

Political Barometer 87

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Political scene in a tangle

Immigration having a significant impact

The continuing (for the 7th straight month) decline in the ruling party's vote estimate (-0.5% relative to January) has thrown the political scene into something of a tangle. And this, despite the fact that the party retains a significant lead. As has been pointed out in the past, though without being understood by many party officials and political analysts, on account of the electoral law in force the size of the gap between the first and second party is of secondary importance. What is more important, as regards the ability of the leading party to form a majority government, is its exact percentage relative to the aggregate percentage of small parties that fail to pass the electoral threshold of 3%. This latter parameter will have greater importance in the next parliamentary election.

Thus, on the basis of the Barometer's vote estimate for the ruling socialist PASOK party (38%) and irrespective of the present gap (currently estimated at 7.5 percentage points), the parliamentary majority that might emerge in the event of early elections would be rather slim (e.g. 153 representatives in the 300-seat House). The possibility of PASOK again clinching a convincing majority, similar to the one gained in the 2009 election, is today quite remote. In conditions of mounting social unrest and the growing phenomenon of civil disobedience, such a dose electoral victory would most likely increase the uncertainty prevailing in the political arena. It should further be noted that PASOK's losses in the current month remained within the broader center-left camp, benefiting mainly the Ecologists (3%) and the Democratic Left party (2.5%).

The gradual recovery of the main opposition conservative New Democracy (ND) party, which began early last autumn, has been continuous. However, it has been taking place at a slower pace than the party itself would probably like to see; while ND has at the same time been facing more acute conditions of party competition from two sides (the right-wing LAOS and the center-right Democratic Alliance). As a result, ND's electoral support remains relatively fixed in the current month (30.5%).

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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 February 2011 survey was carried out: 4-8/2/2011. Published by: SKAI / KATHIMERINI.

FIGURE 1. Labor disputes in the coming months

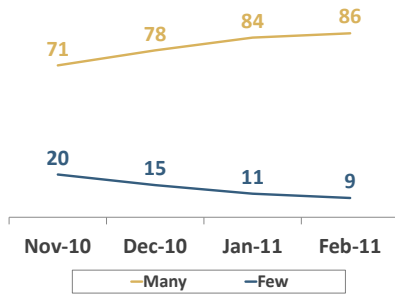


FIGURE 2: Best government

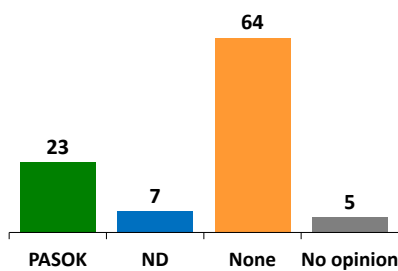


FIGURE 3. Vote estimate - February 2011

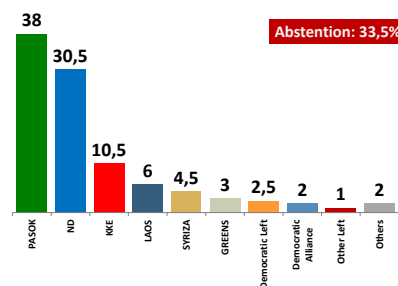


FIGURE 4. Vote estimate, January – February 2011

	Jan-11	Feb-11	Change +/-	
PASOK	38,5	38	-0,5	↓
ND	30,5	30,5	-	—
KKE	10,5	10,5	-	—
LAOS	5,5	6	+0,5	↑
SYRIZA	6	4,5	-1,5	↓
Greens	2,5	3	+0,5	↑
Democratic Left	2	2,5	+0,5	↑
Democratic Alliance	2	2	-	—

This survey provides a clear indication that the attempt being made to shift the political agenda, by bringing to the fore the issue of immigration, has already had a marked impact on the political scene. The **conservatization of the electorate** and **ideological polarization**, both of which have intensified, are being manifested in two opposing directions: Not only at the level of the image of the political leaders and of the parties, but also at the level of electoral support, on the one hand LAOS has been strengthened and, on the other, the left-wing SYRIZA has been weakened. The result so far of the ongoing debate about the immigration problem in Greece translates into (monthly) losses for SYRIZA of around -6% in the popularity of its leader, Alexis Tsipras, -7% in the party's popularity and -1.5% in terms of voting intentions. In contrast, based on the index of the best opposition party, LAOS this month too ranks first with 22%, above not only the Communist Party of Greece (18%) but also ND (18%).

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