



The Minority Report

By Giorgos "Derek" Vrachliotis

In Greece on October we will be having our local "mayor" elections. There is a very interesting story going on in Thrace (northern Greece) regarding this matter worth taking a look...

The Greek muslim minority

As many of you know Greece has a muslim minority, however what most people don't seem to know is the fact that there are three different and distinct groups of muslims in Greece not a single one. The first two groups live in the general area of Thrace. However not all of them define themselves in the same way. Some of them define themselves as Greeks, while some others define themselves as Turkish. The Greek constitution is very specific about this, "Everyone is free to define him(/her)self however (s)he pleases". So both of them fully receive the Greek citizen status and the benefits and obligations that come from this status. They are all free to attend any public school and university, they are free to teach and learn the language they feel native, they are free to operate any kind of legal operations and businesses (including of course the media) and of course they are free to candidate as mayors and congressmen. And as Greeks they are obliged to serve in the army and vote... Yes in Greece voting is not a privilege or right, it's an obligation as the law says but this is a deferent topic. However these two groups are no more than 30% of the total muslim population in Greece. The remaining 70% consists of economic migrants (mostly living in the big cities) but talking about migrants will get me off topic so we will pass them for now.

The political parties

and how they interact with the minority

There are five "big" parties in Greece. The leading liberal party, with some 45% of the votes. The opposition socialist party with some 40% of the votes. The communist party with about 5% of the votes. The "coalition" consisting mostly of leftists, "greens" and other "non aligned" parties with some 3% of the votes and the christian democrat party that was formed after the last elections but the polls give them some 3-5% of the votes about as much as they received in the euro-parliament elections. The rest 2-4% of the votes come from smaller parties that never make it into the parliament. However there is no minority party and this mostly has to do with the fact that the three leading parties always have muslim candidates and some 3 or 4 of these candidates always get elected but this is not the main factor, the main factor is that the minority is "divided" between the existing parties because of their individual political interests just as any normal voter!!!

So why all the fuzz?

Up until now no party would propose a non christian candidate mayor in the Thracian cities. The muslim minority is large enough to elect their congressmen but within the local population they still remain a minority, a minority well divided between the existing parties not to be able to support a specific candidate from a specific party. If you add up the above information it's easy to understand that a muslim candidate mayor is not the most promising choice especially if the party that makes such a choice doesn't have a very good election result history in the area in question. Keeping in mind that the Greek muslims have never elected a female congressman before you see how doomed such a candidate mayor would be. Yet the socialist party proposed such a candidate. But why? I have questioned myself with that and the most reasonable answer I could come up with was that the socialist leader (and ex foreign minister) understanding that there is no good or bad publicity, publicity is publicity and he definitely succeeded in getting a lot of that. Other than that I can't find any other logical reason for such a candidate. However the best point about this candidacy is the debate it steered up and the "change of view" it proposes.

Let's just wait and we will see what comes out of that....