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Two-party system still in free fall

Reconfiguration of the political scene continues unabated

Social and electoral support for the two government parties remains in free fall, with no sign – at least for the time being – of any reversal, or even a containment of this trend. The current seizing-up of the domestic two-party system has now surpassed all historical precedents. It bears no relation whatsoever to the tremors felt in the 1990s, nor to the recent slump of 2008. The total lack of political leadership and the inherent inability to renew political personnel in turn exacerbates the problem. It is very likely that we have now reached the point of no return, if we have not already passed it.

The clear crisis of the political parties is, of course, not the result of the deliberate planning of certain centers of power. Quite the opposite in fact. Just as the significant growth of the phenomenon of mass political parties in the 1970s and 1980s, following the restoration of democracy, was primarily a consequence of the movement of citizens ‘toward the parties’, their decline today is first and foremost a consequence of citizens’ estrangement from them. During the past year, two trends have continued with undiminished intensity. The first trend is that of an ‘exit from the electorate’, which now steadily applies to over one-third of the electoral body. The second is fostering the fragmentation, perhaps even the ‘disintegration’ of the existing framework of party forces. A clear indication of this is provided by the impressive increase in newly-formed groupings of all kinds which has been seen this month. Naturally, in such conditions, one cannot rule out the possibility of new political formations wishing to try their luck.

The loss of strength and social legitimization of the dominant party mechanisms is leading to their administrative frailty and paralysis, while at the same time it seriously limits any margin for political maneuvering and initiatives. It appears that the political scene is inevitably heading toward reconfiguration. The election law in force (the product of political correlations belonging to another time) is unable to ensure an ‘old type’ solution. The dynamic of political developments has surpassed its hitherto institutional function. For now, there appears to be no alternative solution.

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About Public Issue’s Political Barometer

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It is a fact that in Greece's political history, talk of coalition governments is associated with major political crises. It seems likely that something similar will now be repeated. Moreover, the relevant debate will not be initiated with the consent of the existing party formations, which are desperately trying to preserve the status quo ante. It will be imposed 'by force' and 'from below', i.e. by the electorate itself. Undoubtedly, the next national election, regardless of when it will be held, has already become a strong candidate for the title of the country's most crucial electoral showdown since democracy was restored in 1974.

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