

# ELECTIONS, DEAD ENDS AND “STAYING IN EUROPE” Q & A

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*What’s the general “feeling” about the September 20 election? How does the political landscape look right now?*

After an uninspiring, sullen campaign, replete with grand-standing and worn-out clichés, Mr. Tsipras and his divided SYRIZA party have won their second general election in nine months. SYRIZA, once Greece’s “great Left hope,” is now the timid servant of EU *diktats*, having capitulated to the creditors after a prolonged July 12 session in the EU’s torture chamber known as the “Eurogroup.”

Again, though, Mr. Tsipras defied the polls. He has won with a comfortable 35.52 percent of the vote. The conservative New Democracy came in a distant second with 28.03 percent. The bad surprise for everybody was the good show of the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party: it scored third and actually *increased* its share of the vote by almost one percent since the last election in January; it will be present in parliament with 19 seats while many of its MPs, including its leader, remain charged, among others, with criminal conspiracy leading to felony homicide.

The real “winner” of this fifth general election in six years, however, was the Abstention “party,” with 43.38 percent of those registered to vote choosing to ignore the ballot box. Reports spoke of voting stations empty of voters and idling stewards, especially in the provinces, although Athens was not far behind. The reasons for this unprecedented voter backlash are not difficult to find. SYRIZA is responsible for accepting, literally at virtual gunpoint, the suicide pact of the third “bailout” of Greece worth EUR86 billion. SYRIZA’s earlier aura has thus collapsed but, unlike what pollsters thought, it still remains the only “credible” political force. Many of its previously dedicated voters are disappointed but they obviously chose to stay home instead of voting for any other party. All the rest of the so-called mainstream parties are now perceived as little more

than bad jester traveling troupes; only small clusters of residual diehard followers are still their “active” voters. Finally, and justifiably, there is prominent voting fatigue: the September 20 election was the *third* time Greeks were called to the polling station in under a year.

*What should we expect now? Another coalition looks almost certain, doesn't it?*

Mr. Tsipras has indeed announced that he will continue working in coalition with the small nationalist party of the Independent Greeks, his partner in his previous administration. The decision must have come as a particular disappointment to the so-called Democratic Rally (which polled fourth after Golden Dawn) that comprises the once nationally dominant Pasok socialists and the rump Democratic Left (DI.MAR) grouping. Both Pasok and DI.MAR possess the unenviable distinction of having served as coalition crutches to the now discredited and sidelined Antonis Samaras and his 2102-14 New Democracy coalition administration, which agreed as disastrously with the creditors as SYRIZA. If Pasok and DI.MAR had not united their efforts, they would have been struck off the map for certain.

If anything, this election was a glaring opportunity for any thinking person to be outraged at the thick-skinned and unrepentant ways of Greek “politicians.” The most prominent example perhaps was New Democracy’s interim president, Mr. Meimarakis, who kept calling upon voters to show preference to his party as the “guarantor” of a better tomorrow because ND is the party of “authentic people” (?) Both Pasok’s and DI.MAR’s leaders did not fail to follow suit arguing that they, of all people, can be also the most capable “guarantors” of a “democratic tomorrow” and the “strengthening of the voice of the people.” These brave calls to arms came from documented and registered perpetrators of some of the worst outrages against Greek integrity and independence and this nation’s right to demand control over its own affairs – outrages that have been compounded by SYRIZA’s capitulation last July.

*The question right now is: “So, what about the day after?”*

This election has served no purpose other than offering the EU bureaucracies further deadly leverage upon a moribund country. SYRIZA’s “bailout” agreement wipes out the last vestiges of Greek sovereignty, brusquely sidelines the Greek parliament, guarantees further deterioration of an economy that has collapsed by 29 percent since 2010 and is still sinking, opens the door for the direct **expropriation** by the lenders of national assets worth EUR50 billion, and, ultimately, **guarantees** another deadly crisis, with the question of “Grexit” returning to the fore with all of its ferocious passion. As Ambrose Evans-Pritchard [has put](#) it “Greece is being treated like a hostile occupied

state” by its supposed “partners” who, incidentally, are making sure via their “help” that the Greek sovereign debt shoots past 200 percent of GDP (!) by the end of this year.

The new government is expected to pass a barrage of legislation in the next several *weeks* introducing an unmanageable and practically unachievable 60 percent of the “reforms” demanded by the lenders in that span of time. The next Eurogroup is scheduled for October 5. At that time, the lenders will demand outlines of not one but two additional budgets, one for the rest of FY15 and one for FY16. European finance ministers, with repeated public statements just before the election, reminded all that Greece *must not expect any re-negotiation of the suicide pact agreed upon by SYRIZA*. And in the background, the question of recapitalizing the Greek banking system, and lifting capital controls that strangle everyday business, is looming with no hope of rapid settlement, although the tentative expectation is that these issues need to be fixed by the end of 2015. The new government further faces the demand for a primary surplus of 0.25 percent for the current fiscal year, which means that it will need at least EUR 18 billion in revenue by December 31. With the present shortfall in tax collection at EUR 4.1 billion, and the economy in deep recession, EUR18 billion is beyond the sickest imagination.

To say that all of the above guarantees the suicide pact will plunge the country into another massive crisis would be an elegant play with words. The Greek “loafers” and “thieves” will end up the accused again and face even more brutal EU demands – or a quick exit from the euro without a safety net. The IMF has already warned that there can be no Greek recovery without a “substantial” relief of Greek debt – and has made its continuing participation in the Greek “bailout” program depended upon European acceptance of this term. But, Berlin and its satellites staunchly oppose such an arrangement lest their obsession with austerity and “internal devaluation” are questioned by other EU member state victims.

*How can this disastrous merry-go-round be broken? Is there a realistic way out now or in the near future?*

Unfortunately, the answer to this question is “No.” From SYRIZA becoming a “mainstream” party under the EU knout, with the same ease it catapulted itself to the status of a mass “popular movement” party with promises it could not meet; to the atherosclerotic presence of dinosaur political groups like New Democracy; to the chaotic realm of the smaller parties and the cast-iron persistence of the neo-Nazis, the Greek political environment is too fractured and simply unable to find and stick with a center of gravity. At the root of all this is the Greek voter himself, who displays behavior that is impossible to predict and almost always rewards the worst and the dimmest.

It emerged, for example, that voters on the islands closest to the Turkish coast, which have suffered enormously this past summer because of the invasion of mostly Muslim illegal throngs from Turkey, re-affirmed their majority loyalty to SYRIZA, the very same party credited with leaving Greece's sea borders unprotected and appointing a septuagenarian minister for immigration affairs with strange, to say the least, views on how to face the illegal alien crisis. That New Democracy floated to 28 percent after all that Mr. Samaras and his minor cohorts did from 2012 to 2014 is another mini miracle defying reasonable behavior and the laws of political physics. That the Greek voter would vote with the lightest of heart members of political castes known for their corruption and unabashed breach of the law is another phenomenon necessitating anthropological and psychological analysis. The usual excuse is that voters prefer "stability" and "continuity" when they vote like they do. This excuse though flies in the face of the *documented corruption and absence of personal principles* of those who are rewarded, time and again, with a parliamentary seat.

As for SYRIZA's staying power in the coming days, it should be remembered that, despite Mr. Tsipras's decision to sign the suicide pact, many of its members continue to make clear that they *oppose* this "agreement" with the creditors when they, themselves, have cast their votes in favor of it. This anomaly presages possible parliamentary surprises that could destabilize the government and throw the Greek case into another vortex. Already, market watchers suggest that the demise of the Athens stock exchange, traditionally a weather vane of political developments, appears to confirm that the immediate future is pregnant with risks of collapse.

*Against this backdrop, do we still "stay in Europe," and if "yes," how do we stay afloat inside the Eurozone?*

Experienced analysts, including IMF officers who express opinions "privately," stress that a country with the problems and missing links like Greece **needs a miracle to stay afloat** in the Eurozone, a straightjacket of an arrangement without a safety circuit-breaker other than the whims of Germany and its subject entity, the European Central Bank (which, however, remains staunchly 'independent,' if you ask European bureaucrats.)

Staying in the euro, and surviving the ordeal, has two prerequisites, both lying in the zone of impossibility: first, the write-off of all the Greek sovereign debt save a symbolic amount to satisfy inherently weak public relations externalities, and, second, *the adoption of a nation-specific reconstruction program through low or no interest loans and direct fund transfers with the aim of kick starting the economy and helping with restoration of the human disaster caused by the suicide "bailouts."* This reconstruction plan would be little different, but vastly cheaper, than what was offered to Nazi Germany

at the end of World War Two – a country responsible for enormous and unforgivable crimes against humanity.

Theory and reason, of course, have little to do with the omnipresent “political realities.” The European Union, as the exploding illegal alien crisis glaringly proves, is far from a “union” and remains deeply fragmented when it comes to core principles and political requirements. The consistent attempts by elite minorities, over the past forty years, to suppress the European Nation State, and replace it with the dysmorphic gruel of a quasi-federation, are backfiring. Germany’s detrimental role in all of this grows by the day and helps uncover the deep resentments and disagreements even with states that sided with its Nazi incarnation during the world war.

It lies beyond reason to expect from such a political, social and ideological labyrinth to produce rational solutions of the Greek crisis. Thus, Greece wins the unenviable prize of suffering the greatest, European-induced, economic catastrophe in the whole history of “community,” and later, “united” Europe.

The only dim hope for some relief lies with the thin possibility of larger European countries, like France and Italy, realizing that their turn is coming soon and deciding to react. But if and when such reactions materialize will be, most likely, too late for Hellas, the first debt colony in post-war Europe.