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“Unshaping a common policy framework: How essential are elections when social unrest lurks ahead?”



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Under the shadow of the unprecedented economic crisis in Greece, our parliamentary system seems unable to understand the public feeling and the hardship that the majority of the Greek people are faced with. The salvation of the country, and consequently the fate of the Eurozone, is questioned in domestic politics while all parties are still engaged with their short-sighted electoral interests, and ignore the issue of putting ahead a common and mutual agreement upon the future of Greece.

It is a common observation in politics that when it comes to deal with huge dilemmas, it comes down to the public to decide, through elections, the future course of the country. At a minor level, the preparation of a referendum is equally important as it is said to be a cost-effective process in terms of public spending while it guarantees a wide participation of the public. In Switzerland for instance, the referendum process is something very common, even for issues of lower importance. And the stunning fact here is that the initiator and one of the “founding fathers” of the Swiss Constitution was Ioannis Kapodistrias, the first Governor of the Greek state, and a political figure that was never well-recognized for his political strength and vision in his country of origin.

The current conditions necessitate a clear verdict of the public as the public is the one that undergoes the direct results of the government’s policy. Regardless of the pressure from the markets, regardless of the political stakes for the parties, regardless of the possible setbacks linked with the necessary expenses of such a political event, elections are the last and most democratic shelter of a democratic regime.

Meanwhile, there is always the risk of extreme riots equal or even more intense to those we experienced both in June and October 2011 following the general strike. A possible expression of violence is the worst case scenario and the consequences of a massive counter-austerity unrest could be dramatic for the political and social system altogether. In Argentina for instance, public unrest was expressed through extensive violence and the crackdown of the system was only avoided when political reflections of the parliamentary system reacted in favour of the public mood and proceeded to elections.

A final point that is of equal importance is that of public information though conventional and social media. The majority of the Greek people are not well-informed or at least adequately informed either about the exact amount of debt, the amount of the loan received, the public cuts ahead or even regarding the concrete policy plan of the government. In that respect, the role of media is not at all supportive, and I regret to say that even in those times of sacrifices, truth and unbiased information are not at all the case.

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