

Greece and the EU

40 Years of Membership

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Preface

Margaritis Schinas

The year 2021 was emblematic of two key historical achievements for Greece: the bicentenary of the modern Greek state and the 40th anniversary of its accession to the European Union. Joining the EU changed the fate of the country and placed Greece firmly at the heart of European integration.

Becoming a member of a united Europe changed everything for Greece, making it an integral part of the most advanced democratic and social model in the modern world. With its unshakable values, strong democratic institutions and social progress, Greece has achieved as much in its 40 years as part of the European Union as it did in the previous 160 years. Greece belongs to the largest single market in the world. The euro is second most-used world reference currency. Greece contributes to and benefits from Europe's power in international trade, human rights, data protection, universal health and education systems.

Forty years on, these unprecedented achievements reinforce the belief that Europe is now our home, our shield and the best guarantee for our future. This is the European Greece that a new generation of Greeks is now called to defend but also to improve, with even closer integration driven by new and more dynamic policies to achieve our common goals. Greeks are now Europeans who feel proud of —not ambivalent about— belonging to the West. These past four decades have been the longest period of normalcy, democracy, peace and prosperity that we Greeks have experienced. The majority of the political parties and civil society embrace and defend the idea of a European Greece.

Despite its unquestionable gains, our 40-year course has not always been linear. It has had dark moments —which I experienced personally— and there have been numerous lost opportunities and misunderstandings. Nonetheless, the historic choice of full membership has been vindicated.

The COVID-19 pandemic, unprecedented in its magnitude, has cost the lives of millions of our fellow human beings and changed the world as we know it. In Europe, it has led to historic decisions whose implementation is now in full swing. Europe's response to

the crisis represents a leap of unification and solidarity; it confirms that the choices Greece made in the past were the right ones.

Much has changed over the four decades in which Greece and Europe have charted their common course. We have passed from a period of innocence with relatively limited roles for European institutions into one of maturity, in which we are aware of our collective strength when working together within the EU framework and of how much is at stake when we fail to use that strength wisely.

Greece has shown that it can play a leading role in this mature Europe. Its management of migration, cool-headed but firm positions on issues pertaining to the Eastern Mediterranean, its friendship with the Gulf countries, its constructive stance in the Balkans and involvement in the strategic questions Europe has been called upon to answer, make Greece a force to be reckoned with and a broker of future developments.

In this year of historic milestones, European Greece has shown itself to be stronger, more cohesive and more creative than before. The people of Greece have every reason to be optimistic. Many more joyous anniversaries and achievements are ahead of us.

Introduction

Antonis Klapsis

On 1 January 1981 Greece officially acceded to the European Economic Community (EEC), becoming its tenth full member. That same day, President of the European Commission Roy Jenkins highlighted both the importance of Greece's accession and the challenges that this development entailed:

This is the beginning of a new chapter, and our joint task will be to ensure that the participation of Greece in the Community is beneficial both to Greece and to the new Community of Ten. It will not be easy, and inevitably there will be problems of adjustments – on all sides. But I believe that Greece will from the beginning both contribute to and benefit from the Community ... Greece joins the Community at a time of movement for the Community is an organism in evolution. We face many challenges but even greater opportunities. What is important is that we use the sense of European purpose which motivated us all in creating and enlarging the Community for the greater advantage of all our peoples.¹

Accession was the happy conclusion of a long and tortuous process that had begun two decades earlier in 1961, when Greece signed the Association Agreement with the EEC. The dictatorship of the colonels (1967-1974) temporarily diverted the country from its European orientation; the Association Agreement was frozen,² and Greece was expelled from the Council of Europe.³ With the restoration of democracy in

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1. *Bulletin of the European Communities*, 14.1, 1981, p. 10.
 2. Van Coufoudakis, "The EEC and the 'freezing' of the Greek association, 1967-1974," *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 16.2, 1977, p. 114-131; Antonio Varsori, "The EEC and Greece from the military coup to the transition to democracy," in: Konstantinos Svolopoulos, Konstantina E. Botsiou & Evanthis Hatzivassiliou (eds.), *Ο Κωνσταντίνος Καραμανλής στον 20ό αιώνα* [*Konstantinos Karamanlis in the 20th century*], vol. 2, Konstantinos G. Karamanlis Foundation, Athens 2008, p. 317-338; Eirini Karamouzi, "Taking a stance. The European Community and the Junta," in: Antonis Klapsis, Constantine Arvanitopoulos, Evanthis Hatzivassiliou & Effie G. H. Pedaliu (eds.), *The Greek junta and the international system. A case study of Southern European dictatorships, 1967-1974*, Routledge, London 2020, p. 110-123.
 3. James Becket, "The Greek case before the European Human Rights Commission," *Human Rights*, 1.1, 1970, p. 91-117; Dimitris Konstas, *Η "ελληνική υπόθεση" στο Συμβούλιο της Ευρώπης, 1967-1969* [*The "Greek case" in the Council of Europe, 1967-1969*], Papazisis, Athens 1976; Stelios E. Perrakis, *Η*

the summer of 1974, Greece regained its foothold in European politics and, under the leadership of Konstantinos Karamanlis, became a full member of the EEC. In his speech at the signing ceremony of the Accession Treaty, Karamanlis summed up the aspirations that had driven him to the European choice: “Greece enters Europe with the certainty that within the framework of European solidarity, national independence is consolidated for all parties, democratic freedoms are guaranteed, economic development is achieved and social and economic progress becomes the common fruit with the cooperation of all.”⁴

Accession was a turning point for Greece, which over the last four decades has been an active, productive and multidimensional participant in European integration – initially in the EEC and then in the European Union (EU). The course of these 40 years has not been without obstacles. However, despite the difficulties, the balance is certainly positive. Economic growth, institutional modernization and the securing of valuable diplomatic relationships are the obvious benefits that Greece has reaped over time. The country has made significant progress and is today a vital member of the European family.

However, accession itself was not achieved on the basis of consensus within Greece itself. On the contrary, from 1975, when the official Greek request for the opening of accession negotiations with the EEC was submitted, to 1979 when the Accession Treaty was signed and then until 1981 when accession was completed, a considerable part of the Greek political establishment questioned whether or not accession would be beneficial for their country. In the end, a consensus on the advantages of accession was reached only after 1981. Since then, remaining at the heart of European integration has been a constant aspiration of Greece. This strategic choice was (and still is) endorsed and supported by the vast majority of the Greek public.

Naturally, Greek participation in the EEC and then in the EU was linked to wider European and global developments. Membership itself took place in the context of

“ελληνική υπόθεση” ενώπιον των διεθνών οργανισμών, 1967-1974 [The “Greek case” before international organisations, 1967-1974], Ant. N. Sakkoulas, Athens/Komotini 1997, p. 33-114; Antonis Klapsis, “Η δικτατορία των συνταγματάρχων και η ελληνική υπόθεση στο Συμβούλιο της Ευρώπης” [“The colonels dictatorship and the Greek case in the Council of Europe”], in: Kristina Winther-Jacobsen & Evanthia Hatzivasilou (eds.), *Η Δανία, το Συμβούλιο της Ευρώπης, το ΝΑΤΟ και τα ανθρώπινα δικαιώματα στην Ελλάδα κατά τη διάρκεια της χούντας* [Denmark, the Council of Europe, NATO and human rights in Greece during the junta], Patakis, Athens 2019, p. 67-107.

4. Speech of Karamanlis during the official ceremony of the signing of the Treaty of Accession of Greece to the EEC, 28 May 1979, in: Konstantinos Svolopoulos (gen. ed.), *Κωνσταντίνος Καραμανλής. Αρχείο, γεγονότα και κείμενα* [Konstantinos Karamanlis. Archive, events and texts], Vol. 11, Ekdotike Athenon, Athens 1996, p. 144.

the Cold War and, among other things, reflected Greece's pro-Western orientation. After the end of the Cold War, Greece took the lead in establishing the EU and in trying to deepen the unification process. On 1 January 2001 it joined the Eurozone and exactly one year later was among the first twelve countries to introduce the euro. In 2004 and 2007, Greece played an important role in the enlargements of the EU. Today, it continues to have a crucial role in negotiations with Western Balkan countries wishing to join the EU. At the same time, Greece, located at the southeastern tip of the European continent, is the *de facto* guardian of the EU's external borders, a role that has proven to be of crucial importance in times of international crises and refugee and migration flows toward the EU.

This edited volume, which is the product of a joint initiative of the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, the Hanns Seidel Foundation, and the Centre of International and European Political Economy and Governance (University of the Peloponnese), presents some of the most important aspects of Greek participation, first in the EEC and then in the EU. Evanthis Hatzivassiliou points out that Greece's participation in the European integration project was not a temporary phenomenon, but part of a deeper strategic orientation of connection with the developed Western world. Eirini Karamouzi then highlights the way in which the prospect of Greece's accession to the EEC was linked to the consolidation of the country's democratic constitution, an element that was used as a key argument in favor of Greece's candidature.

Ioannis S. Chalkos explains how during the 1980s a consensus that EEC membership promoted Greek national interests was gradually established in Greece. Focusing on the same period, Dionysios Chourchoulis outlines the European policy of the PASOK government, noting the occasional friction between Athens and its partners in the EEC. Manos G. Papazoglou highlights the changes that Greece's participation in the EEC/EU brought about in the Greek political system, while Spyros Vlachopoulos pinpoints the ways in which the Greek legal order incorporated the principles of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Panayotis Tsakonas and Kostas Ifantis demonstrate the readjustment of Greek foreign policy toward Turkey as early as the mid-1990s, with an even more visible turning point being the Helsinki Summit in December 1999, when Athens accepted the opening of Turkey's accession negotiations with the EU, while launching the process of Cyprus' accession to the EU. Similarly, Nikolaos Tzifakis reviews Greece's role in the prospect of EU enlargement toward the Western Balkans, while identifying the occasional shifts in Greek strategy.

Spyros Roukanas presents the long-term trends in migration flows to and from Greece, which he combines with economic and social data that – among other things – are related to the country's European course. Nikolaos Apostolopoulos, Panagiotis Liargovas and Sotiris Apostolopoulos discuss the consequences of both the economic crisis and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic for Greece, in relation to the ways in which the EU has addressed these two challenges.

Markus Ferber reviews the strategies of Greece and Germany with regard to the course of European integration, with economic integration into the EU, EU enlargement, and the building of a solid common foreign and security policy as the main pillars. Finally, Dimitris Keridis explains why, despite the progress made in the economic field, Greece has not been able to achieve convergence with the economic standards of the more developed EU countries.

This volume's approach is clearly interdisciplinary, a prerequisite for capturing all dimensions of a subject with so many varied implications. Only such a broad-angle view can give a fuller account of the mosaic of Greece's forty-year participation in the EEC/EU. The aim is to make a fruitful contribution to both the academic debate and the public debate on the issues related to this participation.

Europe in Greek High Strategies: The Perspective of the *Longue Durée*

Evanthis Hatzivassiliou

Since independence in 1830, Greece has had the ambition to overcome underdevelopment, and join Europe. This chapter will argue that these two aims are interconnected and interactive: neither could be accomplished without the other. It will also be argued that the creation of the European Communities, especially the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957, was decisive; it signaled a major change in the structure of the international system that allowed Greece to realize its aims. The European ideal became pivotal in the efforts of contemporary Greece to achieve development, create an established democracy, and seek balance in the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean. The chapter does not offer a detailed factual account of Greece's relations with Europe; it rather focuses on deeper trends, on the perceptions and aims of the Greek state, and on their interaction with Europe or the European sub-system of the postwar West.

Aspiring to join Europe, 1821-1945

The purpose of the Greek Revolution of the 1820s was to remove the Greek world from the space of pre-modernity, and join Europe. The declaration of Greek independence, issued by the First National Assembly at Epidaurus in January 1822, stressed that the revolution aspired to create a modern European nation-state. The declaration strongly rejected Ottoman "tyranny" and "despotism," and included clear references to what is now known as the Rule of Law: "to reclaim the rights of our personal freedom, property and honor, which today all the well-governed and neighboring peoples of Europe enjoy, but from us only the cruel and exceptional tyranny of the Ottomans has tried violently to take away." The declaration made an explicit reference to the theory of natural law ("rights which nature has planted deep into the hearts of men, and which the laws, abiding with nature, have established, cannot be eradicated by three or four or a thousand and ten thousand centuries of tyranny"). The motive for rebelling was telling: "Starting from these principles of natural law,