

Political Barometer 96

November 2011

Date of publication

November 13, 2011

public issue

The multiple impacts of the change of government

There is no doubt that the appointment of Lucas Papademos as leader of Greece's interim government will accelerate the process of deconstruction/transformation of the domestic party system.

Trend toward deconstruction of the party system

The convergence of the two longstanding government parties, which has taken place for the first time on such terms, marks a decisive turning point and is leading to a further deepening of the crisis of its two-party form. With estimated voter support for the socialist PASOK party and the conservative New Democracy party totaling 48% (and support within society less than 30%), the present crisis (the third since the restoration of democracy, following those of 1996 and 2008) would appear to have reached the point of no return. It is, of course, not yet clear what will take the place of the two-party system in Greece. The spectrum that runs between a new 'bipolarity' and a 'fragmented multi-partyism' is indeed broad. What is more certain, however, is that the past 10 days of Greek politics that "shook the world" in effect signal a historic cancellation of the institutionalized operation of two-partyism, which was consolidated by the numerous alternations in power since 1981, a fact that in turn also renders ineffective – de facto – the electoral law currently in force, since it will no longer be able to "produce the appropriate political results". This explains the plans for changes to the law, which were raised at the last minute by the outgoing prime minister. The other side of the previous ascertainment is that the crisis of representation which has been evident for some time is becoming more acute. And even if the new prime minister does manage over time to rally 'those above', i.e. the politically and financially dominant social groups, this does not automatically mean that he will be able to secure also the consensus of 'those below', particularly without the classic 'channels' of the election process.

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 1,200 adults (18+) from across Greece. November 2011 survey was carried out, in two waves: 3-4 & 7-10/11/2011.

Published by: SKAI / KATHIMERINI.

Impressive rise of the Left

In the present phase, the unprecedented severing of the ideological and political attachment to PASOK on the part of very broad segments of the electorate has resulted in an impressive strengthening of the Left, in all its current versions. The estimated aggregate voter support for the Left now exceeds one-third of the potential electorate. With similarities to the period of occupation, it surpasses even the success of the pre-dictatorship United Democratic Left (EDA) party in the elections of 1958, prior to the formation of the Center Union. If the trend toward the collapse of PASOK's electoral support is not halted, it is clear that, apart from the conditions of social polarization which are becoming more acute, there will also be a tendency for conditions of polarization to be shaped in the political arena, with greater ideological 'clarity' than the corresponding polarization of the pre-dictatorship period, when it was compressed due to the presence of the pre-junta Center.

Decrease in voter abstention – call for elections

Another development that is reminiscent of the pre-dictatorship period, particularly the upshot of the political contention of the 1960s, mutatis mutandis of course, is the growing social acceptance of the call for elections (with 54% of citizens now in favor, an increase of 15% relative to the previous month). The special importance of parliamentary ideology in Greek politics, which has been stressed many times, explains the ways in which social discontent in Greece has historically found (and could possibly find today) an outlet. From this viewpoint, the sudden halting of the trend toward 'withdrawal from the electorate' is also striking. The reduction recorded in the intention to abstain (-7%) is quite considerable (27%, against 34% in October), marking a return to pre-Memorandum levels.

Public Issue was founded in 2001. It specializes in public opinion research on political, economic and social issues in Greece and Cyprus. Member of the World Association for Public Opinion Research (WAPOR) and the European Society for Market Research (ESOMAR).