

Greece and Its Creditors: A new Paradigm - Front of Resistance

By [Dimitris Konstantakopoulos](#) and [Peter Koenig](#)
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Introduced by Peter Koenig

"It is [...] a triumph of the empire to have the victims elect their executioners."

These are the words of Dimitris Konstantakopoulos this Monday morning, 21 September, the morning after the Greek 'snap' elections, when the Greek people re-elected Syriza and their leader Alexis Tsipras, who betrayed them with impunity and on several occasions in the last eight months – yes, when the people of Greece re-elected their hangman with more than 35%, almost the same percentage of votes as on 25 January 2015; not an absolute majority, but a majority all the same that will allow them to form the next government and to call the shots on the already signed-off austerity package – against another debt of 86 billion euros, of which not one euro goes to Greece's vital social programs – only to the banks, which are bleeding the country to death.

If the Parliament re-confirms the new debt which it already approved before Tsipras resigned on 20 August 2015, the debt to GDP ratio will climb to above 210% – completely unmanageable – and illegal, as debt acquired under duress and blackmail which is the case in Greece – is illegitimate under all international standards and laws – as also stated in Zoe Konstantopoulou's (former President of the Greek Parliament) speech at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on 3 September 2015 –

<http://cadtm.org/Zoe-Konstantopoulou-s-speech-at>.

The bulk of this article was written about 3 weeks before the elections. THE NO FRONT is an essay on how to build a Front of Resistance, including remarks on moral and national aspects of politics, on left and right, on left and nationalism, and on euro versus drachma. In the author's own words, it

"represents the views its writer has supported in a lot of political talks and deliberations which have taken place in Greece between the 20th of August and the 3rd of September. But the question of how to build a front will remain very much in the agenda after the elections."

Dimitris Konstantakopoulos is a renowned Greek journalist, writer, philosopher, and he is the cofounder of The Delphi Initiative, a group of international intellectuals called to meet in Delphi, the birthplace of Democracy, at the end of June 2015 to formulate ideas for the government to extricate itself from the debt dilemma, the dictate of the troika and the colonization of Brussels. To no avail. In today's globalized neoliberal world, Democracy is not worth the breath it takes to pronounce it.

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How to build a Front of Resistance (some remarks on moral and national aspects of politics, on left and right, on left and nationalism, on euro and drachma) (*)

While Greek politicians travel around the country telling nonsense and narratives, Greece is disintegrating at an appalling pace. Only God knows what is going to happen this winter. Neither the first Memorandum nor the second can be compared with the third one. It may lead Greece towards a “low intensity” civil war or police state or even to major losses of sovereignty abroad, or it may contribute to the dismantling of the Republic of Cyprus.

Old and new supporters of the Memorandum agree in supporting the program agreed between the Greek government and the creditors, in spite of all the fighting between them, in reality about who will be the best, elected Gaulaiter of the foreigners in the country. But at the same time, everybody knows that this program will not work. Every single Greek knows this, those who signed it know it, all serious economists around the world also know it. It is as clear as that the Earth orbits around the Sun and not the opposite. But on this basic fact, on this major question for the destiny of the nation, the two main parties claiming now our vote either remain silent or they lie blatantly.

While the country is in a process of decomposition and the nation is being threatened with death, as an organized entity, our TV news are full of no news, like the coincidental meeting of Tsipras and Meimarakis at Heraclion airport. Tomorrow, it is not excluded that we will see the two participating in the same government, ruling the country on behalf of its creditors.

A memorandum aiming at destroying Greece

It is unbelievable and this is exactly the reason many people refuse to believe it. But the program applied in Greece is not a mistake. If it was it would have been long ago corrected.

It is aiming exactly at what it achieves, that is our destruction. It has already provoked by far the biggest economic, social, moral-psychological and demographic disaster in post-1945 capitalist Europe. This is not subject to argument, as most economic, social or political questions. The climax of the disaster is clearly reflected in all objective indicators (GDP, unemployment, especially unemployment of the young, dramatic deterioration of living standards and health levels, sovereign and private debt as percentage of GDP etc.)

Only Kafka or Orwell could name this a program of “help” to Greece! It is indeed a program for destroying Greece. It aims at what it is really achieving. And by provoking economic and social disaster, those who engineered it, aim – and so far they succeed – at our enslavement and promote their political, or rather “regime change” agenda, first in Greece, then, if the experiment proves successful, to all of Europe.

Only by causing such a catastrophe could they oblige a European people to accept the unbelievable terms (translated from English with the help of an automatic translation program) that the Parliament has voted in an all-night humiliating parody of a debate, under the blackmail of immediate “bankruptcy of the state”. It is through a new form of financial and political “war” that they are pushing their aim and this aim is to destroy bourgeois democracy, the social welfare state and the Greek nation, as a coherent institutional, political and cultural structure.

It is exactly because they need absolutely our complete destruction, in order to promote their extremely radical agenda, that they refuse and kind of concession. Not just to Tsipras, which after all could be considered more or less normal, but also to Samaras before him,

who was their man and he was very close, politically and ideologically, to the forces now dominating Europe.

For political-geopolitical reasons they decided to write off much of the debt of the occupied Iraq or of the US-friendly government in Kiev. But they insist on Greeks paying the debt until the last euro. Even if they will alleviate a little bit the terms of its repayment, they will keep it at unsustainable levels, in order exactly to continue its use as a weapon against the country!

Greece has experienced its dependence from the US and its tragic consequences after 1947. But even the Americans have not aimed at our complete destruction. They threw us a carrot in the form of the Marshall Plan. Now the threat is complete annihilation!

The program imposed on Greece is not an accident. It reflects the strategy and the ultimate goals of the most extremist segment of the global financial oligarchy, which is now using Greece and Europe in order to implement its European and global agenda. This oligarchy estimates that, after the fall of the Soviet Union, it has a historical, unique opportunity to impose a global dictatorship, a global totalitarianism, which, they think, is the only way to keep their present hegemonic position. If you have any doubts, just see what has happened in Iraq or Libya, Ukraine or Yugoslavia.

The financial, social and psychological-moral disaster caused by the program itself is exactly the weapon used to effectively abolish democracy and the welfare state, free health care and the right of citizens to a pension and to a decent living, which are the most important conquests of human civilization until today.

A «Greece without Greeks» (and also a Cyprus without Greeks) may be the end-result of it. The mechanism is already in place and working: massive emigration of the best educated young people, demographic crisis as a result of the Memorandum policies, serious deterioration of the health situation of the population predictably leading to a serious decline of life expectancy. If the Republic of Cyprus is dissolved, by accepting to become a post-modern protectorate through a new version of the “Annan plan”, which was rejected in the 2004 referendum, the loss of state protection will also force Greeks to emigrate in large numbers.

There is no more vital task for all Greeks than to stop this program. This is not linked to the facility or difficulty of trying to stop it, nor to the risks and dangers associated with that. Obviously it will be very difficult and dangerous to stop it. Simply we don't have any other choice. A very intelligent and competent leadership could, maybe, I say maybe, achieve a compromise, but even to achieve a compromise, you should have an iron determination to go all the way. By compromise I mean a stabilization of the situation where it is, that is to stop the work of the “death spiral” in which Greece is now found. (The term “death spiral” is quite exact if one wishes to describe the situation in Greece. It was introduced in the debate by George Soros who knows better than anyone else what is all about, as he himself has greatly contributed to the launching of this vicious circle!).

The upcoming elections

The September elections will take place under conditions of brutal violation of the constitutional and democratic order, as the Greek people, after deciding by an overwhelming majority in the referendum to reject the policy imposed to them, are now called to decide who will implement the policy they rejected! In such circumstances, there

can be no democratic political solution uniting the nation. Although formally legal, the elections and their result cannot be considered as a legitimate and genuine expression of the will of the people.

The social and political forces that supported the “No” vote are still in a state of cataplexy, of deep shock after the sudden transformation of the leader of the anti-memorandum struggle into the main spearhead of the Creditors and the Americans.

Large sections of the Greek people, angry with the whole political class, are now thinking of abstaining. But such an attitude, perfectly understandable from a certain point of view, will not help in the end but will only precipitate the collapse of democracy. The entire Greek and international historical experience is pointing to this conclusion, first of all our own experience of abstention of the Left in the 1946 elections.

Such attitudes will contribute to facilitate the victory of a political system and a government, which will rule in opposition to the people. Unable to protect the most vital interests of the Greeks citizens, they will have lost their legitimacy to govern, even if they win the elections.

The most probable result in the short or medium term is a sort of formally legal -but not legitimate- “low intensity” police state of a “selective character”.

What is to be done

In such conditions, what is really required is the creation of a broad and credible national and popular front for the defense of the Greek people and the economic and national rebirth of the country. Such a front should assimilate, in the way it is constituted, the many and hard lessons from the total bankruptcy of SYRIZA and AN.ELL., as well as the ease with which their leaders joined, almost without resistance, the opposite camp.

This, for a number of reasons, is impossible to achieve in the little time left until the elections. But if the various “anti-memorandum” personalities and organized forces realize to a sufficient degree that Greece faces the specter of a national disaster of incalculable proportions, if their consciousness of the risk to the homeland will prevail in their thoughts and dominate other, micro-personal and micro-party interests and considerations, then what they have to do is to unite and provide the population at least with the prospect of such a front in the form of a common ballot in the next elections.

Five personalities, who have a nationwide appeal, everyone of them with his own advantages and disadvantages, have disagreed with the capitulation of the government and with its transformation into an instrument of the Creditors-colonialists. They are, in alphabetical order, Yanis Varoufakis, Manolis Glezos, Mikis Theodorakis, Zoe Konstantopoulou and Panagiotis Lafazanis

Why can't these persons cooperate and support such a ballot in circumstances of a looming national disaster? In the past the Communist Party was able to cooperate with New Democracy (under the leadership of Mitsotakis) against PASOK. SYRIZA was able to cooperate with Independent Greeks (An.Ell.) or the Bolshevik Lenin with Russian Old Believers (“Beat together, march separately” was the formula). What are the colossal differences that prevent such a temporary, even partial, cooperation, respecting all other differences, when the country is in decomposition and the most vital interests of the Greek people are threatened?

There are many others in Greece, who are distinguished for the integrity of their character, their selflessness and their seriousness. Those are the properties we need desperately. These people have distinguished themselves by their participation in the struggles of society and of ideas in the most diverse domains of social life, thus expressing existing social currents and sensitivities in a society which, being often amorphous, is better expressed in some cases by individuals and less by social institutions, organizations etc. We know them and we can find them, if we put aside our enormous -but really so small- egos, our selfishness and opportunism. These should be the candidate MPs on the ballots of the front.

Only a caricature of a Front could be formed on the basis of party and parliamentary hierarchies, or by supposedly uniting organizations devoid of a genuine social dynamic or serious ideas, thus perpetuating the “mediocracy” which characterizes our social fabric in the most diverse areas.

It is unfortunately impossible within 15 days to elaborate a credible economic program. The lack of such a program is one more of the things for which the SYRIZA leadership bears enormous, we should say criminal, responsibility. The absence of such a comprehensive program has been the Achilles heel of the “anti-memorandum” movement in all its forms and wings. But, still, there is at least the possibility of outlining in the remaining time the main principles and guiding ideas of such a program and of an alternative vision for our country.

Left or Right?

The Front we need to create should stand, somehow, “over” and “above” the classical division between left and right. This has to be done not because such a difference does not bear any significance, as some people claim. This has to be done because we should try to unite all Greeks, if possible, in an effort to save and “regenerate” our country.

In Greece, we don’t face just a neoliberal counter-reform program which provides for the violent deterioration of the situation of the poorer classes. If we had to confront such a program, it would only be natural to try to create a class-based, not a national and social front.

An ultra-neoliberal program of course is imposed in Greece. But it is part of and a consequence of a project of destroying the fundamental conditions of reproduction of the Greek social formation and of the Greek nation-state, of establishing a form of “self-destroying debt colony”. It is also a project leading to the rapid and violent deterioration of the terms under which Greece participates in the international division of labor.

This is not happening by accident, as we emphasized above. The nation-state in Europe represents an embedded institutional identity, a strong ideological identity, but also the only framework in which there can be some exercise of democratic control and some level of social protection. All these qualities make the nation-state a huge obstacle to the forces that wish to impose a global dictatorship in the concrete, real conditions we are now facing in Europe and the world.

In such conditions, the defense of the nation is not nationalism. On the contrary, it is the only way to maintain the dignity of people and the most basic human, social and political rights and conditions of existence of all citizens, and in particular the poor and working

classes of society.

No one of course can defend the nation without defending the people, which we consider more or less identical with the nation, as well as the other way round. The forces that organize the economic warfare against Greece, taking advantage, needless to say, of the pre-existing serious crises of its internal structures, are in fact destroying the nation-state in the form we have known it, because only in this way can they finish with democracy and the social welfare state.

It is the (form of the) problem we are confronting that has to define the means and the tools of addressing it. Communists created in Greece the largest resistance movement in Hitler's Europe. They did not name it a "class", or "workers' and peasants'", or "socialist" front. They named it the National Liberation Front.

Those who want to fight for the hegemony of their leftist or rightist ideas, can do so and try to prove within such a front that their ideas are the most suitable to help organize and constitute the identity of the struggling nation and the people.

Drachma or Euro

This issue has now become the main issue dividing the country, but also the "anti-memorandum" forces.

The "No" front cannot be a "front for the drachma", but it should not also preclude, in all circumstances, the need to resort to a national currency, a national means of payment, if the necessities of the struggle and the need to resist foreign pressure and war so requires.

The "No" camp consists of social forces that, at present either want to stay in the eurozone or want to exit from it. If one were to adopt a categorical position on this subject, the only result would be to split apart the unity of the antimemorandum social forces.

But this is not just a political tactic, which someone could criticize as opportunistic. We need indeed the dialectical synthesis of the two views, keeping in the arsenal of Greece all weapons available. We can't predict now under what conditions, in Greece and in Europe, the Greek question will be raised again. There is no reason to decide now what will be our negotiating position in the future. On the opposite, it is extremely important to study very seriously, prepare ourselves and prepare the country for all options.

And this has not to do only with the choice of currency. It has to do with the whole international orientation of Greece, which probably will have to change, if the need of saving our nation will impose such a fundamental change. We should say all this very clearly. Greece should not be taken for granted by anyone.

But if we should leave open all possibilities, we don't need to define as of now and in a categorical way what we will do at a given moment.

Sometimes, the discussion on the currency seems like talking to someone who had a heart-attack and telling him that he needs to quit smoking and start eating normally. He should of course do this, but he should first be saved from the attack!

We must remember that the weapons used against Greece by its "Creditors" are not only -or even mainly- the euro.

Economically, Greece has been attacked through debt. Legally it was attacked through the imposition of British colonial law and the jurisdiction of foreign courts, in conjunction with the clearly colonial terms of the loan agreements it was obliged to sign. Politically, it has been attacked through a “communication war”.

It is on all these fronts that the country needs to organize its defense and its counterattack. And at the same time, it has to organize and struggle for its internal redressing. Without at least the beginning of efforts and struggles to redress the internal situation, it will be impossible to resist external pressure and vice-versa. The choice of a currency has to derive from global strategy, not substitute for its lack.

Along the way, of course, we may need to change everything, including the currency and the entire international orientation of the country. But this has to be done when the need clearly demands it and the Greek people understands it.

Maybe we are wrong in all that we have said so far. Still we would like to ask the supporters of the national currency, is the opponent making a mistake here? Why are the pro-Memorandum forces so anxious to limit the whole discussion in Greece to the “Euro or Drachma” question and to portray the entire opposition to the Memoranda and loan agreements, as the “party of drachma”?

The discussion about what and how we produce, how we survive in conditions of economic warfare, how we create consumer, production, small business cooperatives, how we set society again on the path of production, cooperation, solidarity and assertion, has to be organized at all levels of society. It has barely started. It certainly precedes the absolutely necessary debate on the currency. The Greeks know that the euro is a bad currency and the EU is a very spiteful environment. But they have no confidence in themselves and in their country, nor in us. That’s why the majority in the polls say they prefer the euro!

We should all, to the extent that our forces and influence permit, also propose an electoral-political solution to the Greek people, despite the enormous difficulties of this task. Mere talk and blaming each other simply won’t do. The responsibility for the tragic situation we are experiencing lies not only with the leader of SYRIZA and his associates, nor only with the old parties and servants of foreign interests. We all bear a part of the responsibility, each according to the role he has played, his power and influence. These responsibilities are very different for all of us but they exist. And everyone will be judged and very severely indeed.

Athens, September 3, 2015

(translated from Greek)

(*) The decision to call an early election, announced on the 20th of August by Alexis Tsipras, with the encouragement of the Creditors and Washington, has found the political forces which still are against the capitulation in a dire state. Not unity between them, not clear perception of what is to be done, internal antagonisms for “power”, inside their camp, no new credible message for the continuation of the struggle.

The “Left Platform” tendency of SYRIZA, afraid that they would simply be kicked out of the SYRIZA party lists, decided to form a new party “Popular Unity”. They formed the (over-centralized) structure of the party, they wrote the outlines of its program and then called on other people to cooperate. Such a method provoked a lot of protests and remorse, but nobody else was really ready or had the will and the mechanism necessary to participate in

the elections. Leaders of “Popular Unity” decided also that the electoral lists of the new party would be comprised essentially of the SYRIZA deputies who have disagreed with the Memorandum, thus excluding a possibility of political and social enlargement. And they have insisted on adopting a strong position on the introduction of a national currency for Greece, a point which divides the anti-memorandum camp.

All this provoked a rather negative atmosphere inside the “No” camp. The very probable consequence will be a rather low electoral result for “Popular Unity”, which has proven that it cannot by any means represent, even a significant part of what was the “No” camp in July.

This article represents the views its writer has supported in a lot of political talks and deliberations which have taken place in Greece between the 20th of August and the 3rd of September. But the question of how to build a front will remain very much in the agenda after the elections.

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