

## GREECE: THE LEFT BOWS OUT, BUT...

### Q&A

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*"We hang the petty thieves and appoint the great ones to public office." -- Aesop*

*Kyriakos Mitsotakis has been hailed by some foreign media as a reformist "steamroller."  
Can he really fit the description under the current circumstances?*

Let's be honest, Mitsotakis faces a Herculean job. Four and a half years of distorted and disastrous ideological fantasies serving as "policy" have devastated the economy, broke the back of the middle class, elevated cronyism and corruption to the role of primary government tools, and sowed division, fear, and loathing across the land.

Greece is thus at the cusp of yet another restoration of democracy 45 years after the fall of the junta that ruled from 1967 to 1974. The job this time is far more dangerous and complex given that Greece is caught in debtor's prison, with her creditors tightening the noose as soon as they suspect "deviation" from the Procrustean demands of the monstrous EU series of "bailouts" initiated in 2010. Greece was choked, humiliated, and pummeled, and her people pauperized down to "existing socialism" standards, with complete abandon, *pour encourager les autres*. Mitsotakis won't admit as much but he has little wiggle space. The Greek people are exhausted and expect some relief as soon as possible. "Steamrolling"

thus appears less of a choice; rather, careful, targeted, and quick action, in areas that won't arouse creditor wrath, is a better, and, one hopes workable, solution.

***What areas are these?***

The creditors are already making noises about Greece having no options of tweaking the severe economic “reforms” *designed not to help recovery but to keep Greece paying without any debt relief for decades to come*. Room for cutting taxes is almost nonexistent and any other incremental economic measures would face stiff resistance from Greece's overseers cosmetically known as “the institutions.”

Mitsotakis therefore could choose to restore some balance in education and domestic security, two areas that have been relentlessly savaged and manipulated by SYRIZA's criminally amateur radical leftists and the crude street gangsterism they promoted as the supposed “people's power.” Other possibilities could be fast tracking infrastructure improvements and administrative reforms in the public sector to take the knife to red tape and eliminate nonsensical bureaucratic logjams. Mitsotakis should know he has no time comfort zone in delivering some relief. He should be applying the powers of his office and committing his ministers to action as we speak. Time is of essence.

***Strategically speaking, what are the immediate political threat(s) Mitsotakis must deal with?***

Contrary to pre-election estimates, SYRIZA suffered at the polls but did not collapse despite a horrendous record of manipulating government; destroying the middle class through taxation; treating the state as territory to plunder and exploit for personal gain; elevating grossly uneducated, mandrillic, offensive puppets to the status of key government players; and systematically spreading the kind of toxic populism that can damage any hope for a lasting rebound of the country.

SYRIZA as the main opposition party in parliament, instead of being a relic relegated to the dustbin of history, represents a ***huge time-controlled landmine*** for the new

administration. The 31,6 percent that voted for SYRIZA can be safely assumed as accepting and supporting SYRIZA's core "values" viz.

(a) the need for "permanent revolution" to devour the "bourgeoisie"

(b) support for street hooliganism and armed thuggism

(c) a statist economy hermetically closed to private initiative and international business

(d) the state as the go-to source of "jobs" for the unemployable, semiliterate, and unqualified and

(e) maintaining a huge corrupt and underperforming state bureaucracy as the *insurmountable obstacle* to any attempt at reform, economic, political or otherwise.

SYRIZA should be trusted to raise havoc upon every breath the front bench draws. While Greek commentators are already fully engaged in the meaningless debate of whether SYRIZA is still a "radical Left" party or has chosen to accept "social democracy," SYRIZA notables are already busy with bravado talk on how the Tsipras party is "...the shield of popular freedoms and rights to a better tomorrow" via the usual: rabble rousing, violent demonstrations, strikes, facility occupations, constant harassment of front bench legislative initiatives, and uproar in the house at the drop of a hat during sessions. SYRIZA based its whole existence on such tactics and there is no practical reason to abandoned them now as it tries to establish itself as the alternative "anchor" defending the people against the "elites." When it was the beggar groupuscule capturing 4 pc of the popular vote its impact was limited. One though dares not imagine what it can do today as the main opposition heartened by the fact of *having defeated all predictions it was on the way to political oblivion.*

While Mitsotakis has a solid majority, and thus needs no "tolerant" assistance from other parties to legislate, constant SYRIZA guerrilla tactics can, and will, create an atmosphere of tension, frustration, and general destabilization of a parliamentary process which, historically speaking, was never a model of moderation and rationality to the benefit of the common good.

*The oft quoted adage “it’s the economy stupid” is especially relevant to Greece today. Does Mitsotakis have a plan for jumpstarting an economy still in intensive care?*

Enthusiasm about SYRIZA’s departure has led many inside and outside Greece to erroneously conclude that, at last, the country is on the road to sustainable recovery. Unfortunately, the situation is far more complicated than that.

The damage SYRIZA has done cannot be repaired in a matter of weeks or months. The banks are moribund with capital controls still in place to avoid disaster. Zombie banks cannot offer lending for getting the private economy, already pummeled to near death, under way. It is estimated that during SYRIZA’s catastrophic years in power €100 billion went up in smoke. Meantime, the EU “bailouts” have hardly dented the enormous sovereign debt—and if anything, the debt keeps growing and now stands at a daunting 180 pc of GDP. The EU “institutions” demand primary surpluses of 3.5 pc of GDP until 2022, and an average of 2.2 pc until 2060. This is an impossible target that Berlin and its boyars in Brussels refuse to modify or withdraw. Tsipras tried to play hard ball with the “institutions” when bankrupt but refused to leave the source of Greece’s woes, namely the Eurozone. Having to struggle along with an overvalued common currency sapping Greek exports was an impossible task. Mitsotakis, the avowed “Europeanist,” is in no better position; he must try to ameliorate the country’s desperate economic woes with *the same shackles that broke Tsipras’s bilious fantasies*—the overvalued euro and the tottering EU—and with the added burden of the usual neoliberal recipes that have been thoroughly discredited during the continuing EU crisis.

The “steamroller” is thus caught between a rock and a hard place. He could attempt to fast-track important projects already on the table, such as the [Hellenikon airport project](#) and expanding [Chinese investment](#) in the port of Piraeus currently in limbo, but even under the best of circumstances measurable proof of any forward movement won’t be available until early next year, at best—if, that is, the new PM finds powers of persuasion which he does not seem to possess. Accelerating privatization is another possibility but it will require Herculean legislative work that should have begun yesterday. A case in point is the logjam Mitsotakis faces is the case of the Public Power Corporation (DEI), the country’s main electricity generator. DEI is bankrupt and may be collapsing momentarily, sending

dangerous ripples throughout the entire creaking economy. A tender for DEI units has just [collapsed](#), leaving the company at the cusp of bankruptcy. If DEI goes, the new administration will face the horror of trying to rescue what it can *without any assistance from Berlin and Brussels whatsoever*.

***Based on the above, enthusiasm about Mitsotakis as “steamroller” appears indeed premature. But, the key question-- “what is to be done?”—remains unanswered. Where is the country headed then?***

Greece never ceases to be a place where appalling jokes—political, social, economic—repeat themselves with remarkable regularity masqueraded as “policy.” It was the “radical” SYRIZA that quickly morphed into an obedient foot servant of “big business,” under vicious German bullying, angering European leftists who were mortified at Tsipras’s *kolotoumba* (the Greek word for ‘somersault’). Greek oligarchs came to be sweet partners of Tsipras and his odd crowd of scandalous analphabets and avowed anarchists. It was Tsipras who happily sold Hellas down the river, and [destabilized Greek politics](#), in order to satisfy EU and US demands for bringing the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) into the NATO fold as “North Macedonia,” a name Skopje is already replacing with a naked “Macedonia” while happily thumbing its nose at Athens. It was Tsipras who established harmonious relations with Donald Trump by defenestrating all angry pseudo-Bolshevist rhetoric he and his gang treated as the movement’s Holy Bible of “anti-capitalism,” “anti-militarism” and “anti-elitism” during the wilderness years. It was a crassly arrogant Tsipras who instituted a massive corruption drive to “adjust” the employment status of scores of SYRIZA cadres moving them, via last-minute legislation, to cozy higher-paying public sector jobs days before he lost the election. And even the terrible summer 2018 tragedy of a [huge conflagration](#) in coastal Attica, a few kilometers from Athens, that devoured 100 lives and thousands of dwellings, was not enough to change the minds of those who voted for SYRIZA on July 7.

With or without Mitsotakis, the Greek predicament changes little. Even during the “good years” (when headlong borrowing created the illusion of ‘wealth’) Greek politicians refused to face reality. They blindly drove the country into the euro straightjacket thus

guaranteeing the fast deterioration of whatever “positive” economic activity the country could manage. They refused to touch an antiquated corrupt political and economic system because they always were, and are, prisoners of party cronyism and public sector labor union godfathers and their “labor action” goon squads. They read all international signs incorrectly—including [why the euro](#) doesn’t and won’t work. They accepted [catastrophic “bailout” agreements](#) designed not to bail out the economy but to satisfy the creditors’ outrageous repayment demands. Greece will thus continue being crushed under the debt burden for decades to come because, even if a rebound miracle occurs tomorrow, the size of the debt is such that [it will never be repaid in full](#) (*source behind paywall*).

*In the end, it seems we should be talking about ways of tackling an existential crisis, replete with complex questions of society and politics, rather than Mitsotakis’s electoral victory, which apparently arrived with disturbing limitations. But is this the right time for such a wide-open debate when the country is still lying on Procrustes’s bed?*

There’s never a “right time” for “wide-open debates” in Greek politics for the simple reason Greek political forces remain way below the intellectual and cerebral level required for such events. Anyone with even a cursory understanding of postwar Greek history knows Hellas goes through unending cycles of regurgitating common problems without *ever arriving at workable solutions* on questions that have been resolved a long time ago in other advanced democratic systems. And when we refer to “workable solutions” we refer to *compromise, common values, and generally accepted principles of rational behavior*. None of these elements are present in the Greek predicament in quantities that can push through and maintain *lasting reform*.

Greeks chuckle over the widely used maxim of “*nothing is more permanent than the temporary*” and indeed this axiom forms the core of Greek political behavior. And since the temporary is never sufficient to create meaningful and stable continuity, Greece’s modest, not to say puny, gold is turned to ashes again and again. Anyone who may put his money on Mitsotakis being the catalyst for starting an honestly “wide-open debate” on *how to reverse the key crises of the country and lay the foundations of lasting improvements* should be best advised to look elsewhere and the reason is simple: the “steamroller” originates in a political

family tradition that is a textbook of what is wrong with Greek politics. And while it is only fair to give him the benefit of the doubt at this early stage, a careful reading of his tactics and “management” style would show to those with an eye for detail (and a sense for things Greek) he won’t be diverging significantly from the inherited beaten path.

But Greece has had enough of the beaten path already.

What she needs—desperately—is a genuine, decisive, lasting revolution.