

**Greek PM rules out snap polls, protesters are back**  
**Reuters**  
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ATHENS, Sept 4 — Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou yesterday ruled out snap elections and said his government would succeed in bringing Greece out of the crisis by the end of his term in 2013.

Thousands of demonstrators returned to the central Athens for the first time after the summer to protest against unpopular austerity measures in exchange for more EU/IMF funds on the day the ruling socialist party met to mark its 37th anniversary.

"Citizens will judge us in 2013," Papandreou told a party conference. "By then, we will have achieved bringing Greece out of the crisis and will have completed so many and important reforms."

But three opinion polls published in Sunday newspapers showed the main conservative opposition New Democracy party had widened its lead by 0.6-5.1 percentage points over the Socialist government, which has seen its popularity wane as austerity bites.

An Alco survey for Proto Thema newspaper, carried out August 30-September 2, showed some 22.2 per cent of Greeks would vote for New Democracy versus 17.4 for socialist PASOK. In its last poll in June, support for New Democracy was 21.3 versus 19.6 for

Pasok

About 67 per cent of those questioned were against snap elections and about 76 per cent said they could not afford the new one-off taxes Greece has imposed to shore up its public finances and wanted growth boosting measures instead.

In another sign that Greeks were fed up with austerity and galloping unemployment, some 75 per cent of people aged between 18 and 24 said they wanted to leave the country.

"The indignant" are back

Another poll carried by MRB for Sunday's Real News showed New Democracy widened its lead to 23.7 per cent from 22.9 per cent in June. PASOK lost 2.2 percentage points, dropping to 18.6 per cent.

About 87 per cent said they could not stand any more sacrifices, while 72 per cent foresaw major social unrest in coming months.

Political analysts see snap elections on the horizon and say the next few months are critical for the government as Greeks return from summer holidays to tougher austerity measures.

The government must also convince disgruntled lawmakers and an angry public that belt-tightening will pay off.

The "indignant" protest group, which had camped for weeks before the summer in front of parliament, came back yesterday, shouting slogans against Greek politicians.

A crowd of several thousand protesters packed Syndagma Square, holding banners reading "We owe nothing, we sell nothing, we are not paying."

Unlike the violent protests in June when Greece approved a five-year austerity and privatisation plan, the crowds yesterday were peaceful.

The government's failure to meet the fiscal targets set by its international lenders is also complicating Papandreou's task. An official close to the inspectors said late on Thursday that the 2011 budget deficit will be at least 8.6 per cent of GDP, compared to a target of 7.6 per cent.

On Friday, Greece and an EU/IMF inspection team interrupted talks on a new aid tranche after disagreeing over why Athens has fallen behind schedule in cutting its budget deficit. Discussions are due to resume on September 14.

The deputy leader of Germany's junior coalition partners, the FDP, said yesterday the interruption of talks was a blow to the stability of the euro and called on EU and IMF to push Athens to reaffirm its will for reforms. — Reuters

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