

GREECE'S SISYPHIAN CHALLENGE

HOW TO TACKLE ANARCHO-TERRORIST VIOLENCE

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The newly elected conservative government of PM Kyriakos Mitsotakis faces multiple crises bestowed upon it by the disastrous four-and-a-half years of the radical left SYRIZA troupe mimicking government.

One of the keenest such emergencies is the constantly growing threat of terrorist-anarchist violence on top of a generalized crisis of increasing “common” crime (theft, breaking-and-entering, home invasion, armed robbery, unprovoked random attacks on the unsuspecting, human trafficking, purse snatching, prostitution etc.)

SYRIZA as “government” was a dear and understanding friend of street thugs, criminal anarchists, drug dealers, violent demonstrators, illegal alien outlaws, and imported organized crime. The Greek Police (ELAS), not up to the fight anyway after years of being the political scapegoat of all and sundry, was further ruthlessly undermined and hamstrung by the communists in power who, by definition, approach *all law enforcement* as an obedient tool, at the beck and call of the party cadres, rather than a force protecting and keeping the peace.

Today, however, these disillusioned low-morale police are called upon to somehow raise themselves by the bootstraps and take to the field to face a multi-tentacled, fanatically determined, and dangerous enemy. This contest would be *the* test for PM Mitsotakis and his promise to restore the citizens’ trust to the police and clean up Athens and other cities of roaming outlaws foreign and domestic, common criminals, drug dealers, and assorted anarcho-terrorists.

The current focus of this overall attempt is Exarchia, a neighborhood in the center of Athens a stone’s throw from the city’s Archaeological Museum and the National Technical University commonly known as the “Polytechnion.” Once a sleepy neighborhood and chosen watering hole for harmless dilettantes, artsy types, university students, and penniless “intellectuals,” Exarchia quickly rose as a hub of terrorist anarchism and organized crime beginning in the years right after the fall of the junta that governed Greece from 1967 to 1974.

Exarchia quickly claimed the mantle of being the hub of anarchism and street thuggism, a tendency that grew rapidly in the 1980s under the Pasok socialist government and its reluctant treatment of terrorism and “people’s protesters.”

The Exarchia situation worsened precipitously once the Polytechnion became another hub of violent student demonstrations -- enhanced by piggyback terrorist and anarchist gangs permanently occupying campus buildings to store makeshift weapons and explosives and use as HQ for “collective anti-state combat decision-making” complete with its own anarchist-terrorist Web page.

Today, Exarchia is a chaotic violent zone, a no-go area for law enforcement, its inhabitants living in fear of their lives, dominated by terrorists, drug dealers, anarchist “liberation fighters,” human traffickers, prostitutes, and illegal aliens involved in criminal activities, who have taken over buildings, abandoned by their fearful owners, and declared them “free zones” for hosting criminal, illegal, and antisocial populations.

Indeed, toward the end of SYRIZA’s rule, an attempt by law enforcement to search for and arrest drug dealers in the neighborhood resulted in a humiliating fiasco when anarcho-terrorists, heavily armed with AK-47 assault rifles, confronted the “intruders,” beat them up, stole the sidearm of one officer, and forced them into a humiliating hasty retreat.

Thus, Exarchia has now emerged as Mitsotakis’s litmus test on how to tackle Greece’s crime-and-anarchism crisis. In a political move to demonstrate “resolve,” Mitsotakis has appointed an old Pasok socialist cadre, Michalis Chysochoides, as the public order minister claiming Chysochoides has the “credentials” to do the job since he has held the same portfolio before during Pasok’s 20-year reign. Nevertheless, the appointment has raised some brows and thus the jury is still out on this “right man appointed in the right place.”

A quick review of facts regarding a potential assault to reclaim Exarchia, and bust the operational hub of Greek anarcho-terrorism once and for all, is as follows:

1. Tactically, Exarchia affords the upper hand to the resident terrorist element. A neighborhood of narrow streets, dark alleys, and occupied “people’s” buildings, which can be turned easily into defensive positions difficult to overcome, Exarchia is a serious challenge for any tactician planning a major clean-up operation.
2. Those who examine the challenge at hand with a trained eye suggest that police forces *alone* may be inadequate to carry out a successful search-sweep-and-detain operation.
3. They also suggest that the possibility of mass armed reaction by the criminal element **must not be discounted**, in which case the whole situation “on the ground” transforms itself into low level *urban combat* with the true possibility of casualties. In such case, Exarchia will claim the dubious distinction of being the first instance of urban warfare in the Greek capital since the communist insurrection of December 1944-January 1945.
4. Assuming that the above are valid decision-making assumptions, an Exarchia operation gives rise to much broader political and operational questions, ergo:

5. Can a civilian government (any civilian government) in peacetime assume the initiative of using the uncompromising **necessary force** to tackle a challenge that has already **far surpassed** the envelope of a mere police tactical assault?
6. Can this civilian government absorb the *guaranteed street violent reaction* of many in Greek society commanded by left-wing forces and particularly the SYRIZA popular core?
7. And can a civilian government decide to retreat, or choose a slap-on-the-wrist demonstration, when Exarchia, in its present form, is a **festering debilitating pustule** threatening, if not promising, far worse outcomes in the near future if it is left untouched?
8. If a law enforcement operation, however well organized and equipped, has limited expectations of success, then what?
9. This is where the question of credible *tactical intelligence* emerges as the key to any planning, including broaching the possibility of deploying **limited military force as backstop of any police operation**.
10. Does the government possess the resources to determine, as accurately as possible, the thugs' intentions and materiel preparations to wage combat against the state?
11. Do police and other intelligence provide a **credible picture** of thug combat capabilities, the size and state of their weapons cache, ammunition, and explosives and the possibility of these armaments including "surprise" makeshift weapons like rockets assembled by terrorist "armorers" and other fire-and-forget projectiles?
12. And if such a picture exists does the government possess the moral and political backbone to decide on the *maximum use of force* to guarantee the Exarchia abscess is spiked **once and for all and** never to emerge again?

Unfortunately, those with diachronic experience of Greek politics would most likely respond to this penultimate question in the negative. It is indeed hard to imagine how any Greek prime minister, whose survival in office depends on little changed patterns of cronyism; collaboration with powerful not-so-opaque special interests; and the support of party appointees, perennially afraid of losing their grip on the government largesse ladle, taking the high road and ordering a truly **crushing blow** on those who thumb their noses at both government and the majority of the Greek people.

Thus, the unavoidable, if regrettable, conclusion is "stay tuned for an underwhelming response to Exarchia," which is compatible with the most persistent and rock-solid motto in the Greek political playbook: "**Business as usual.**"

