Analysis

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The momentum of the new electoral contest

The forthcoming electoral contest will undoubtedly be characterized by the element of polarization, with left-wing SYRIZA and conservative New Democracy (ND) emerging as its leading players. The unprecedented fragmentation of the vote recorded in the poll of 6 May will give its place to a more consolidated party scene. This will happen mainly at the expense of that segment of the electorate (19%) which, by opting for the polychrome of small, newly founded party formations and due to the completely undemocratic and distorting operation of the electoral law, found themselves without political representation. However, it is not certain that the transition from the two-party system of the post-dictatorship period to the new "bi-polarism", which has arisen largely due to the divisive impact of the Memorandum, will be completed by the next Parliament.

Rise of the Left

The election result of 6 May clearly registered the anti-Memorandum mood of the electorate. The political vacuum that has been created looks as if it is being filled – for the first time since the war – by the Left. The momentum of the election result of 6 May is already being manifested with great intensity. SYRIZA's success at the poll has prompted a new current of electoral support in its favor. This current is of far greater compass than the corresponding one prior to the election and has led – so far – to a further massive increase in its estimated voter support (28%, +11% compared to the recent poll result). This has been primarily at the expense of the Communist Part of Greece (KKE), smaller left-wing groupings, but also – to a significant degree – at the expense of the conservative segment of anti-Memorandum voters who initially supported the right-wing Independent Greeks party of Panos Kammenos. It should be noted that the convergence of separate political forces against SYRIZA and the head-on nature of the confrontation is probably tending to facilitate and accelerate such 'defections' across political blocs. The sharp rise in SYRIZA's estimated voter support appears to be resolving the underlying crisis of representation in its favor, in a similar way to what took place in the earlier period 1974-1977, when it was in socialist PASOK's favor.

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In parallel with the electoral trend, a dual organizational transformation of SYRIZA as a political entity is in progress. On the one hand, from 'above', i.e. at the level of the party leadership, the unification of the various groupings and currents is under way, in order to the secure the bonus of 50 seats given to the first party by the electoral law. While on the other, from 'below', with the active participation of voters and supporters, in a manner that is sometimes reminiscent of 1974.

Backlash

The conservative bloc emerged from the elections of 6 May highly fragmented, while its percentage of the vote is the lowest ever received by the main party of the Right since the restoration of democracy in Greece. Its structural weaknesses remain and make the goal of electoral victory a difficult one. However, the rise of the Left has led to a backlash and ND has de facto become the core of the opposing pole. Already, in the first post-election Political Barometer survey, ND has managed to increase its estimated voter support by 5 percentage points (24%), winning back a portion of disgruntled conservative voters who in the recent poll chose Independent Greeks, the far right, or smaller formations in the liberal bloc. With regard to this point, it should be noted that the prospect of high-profile political figures throwing in their lot with ND will probably not add anything new to what has already taken place at the level of the electorate.

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