

Political Barometer

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Government attempts to 'sally forth', despite loss of support

The return to the daily political 'routine' of handling the economic crisis in the aftermath of the November local and regional elections has been very rapid. Despite the considerable weakening of the ruling party's electoral support, as recorded – just one month ago – in the elections, perhaps in response to this, the government is now attempting to 'sally forth'. However, in the Barometer of December, its downward slide appears to be continuing. Electoral support for the ruling socialist PASOK party is currently estimated at 39% (figure 1). The decline in social consensus observed (-3.5% in just two months) is significant, in contrast with the views of the head of the IMF (figure 2).

The municipal/regional elections gave PASOK an extension of social sanction. The dynamic recorded in the first round of voting in favor of the main opposition conservative New Democracy (ND) party was neutralized by the adverse result – against it – in the second round and the defeats it suffered in Athens, Thessaloniki, the Peloponnese and Crete. The election result did not create any significant political trend because it did not attest a transformation of the correlation of forces. That is, it did not have a similar effect as the result of the European elections in 2009. In any case, the small margin between PASOK and ND, as recorded by the electoral support for the two parties in the regional elections (2 percentage points) clearly does not automatically translate into a corresponding narrowing of the gap in their support in the event of a national election. This latter gap, although having decreased markedly compared to last October, still remains quite clear, 9 percentage points in favor of PASOK (against 14.5% previously - figure 2). Understandably, the now official appearance of Dora Bakoyannis' centrist Democratic Alliance party (with an estimated 2% vote share) serves to help sustain the margin.

By implementing harsh austerity measures in the public sector, the government is attempting today something that has brought it *in direct confrontation with the historical core of its post-dictatorship electoral support*. However, its social support is already significantly reduced, since in reality (i.e., given the considerable decline in voter turnout) it has the consensus of only 1/3 of the total electorate.

Author

Yiannis Mavris
Public Issue Research Institute

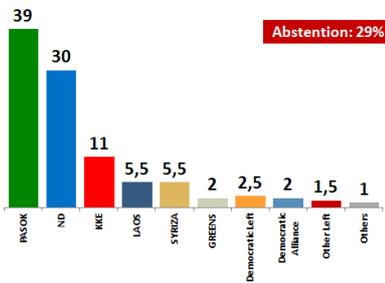
Public Issue

16, Vas. Konstantinou Str,
Athens, GR – 116 35
T: +30 210 757 5000
F: +30 210 757 5100
E: info@publicissue.gr
W: www.publicissue.gr

About Public Issue's Political Barometer

The results presented in this analysis are based on monthly telephone opinion surveys, with a general population sample of 1,000 adults (18+) from across Greece. The December 2010 survey was carried out: 2-8/12/2010. Published by: SKAI / KATHIMERINI.

1. Vote estimate - December 2010



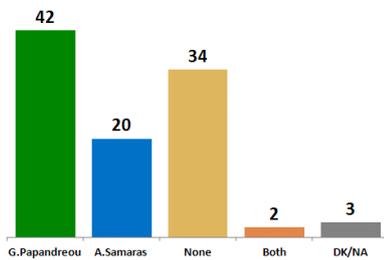
The alienation from the electoral process and the parties, the distrust of labor unions, the passive manifestation of social protest and the ‘numbness’ of public opinion toward the profound changes taking place today, constitute favorable factors for the government undertaking.

2. Vote estimate, October – December 2010

	Oct-10	Dec-10	Change +/-	
PASOK	42,5	39	-3,5	↓
ND	28	30	+2	↑
KKE	11	11	-	—
LAOS	5,5	5,5	-	—
SYRIZA	4,5	5,5	+1	↑
Greens	2,5	2	-0,5	↓
Democratic Left	1,5	2,5	+1	↑

The weaknesses of the main opposition party and the fragmentation of the left are also working in the same direction. At the same time, the European and international support being given to the government and to Prime Minister George Papandreou personally appears to be influencing a certain segment of public opinion (figure 3). But is this course of action chosen by the government based on a realistic assessment of the current situation, or is it an undertaking that will prove to be impracticable? Is the government’s present social and political legitimization sufficient to impose the radical transformation of the post-dictatorship social correlation of forces? These are questions that will be answered very soon.

3. Best prime minister



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