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Registered, Banned and Excluded: Thoughts on Mobilisation and Exclusion of Far-Right Parties

This year a new record was set in regards to Greek parliamentary elections. 50 political parties and party coalitions registered to the Supreme Court in order to participate and claim the vote from the electorate, while in comparison, in 2019, the number of registrations was only 24. Interestingly, out of those 50 political formations, 15 have some reference to the far-right, expressing mainly anti-immigrant positions and nationalist narratives. This high number of marginal formations points to a hyper-activity within the ecosystem and its various subsystems of the far-right, a so-called patriotic front. In this sort of essay, two main points will be discussed: first, the mobility within the far-right space, and second, the role/control of the Supreme Court on the participation of party formations in the elections.

Regarding the first, similar to past cases, a number of new formations come from seceding from the governing party of ND that express more extreme positions, especially in terms of security and anti-immigration policies. Additionally, the latest legislation (39/01.03.2022) on state funding of political parties and party coalitions defines that political parties that exceed 1.5% in the national election are entitled to funding. Considering that the latest exit polls suggest that more than 10% of the electorate is considering casting their vote to a far-right formation, that can mean potential access to funding for some, even if not reaching the 3% threshold to enter the parliament. And access to funding creates better long-term opportunities for political parties, which can strongly motivate some of them. Having said that, the high number of different formations, individual opportunisms of party leaders and inner competition indicate a lack of ability to form a coiling united front of the far-right and a possible reduction to the dispersion of votes. This does not exclude, though, a possible wider armament in the second round of elections, with the leader of Greek Solution calling for a mobilisation of the national patriotic front to achieve a more vigorous representation in the national parliament.

The second point refers to the legislative framework, following the developments after the trial and defunct of Golden Dawn and the exclusion and ban of a party from participation in the elections. This framework focuses on National Party-Hellenes, formed by a former member of Golden Dawn, Ilias Kasidiaris (currently serving jail time). In the end, the Supreme Court decided to disqualify the party due to, among others, the incitation of violence, disrespect to democracy, promotion of totalitarian ideologies, dissemination of racist and intolerant ideas and hatred that threaten the peaceful coexistence of social groups in the country. This is the first time, after the re-establishment of democracy, that the court considered the request for such a ban to protect democracy and the current constitution. However, this does not mean a ban on the functions of the party itself, but just a temporary ban on participating in the specific elections that leave open the opportunity for the party to reintegrate in the future in an attempt to circumvent the previous prohibition. Finally, the decision of the court also included exclusions of other far-right formations mainly due to technicalities in the process, something that stimulated some criticism about what extent the ruling party of ND is using the process as a strategic tool to undercut political rivals of the far-right for its electoral benefit.

The issue of banning political parties that pose a threat to democracy was initiated just after the appearance of Golden Dawn in the 2012 elections. However, it had only been seriously discussed in 2021, followed by numerous amendments in the legislation that ultimately led to the ban of National Party-Hellenes. The need for a long-term solution becomes apparent in the process, with better-defined criteria to protect the state's free functioning and a healthier political competition that will not leave any space for even implying that judicial power is a tool of political power.

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