

# The future of democracy demands that Greece has the rig..

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This [was in the Guardian overnight](#):

*Fears were growing on Monday night of a fresh crisis in the eurozone after Greece failed to elect a head of state, triggering a snap election that is tipped to bring radical, anti-austerity leftists to power.*

You can sense the anxiety tending towards paranoia in the report, and this in a supposedly left of centre newspaper. It takes little to imagine what what is being said elsewhere about the prospect of a Syriza government led by Alexis Tsipras.

And yet Tsipras is saying something that makes complete sense. In fact, to be blunt, his political crime in the eyes of those who view his potential rise to power with all the angst that the Guardian clearly shares, is that he is telling the truth. As a matter of fact Greece cannot pay its debts to the Eurozone. [Even the FT publishes comment saying that this morning](#). That has been obvious for a long time.

And it is equally obvious that whilst Greece is yoked to a burden of avoiding the need for bad debt provisions in German banks that German bank regulators would rather not admit to which were, in fact, the fault of those banks in over-lending to Greece in the first place then Greece cannot possibly recover economically from the mess that membership of the Euro has consigned it.

The paranoia that will rampage through the EU's corridors of power, the European Central Bank and the governments of Europe is, however, real in the sense that it will motivate action in those places. The style of that action is not hard to predict. The painting of Syriza as extreme, when one of its goals is to reduce the Greek tax gap, will be a consistent message. Old style anti-leftwing rhetoric will be commonplace. And throughout it all the message will be implicit that the choice of such a government by the Greek people will be unacceptable to Greece's European creditors who will, no doubt, and in short shrift, demand the right to replace that elected government with a new one of their choosing that will ensure that the people of Greece will be denied the only logical choice available to them, of defaulting, and will instead grind them to the

burden if repaying an impossible debt. If in doubt note this headline from the FT today:

The ground is already being prepared.

And yet, absurdly, we would not, of course, require this sacrifice of a company, which would be allowed to renegotiate its debt and write part off in such a circumstance so that it might thrive again.

And individuals have the chance of bankruptcy and then moving on.

But for saying Greece has to be provided with this change of breaking free from the shackles of debt - as Germany was by its international creditors in 1953, without which its postwar growth would not have been possible - Tsipras is being labelled an extremist. He is no such thing. He is the voice of reason in a swamp of denial.

But the result is that a quite reasonable fear is developing that Greece is being given notice that its democracy is being constrained. The message that will be sent to Greek people over the next month is that they may vote as the neoliberal Germans who dominate the European Central Bank want or their right to choose may be curtailed. I [can describe this no better than Ivan Horrocks, a regular commentator in this blog, did yesterday](#):

*I'm not a betting man, Richard, but on this occasion I think I'll confidently bet that not one EU government will support Syriza. If Podemos was in power in Spain, it'd be a slightly different matter, but on this occasion I can't even see any of the social democrat governments lending support.*

*As you say, that will show democracy has failed — and indeed it has. It will demonstrate beyond doubt that citizens casting their votes in elections is simply an exercise in maintaining an illusion — a sham democracy. In normal circumstances, that is, within “accepted” parameters, it is a practice that is tolerated — even encouraged for its PR value — by those entities and individuals who truly exercise power and control. But if Syriza stick to their word they will be moving well outside those parameters and for those who truly rule us that can most certainly not be allowed. It would therefore seem likely that we are about to see the full arsenal of the power and control of the “elite” revealed, as we'd expect to be the case when hegemony starts to fail. What the outcome will be is anyone's guess. But in the meantime Syriza require every ounce of support we can give them.*

Ivan may well be right. Np but if he is we face a democratic crisis in Europe that will lay bare the reality of the power structure in all Europe's democracies and will make it abundantly clear that the power we think we have to make choice may be little more than tokenistic in nature. If it becomes clear that the only choice we have is to acquiesce to the demands of capital or be denied the choice we want then the shallow

vener of democracy that has existed since the hegemony of neoliberals m arose in the eighties will become too obvious to be ignored.

And then, I admit, I am not sure what will happen. But a point always comes when people realise that there is a power that is oppressing them which they have no choice but to remove. If the outcome was a swing in Greece from the democratic left to the far right of Golden Dawn the outcome may be very much worse for Greece and Europe, but instability would that case become much harder to contain.

There is a necessary price be paid for democracy. Writing off unpayable debt is one such price. Europe had better embrace that reality very soon. The alternative will be very much worse.