of his neck, with a posture indicating a relaxed attitude, sometimes combined with an air of awkwardness, had no difficulty in offering a broad smile and in making gestures suggestive of familiarity during formal meetings. His image is thus in counter-position to the usual staged image of politicians. Tsipras became involved in political action in his school and university years, participating in left-wing party youth movements, and was the chairman of his school's 15-member committee, and was a member of KNE, the Greek communist party's youth organisation. As such, he became one of the main protagonists of the

1990-91 school mobilisations against the educational reform envisaged by the then Minister of Education. It was in this environment that his body stance (attitude) -physical habit- was developed, by means of which, active subjects, according to Bourdieu (1995: 82-87), “bear” themselves, i.e. their manner of speech, gestures, style, etc. It is for this reason, moreover, that those who grew up and were nurtured in the same environment as Tsipras, and who thus had similar socialisation processes, presented a “stylised homogeneity” (Bourdieu 1995: 80-81), that is, characteristics common with Tsipras as to the way they dress, speak, and so forth.

Consequently, the sartorial behaviour of Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras was not from the outset a constructed image conceived to function as a symbol against the hegemonic discourses on the European political scene. Rather, it is a way of dressing with which he felt completely familiar and which he was able to uphold daily. As such, wearing a suit without a tie is the result of a combination of individual habit in favour of specific forms of sartorial consumption and of specific social conditions (Entwistle 200b). In this regard, the former deputy minister of Culture, Nikos Xydakis, one of the government officials who, unlike the prime minister, wore a tie, explains:

It is not so much about the symbolism, but about how one feels more at ease. That is the basic starting point. One person feels comfortable with his shirt hanging loose over his trousers, another in an anorak, another with a tie. Clothes are an outfit for a public space where one is exposed. On the battlefield, each of us wears the armour that gives them strength and protects them the best.

(Eptakoili and Danou 2015)

When, through the international community’s reaction, the prime minister and his advisers realised that the lack of a tie symbolizes a powerful communication card, the rejection of the ‘official’ political outfit became an extension of his political discourse. His body, in interaction with the absent tie, become the critical field within which identities were spun. Acting strategically so as to maximise the benefit stemming from this situation, Tsipras has framed his dressed body as a field of both resistance and negotiation in the face of hegemonic discourses, his ultimate goal certainly being to gain more political and social capital. According to Katz (2010:408):

Gramsci employed the term ‘hegemony’ to name the process of political domination through ideological domination. He showed how dominant elites use the state as well as the popular culture, mass media, education, and religion to reinforce an ideology which supports their position in the relations of force.

Tsipras thus promised Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, who gave him a tie as a gift, to wear it “when we reach a mutually acceptable solution with Europe.” Similarly, when, to the photographers’ delight, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker ‘lends’ him his tie,

everyone hastens to decode the gesture as heralding an agreement between Tsipras' government and Greece's creditors. Consequently, his presentation of himself on the international political scene focused on techniques drawn from his lived experiences and which he applied to control the impressions (Makrinioti 2004: 11) formed about him and his actions by attendees at international events. When Tsipras realises that those around him are attracted by his gestures, he transforms these gestures to influence and achieve his political goals (Macha-Bizoumi 2018:530-531).

Conclusion

Two items of clothing, the turtleneck and the tie, have acquired a dynamic symbolic role on the bodies of two Greek politicians, who use their bodies and dress as dynamically-generated fields so as to articulate personal and political identities. In the case of Andreas Papandreou, although initially a vestimentary choice linked to his life in general, his attire in a jacket over a turtleneck was rapidly transformed into part of his communication and political leadership, contributing to the closeness he projected to the mass of his voters when addressing them from the pre-electoral 'balcony'. This attire did not last, soon being replaced by the habitual dress of politicians in a suit, when PASOK became Greece's ruling party. In contrast, the dress behaviour of Alexis Tsipras is the result of personal habit in favour of specific forms of sartorial consumption and of structures (see Lopez and Scott 2000 for a description of this term) which defined and determined this choice of attire. His persistence with this attire while pursuing his action in the normatively-structured political field, where politicians wear a uniform, demonstrated that the differentiation achieved through his sartorial practice highlighted the absent tie as a symbolic means of resistance and negotiation in the face of hegemonic discourses.

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Endnotes

1. Andreas Papandreou (1919-1996) was a Greek economist, politician and a dominant figure in Greek politics, known for founding the political party PASOK (Panhellenic Socialist Movement), which he led from 1974 to his death in 1996. Papandreou's party win in the 1981 election was a milestone in the political history of Greece, since it was the first time that the elected government had a predominantly socialist political programme. He served three terms as prime minister of Greece (1981, 1985, 1987).
2. Alexis Tsipras (b.1974) has been the leader of the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA), a left-wing political party, since 2009. After winning the snap elections of January 2015, SYRIZA formed a coalition government with the small right-wing party Independent Greeks (ANEL) and ruled until July 2019.
3. Constantine Karamanlis (1907-1998), a towering figure of Greek politics, had a political career that spanned the latter half of the 20th century. After various ministerial posts in the immediate postwar years, he was prime minister four-times and twice held the role of president of the Third Hellenic Republic (1980-85 and 1990-95). His supporters lauded him as the charismatic ethnarchis (leader of the ethnos or nation).