

Kalyvas, one of the leading comparative political scientists of his generation, offers a thoughtful and measured approach. His insightful introduction to Greece's modern political history argues, somewhat surprisingly, that the country has often been ambitious and successful. Kalyvas, one of the leading comparative political scientists of his generation, takes a more thoughtful and measured approach. His insightful introduction to Greece's modern political history argues, somewhat surprisingly, that the country has often been ambitious and successful. The Greeks established the first independent state in Ottoman Europe, imposed egalitarian land reforms, fought off communism, generated substantial economic growth, and now maintain a stable, inclusive, and liberal democracy. This record compares quite favorably with that of the rest of the Balkans (which share Greece's geography and history of foreign occupation), much of Latin America (which shares Greece's autarkic interwar policies), and southern Italy (which, like Greece, suffers from tax evasion, corruption, and clientelism). Yet precisely because the goals have been so ambitious, Greece's road to modernity has been paved with intermittent disasters that have drawn in the great powers. Each half-successful modernization effort has eventually triggered an economic boom and bust; the current economic crisis is Greece's seventh in modern times. Kalyvas' slim volume puts this story into perspective with remarkable clarity and brevity. If you read one general introduction to Greek politics, this should be it.