

Greece in the European Union: The “Maverick” Becomes an ‘Orthodox’ Member State

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RÉSUMÉ

Cet article retrace l'évolution de la pensée grecque en ce qui a trait à la participation de la Grèce à l'Union européenne. La Grèce appuie une Europe fédérale et a développé une politique européenne cohérente. Elle doit maintenant compléter les ajustements de son système économique, politique et social face aux exigences de l'Union européenne.

L'auteur ajoute que la Grèce n'est plus considérée comme le “mouton noir” de l'Union. Au contraire, le pays est maintenant perçu comme un “état-membre orthodoxe”, qui prône une plus grande intégration selon les axes fédéralistes.

ABSTRACT

This article traces the evolution of greek thinking on the participation of Greece in the European Union. Greece supports a federal Europe and has developed a coherent European Union policy. It now needs to complete the adjustment of its economic, social and political system to the European Union's requirements.

The author also concludes that Greece has ceased being the “black sheep” of the European Union. On the contrary, it is regarded as an “orthodox member state”, advocating closer integration along federalist lines.

Greece's Entry into the European Union

Greece joined the European Community (as the European Union was known at that time)¹ in January 1981², after a long and troubled period of association. Indeed Greece was the first country to sign an association agreement (Athens Agreement) with the incipient European Community in 1961. This agreement was actually never implemented properly owing to different views both on the part of Greece and the EC on its interpretation.³ The agreement was frozen in 1967 following the imposition of the military dictatorship in Greece.⁴

After the collapse of the military regime in July 1974, the association agreement was reactivated, but in the meantime, Greece opted for full membership. Karamanlis, the Prime Minister, submitted the application for full membership in June 1975. Despite some reservations from the Commission⁵, official negotiations started in 1976 and were concluded in May 1979 with the signing of the Act of Accession.⁶ Greece became the

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tenth official member of the EC in January 1981. Greece decided to join the European Union/Community for three main reasons:

— to stabilize its newly-founded democratic institutions. The EC institutional framework was seen as the safety net around democratic politics, capable of contributing to the consolidation of democratic process and institutions.⁷

— to strengthen its external security and to lessen its dependency on foreign protection, especially its post-war dependency on the USA.

— to acquire the financial means and other market conditions for the modernization and development of its underdeveloped economy.

What is important about the decision to accede to the European Community is that the idea did not enjoy widespread political support. It was a decision taken by the conservative New Democracy party and more accurately, by Karamanlis himself, with very little support from other political forces. The Communist Party of the Interior, as the Alliance of the Left (Synaspismos) was known at that time, and the centrist forces endorsed Greece's European orientation. However the orthodox/hardline Communist party of Greece (KKE) and, more importantly, the nascent but dynamically rising political force, PASOK (Panhellenic Socialist Movement) were vehemently opposed to Greece's joining the European Community. Indeed PASOK, as the main opposition party at the time of the accession negotiations (1977-1979) declared that, once in power, it would conduct a referendum with the view of withdrawing Greece from the EC.

PASOK came to power in October 1981, only a few months after Greece's official entry into the European Community. Between 1981 and 1986, PASOK displayed a rather ambivalent attitude towards the Community, although it did make a serious effort to improve Greece's position in the Community's institutional system and policies.⁸ This effort resulted in the adoption of the Integrated Mediterranean Programs (IMPs) in June 1985. This ambivalence was mainly expressed in the context of the European Political Cooperation (EPC).⁹ Here Greece distanced itself from, and even vetoed, important EC decisions concerning vital foreign policy issues (East-West relations, Middle East, terrorism, etc.) This stance earned Greece various pejorative titles ('odd country out', 'maverick country', 'black sheep of the EC').¹⁰

This period of ambivalence came to a close towards the end of the 1980s, starting from 1986, when PASOK began to change into a pro-European, pro-integrationist political force. Three basic factors contributed to this transformation¹¹:

— the substantial and rising budgetary benefits that Greece had begun to accrue from the EC. Net receipt from the EC budget increased from mere 150 m. ECUs in 1981 to 1300 m. ECUs in 1986, something which turned the Greek electorate enthusiastically in favor of the EC. This could hardly have been ignored by PASOK.

Table 1: Greece's net receipts from the EU budget

<u>Year</u>	<u>Net Receipts</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Net Receipts</u>
1981	+ 140,2	1990	+2470,2
1982	+ 604,3	1991	+2926,4
1983	+ 973,7	1992	+3604,0
1984	+1008,2	1993	+4136,7
1985	+1314,8	1994	+3851,9
1986	+1272,7	1995	+3488,9
1987	+1536,5		
1988	+1491,6		

Source :Court of Auditors/EU

— the realization that Greece had come to enjoy considerable bargaining power, especially *νῦν-ἄ-νῦν* its neighbors, most notably Turkey,¹² by virtue of Greek EC membership.

— the socializing effect that participating in the EC organs had upon PASOK figures, who discovered that the EC was not dominated, as some tended to believe, by the large member states. Small states could exert considerable influence, provided that they had the right strategy for doing so. In essence, from the mid 1980s the PASOK government and Greece as a whole came to realize that the expectations placed upon EC membership had begun to be fulfilled.

The transformation of PASOK into a pro-European force¹³ meant that the bulk of Greek political forces were by the late 1980's supporting Greece's participation in the EC. Membership had thus become a consensual element in Greek politics, one which reflected the overwhelming support that European integration enjoyed among the Greek electorate. As a result, Greece was gradually able to assemble a coherent overall policy on European integration, the European Community/Union and Greece's role within it.

The European Policy of Greece Today

The central theme of Greece's current European policy can be summarized as support for the federal evolution of the EU. By now Greece stands with the member States which openly advocate the federal construction of the Union, even though, for reasons of political expediency, they do not utter the term 'federalism'. In Greece's view, the federal construction comprises four basic elements¹⁴:

Strong Supranational Institutions

The existence of strong, supranational institutions, capable of formulating policy and making decisions, democratically legitimized and independent of the control of any country or group of countries, constitutes an overriding objective of Greece's European policy. In this context, Greece supports strengthening the role of the European Commission and its eventual evolution into the role of a truly European government. A strong European Commission is seen as a vital component of the institutional system, ensuring the equilibrium of relations among small and large member States of the Union. In many cases, Greece has discovered that the Commission is the body which counterbalances the political excesses of the large member States in formulating policy. According to an official Greek government publication, "the Commission, along with the European Parliament, represent the best allies of Greece in the European Union".¹⁵

In recent attempts at revising the treaties, and, more precisely, in the most recent attempt which led to the Treaty of Amsterdam¹⁶, Greece has supported substantial extension of the Commission's powers to embrace areas of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), the so-called second pillar of the Union's edifice, as well as the field of Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) cooperation, the third pillar of the Union's structure. More concretely, Greece wants the Commission to have the right to initiate policy ('right of initiative') and to be extensively involved in the process of implementing policies, particularly Common Foreign and Security Policy. Like all other small States of the Union, Greece is a staunch supporter of the exclusive right of initiative, which the Commission has been enjoying since the establishment of the European Community in the 1950s. Attempts by larger member States at curbing the Commission's exclusive power to initiate policy have met with severe opposition from Greece.

Nevertheless, Greece is categorically opposed to the idea of downsizing the Commission by reducing the number of commissioners. Greece insists that each member state should have the right to nominate a commissioner. The right of every member state to be represented in the Commission, even though the latter, a supranational body, is viewed as an indispensable element underpinning the legitimacy of the institution and, indeed, the European Union as a whole. Moreover, Greece supports the election of all the members of the Commission, including its president, by the European Parliament.

As far as the European Parliament is concerned, Greece also enthusiastically supports strengthening its legislative and political powers, thus essentially transforming the institution into a full-fledged legislative body. In this connection, Greece has supported the transfer of legislative powers from the Council of Ministers to the European Parliament in successive

revisions of the founding treaties. In particular, it has endorsed the drastic extension of the so-called co-decision procedure, which allows the European Parliament to act as co-legislator with the Council of Ministers in a wide range of policy areas. Moreover, it has sought to expand the Parliament's competencies in the CFSP and JHA, but with little success.

Again, Greece's stance towards the European Parliament is shaped by both general and specific considerations. The general ones relate to the desire to enhance the democratic nature of the European Union through the reinforcement of the European Parliament, the only elected, representative body of the Union's institutional system. The specific ones derive from the fact that the European Parliament, like the Commission, has acted as a body contributing to political equilibrium in the Union and more interestingly, to the balance and symmetry in the relations between small and large member states of the Union. On the other hand, Greece has concluded that the European Parliament is more sensitive to the views and goals of the small member States and, of course, to the views of Greece, especially as regards some vital political issues, including the Cyprus problem and Greek-Turkish relations. The European Parliament is thus seen as an effective and reliable ally of Greece in the Union's policy-making process.

On a broader basis, the European Parliament and Greece appear to share the same overall federalist philosophy with respect to European integration and the evolution of the Union's institutional system.

Greece attaches the same overwhelming importance to the role of the other supranational institution, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) and to the auxiliary institutions, especially the Committee of the Regions. For Greece, the strengthening of the supranational institutions is seen as the surest way to prevent any group of countries or a *directoire* of Countries from dominating the policy-making process of the Union. As a Greek official paper has put it¹⁷, the existence of institutions of a federal character, associated with the system of checks and balances, prevents the domination of the EU system by a hegemonic country or by a group of countries.

Naturally, Greece, like other small countries, especially the Benelux, feels quite dissatisfied by the recent trends towards strengthening the intergovernmental elements in the European Union's institutional system.

Strong Budget and Strong Common Policies

Greece is one of the member states that does not appear to have any real problem in transferring sovereign jurisdictions to the European Union for the purpose of framing common policies at the Union's level. Indeed, Greece believes that the Union should not confine itself to promoting

negative integration, i.e. the establishment of the single, internal market, indispensable as it may be for the European economy, but should also promote positive integration through the formulation and implementation of common policies in all areas where the nation state appears incapable of acting alone.

In this respect, Greece steadfastly supports the objective of establishing full economic and monetary union (EMU), even though the Greek economy is the least qualified to join the first group of countries to launch the single currency (Euro) in 1999. Despite the remarkable progress achieved in recent years in reducing the macro-economic imbalances, the Greek economy has a long way to travel before it is deemed suitable to adhere to the single currency. Most estimates agree, however, that by the year 2001 it would be in a position to do so. Greece is currently rigorously enforcing a program of economic convergence, designed to meet 'the economic criteria laid down in the Maastricht Treaty for joining the single currency. In fact the present Greek government, led by Simitis, has made the adjustment of the economy to the conditions required for full participation in the EMU a paramount objective in its economic policy. Greece fears that, if left outside the EMU, it will become politically marginalized in the European Union and thus unable to influence the policy outcomes likely to affect its economic and political interests.

Moreover Greece considers the existence of a strong structural policy with a redistributive function aimed at advancing economic and social cohesion and reducing inter-regional and social disparities, as an integral part of the positive integration process. To that end, Greece has fought hard in the negotiations leading to the single European Act (1985-1986) and the Treaty on European Union (Maastricht Treaty, 1990-1991) to strengthen the provisions concerning the structural and redistributive aspects of the common policies, most notably of the regional and social policy. The adoption in 1988 of the so-called 'Delors packages' and the new structural policy, as well as the creation of a cohesion fund by the Treaty of Maastricht in 1991, are considered essential achievements to which Greece has contributed. More recently, Greece has insisted that the European Union should develop the policies to deal with the worsening unemployment problem in Europe. Strengthening the 'social dimension' of the Union is viewed as a necessary complement to the lopsided emphasis placed by the Treaty of Maastricht on 'nominal convergence' and monetary policy in the process of achieving full-fledged Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). Of course the preservation of the common agricultural policy (CAP) is part of Greece's overall policy towards the Union.

Not surprisingly, a vital component of Greece's European policy is advocacy for a sizable Union budget, with functions similar to those performed by budgets in federal systems; i.e., stabilization, allocative and redistributing functions. For Greece, fiscal federalism is an indispensable element of the federal construction of the Union. Consequently, Greece has consistently supported the increase of the Union budget, which at present cannot exceed the equivalent of 1.27% of the Union's cumulative GNP. For Greece, the establishment of the EMU, the enlargement of the Union to include the less developed countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CCEE) and the development of new activities in the context of the Common Foreign and Security Policy should be accompanied by a substantial increase in the Union budget beyond the 1.27% ceiling. Such an increase may appear extremely difficult politically, as the member states with 'net contribution' to the budget, especially Germany, are vehemently opposed to the idea.

Because Greece is such an ardent advocate of positive integration, it remains lukewarm about the concept of 'subsidiarity'. It thinks that at this stage of integration the concept tends to hinder rather than advance the deepening of integration.

A Strong and Effective CFSP

The third main component of Greece's European policy is the support for the endowment of the Union with a strong, effective foreign and security policy, embracing defense policy and 'common defense'.¹⁸ Although initially markedly antithetical to the idea of transforming the Union from a 'civilian' to a 'military power', Greece realized that, both for wider and more narrow national reasons, the Union should acquire the political, institutional, and eventually the military means to play a more active role in handling regional and international crises. As a result, starting from the negotiations for the Single European Act (1985), Greece has begun to pour proposals for the expansion of the Union's competence into the area of foreign and security/defense policy. The operation, since the early 1970s of the European Political Cooperation (EPC) on a purely intergovernmental basis for the coordination of the foreign policies of the member States was rightly thought to be a very imperfect system, incapable of producing effective results. The establishment of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) in the form of a second pillar of the Treaty on European Union, as an intergovernmental system of foreign policy was supported by Greece, but as a preliminary step towards the ultimate objective of building a fully-fledged system of foreign policy.¹⁹

In the negotiations for the elaboration of the Treaty of Amsterdam (1996-1997), Greece came up with the idea of fully 'communitarizing' the CFSP. Moreover, Greece proposed the merging of the West European Union (WEU) into the European Union and the assumption by the latter of all defense functions, especially functions concerning soft defense (humanitarian missions, peace-keeping and peace-making, crisis-management functions) enshrined in the so-called Petersberg protocol (1992) for the WEU. Although the proposal for integrating the WEU into the EU was supported by a majority of member states, it was eventually abandoned due to stiff resistance from Britain, as was the idea for bringing the CFSP fully into the Community's system. Yet the soft defense functions ('Petersberg tasks') were incorporated into the new Treaty as defense functions of the European Union.²⁰

On the other hand, Greece sought to broaden the objectives of the CFSP so as to cover the protection of the external borders of the Union and the territorial integrity of the member states. This was more or less fulfilled through relevant provisions embodied in the new Treaty. Consequently, Greece feels that in the future the Union will be better positioned to project a more effective political role thereby assisting Greece in its handling of regional conflicts and safeguarding its security interests.

On a more general level, Greece believes that the end of the cold war and the division of Europe necessitates the construction of a new European security architecture around the EU, complementary to that of NATO, an institution still perceived as an essential element of Europe's collective defense system.

An Inclusive European Union

The enlargement of the European Union to include the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CCEE), recently liberated from totalitarian rule and striving to build democratic institutions and market economies, represents perhaps the greatest historical challenge for the EU. The extension of the Union's political system to Eastern Europe is regarded as a factor capable of contributing decisively to the stability, security and prosperity of the region. Along with NATO expansion, the enlargement of the EU is perceived as the most important pillar of this new European architecture.

Greece favors enlarging the Union for political and economic reasons. Yet Greece wants EU enlargement to embrace Cyprus as well as the Balkan States.²¹ As far as Cyprus²² is concerned, Greece managed to secure the opening of accession negotiations early in 1998, as part of a compromise for the implementation of the third phase of the customs union

between EU and Turkey. Although Cyprus fulfills all the criteria for accession, the act of opening negotiations does not necessarily mean the entry of Cyprus into the Union, given that a number of member nations do not wish to see a divided state within the Union. The resolution of the perennial Cyprus problem thus appears to be a prerequisite for the accession to the Union. Greece could hardly accept this prerequisite and stresses that if Cypriot membership is blocked, then Greece will be forced to veto the entry of any other country into the Union.²³

The European Commission has proposed recently to open negotiations with only five of the ten applicant States of Eastern Europe, (Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Estonia and Slovenia)²⁴. The other five, including Rumania²⁵ and Bulgaria²⁶ should wait for a later, unspecified date to start negotiations. Greece, like a number of other member states, has objected to this proposal arguing that accession negotiations should start simultaneously with all applicant CEE countries. Greece is deeply concerned about the integration of the Balkan region into the EU. It considers that the history of instability and conflict in the Balkans can be overcome only through the full integration of the latter into European institutions and structures.²⁷

The Problem of Adjustment

Having formulated a coherent European policy, the main challenge Greece faces as a member state of the European Union is the adjustment of its economic, social and political system to the EU requirements², in other words, the 'Europeanization' of Greek politics and economics. This process has turned out to be extremely difficult in the Greek case for a number of reasons, including (a) the gigantic size and overcentralized nature of the Greek State and its paramount role in the economy, either in terms of tightly regulating economic activities, or in terms of producer, (b) the peripheral location of Greece with no common borders with any other member state of the EU, a location aggravated by the instability and the conflictual dynamics of the regional environment, (c) the external threat Greece faces to its territorial integrity and independence, a threat forcing it to spend approximately 5% of its GNP on military expenditure, the highest share of any other member state of the EU.²⁹

Other cultural and historical factors have also rendered the process of adjustment exceedingly difficult.³⁰ Thus, while EC membership entailed the redefinition of the role and size of the state, Greece followed during most of the 1980's a policy leading to the expansions of the State's role and functions. This brought Greece into direct conflict with the European Community and complicated the process of adjustment and economic convergence. Indeed, despite a sizable transfer of financial resources from

the EC budget (Table 1) , Greece was the only member State to register divergent rates of economic performance. The Greek GNP per capita dropped from 52.3% of the EC average in 1981 to 44.6% in 1991.³¹

Similarly, Greece experienced problems in adjusting its foreign policy to the EC/EU requirements and logic. It therefore pursued foreign policy objectives which were clearly not in line with the EU, or which did not take into account its membership.³² The most striking example in this respect was the handling of the so-called 'FYROM question'³³ (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia). By choosing to focus its policy on the historical aspects and the name of the newly founded State instead of concentrating on the real issue of security that FYROM posed, Greece became thoroughly isolated within the European Union. This policy did not allow Greece to take advantage of the changes in the Balkans and thus strengthen its regional role.³⁴

The systematic effort of adjusting Greece to the requirements and dynamics of EU membership was inaugurated with the election of Simitis as Prime Minister of Greece (January 1996). The advent of Simitis to power was rightly interpreted as the rise of pro-European political forces to power and the defeat of the traditionalist forces. Similar changes in the New Democracy party with the election of Karamanlis as leader helped create the political climate needed to introduce the long delayed modernization of Greek economy, state and foreign policy. The overarching objective set by Simitis' government is to prepare Greece for full EMU membership by the end of the century through the rigorous application of the 'convergence program' for balancing Greek public finances and restructuring the economy.

Moreover, a successful attempt has been made to develop Greece's relations with its Balkan neighbors by solving outstanding problems, including that of FYROM and promoting inter-regional cooperation.³⁵ Two meetings of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, one in Sofia in 1996 and a second one in Thessaloniki in 1997,³⁶ laid down the conditions for advancing inter-regional cooperation in Southeastern Europe. In fact, Greece has emerged as the main champion³⁷ of 'Balkan integration' within the European Union and NATO. Recently Greece even entered into the process of normalizing relations with Turkey,³⁸ by seeking solutions both to the problems in the Aegean as well as in Cyprus.

Concluding Remarks

The attempts at domestic and external adjustment along with the modernization pursued in earnest by Greece recently have turned the country into a so-called ordinary member State of the European Union.

Greece has ceased being the "black sheep" of the EU. On the contrary, it is regarded as an 'orthodox member State', advocating closer integration along federalist lines. Nevertheless, Greece's position in the EU will be determined by its ability to participate fully in the EMU and the single currency (Euro), if this project goes ahead as planned. Fortunately, the situation appears to be fully understood by Greek political élites.

NOTES

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9. On Greece's role in the EPC see S.J. Nuttal, *European Political Cooperation*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992 and Y. Valinakis, *European Political and Defense Cooperation: Greece and the New European Architecture*, Athens, Papazissis, 1991 (in Greek). On the general performance of Greece in the EU, see P.C.

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10. Nutall, **European**, *op. cit.*, pp 306-307
 11. See P.C. Ioakimidis, **Europe in Transformation, the European Community and Greece in a New Perspective**, Athens, Themelio, 1990 (in Greek).
 12. P. Kazakos, "The Normalization of Relations Between the European Communities and Turkey and the Greek Foreign Policy" in A. Alexandris, Th. Veremis et al., **Greek-Turkish Relations 1923-1987**, Athens, Gnessi, 1988 (in Greek).
 13. On this issue see, P.C. Ioakimidis, "Preconditions for Greece's Effective Participation in the European Community in the 1990's", Athens, ELIAMEP Yearbook, 1991 (in Greek), K. Featherstone, **Socialist Parties and European Integration**, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1988.
 14. P.C. Ioakimidis, **European Political Union**, Athens, Themelio, 1995 (in Greek), L. Tsoukalis (ed.), **Greece in the European Community**, Athens, EKEM/Papazisis, 1993 (in Greek).
 15. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Greece and the European Union Institutions" (unpublished paper, 1996, in Greek)
 16. As regards the main changes in the new Treaty, see P.C. Ioakimidis, "Does Amsterdam Rescue the Federal EU?", *Oikonomikos Tachydromos*, no.36 (2261), September 4, 1997, pp. 40-42 (in Greek).
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 18. See, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, **For a Democratic European Union with Political and Social Content, Greece's Contribution to the 1996 Intergovernmental Conference**, Athens, 1996
 19. *Ibid*
 20. See Draft Treaty of Amsterdam, CONF/4001/97
 21. See P.C. Ioakimidis, **The Future Enlargement of the European Union and Greece. Cyprus, Balkans, Eastern Europe. Problems, Consequences, Strategy**, ELIAMEP/I. Sideris, 1996 (in Greek).
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24. See Commission, *Agenda 2000 For A Stronger and Wider Union*, Com(97), 2000 final.
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28. See L. Tsoukalis (ed.), *Greece in the European Community: the Challenge of Adjustment*, Athens, Papazissis/EKEM, 1993 (in Greek).
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31. See, European Commission, *Report on Progress in Economic and Monetary Convergence and Progress with the Implementation of Community Law Concerning the Internal Market*, 1993.
32. On this issue see Th. Couloumbis, "Introduction: the Impact of EC (EU) Membership on Greece's Foreign Policy Profile" in P. Kazakos, P.C. Ioakimidis, *Greece... op. cit.*, D. Constatas, *For the Foreign Policy*, Athens, Papazissis, n.d. (in Greek), Th. Veremis and Th. Couloumbis, *Greek Foreign Policy, Prospects and Problems*, Athens, Papazissis, 1994 (in Greek).
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37. See Y. Valinakis, **The Development of the Balkan Policy of the European Union and Greece: the Political Framework**, EKEM, Working Papers, no.15, Athens 1992 (in Greek), P. Papaspiliopoulos (ed.), **The Balkans in the United Europe, Greece's Contribution**, I. Sideris, Athens 1995 (in Greek).
38. Cf. P.C. Ioakimidis, "There Can be Another Policy Towards Turkey", *Oikonomikos Tachydromos*, no.2 (2227), January 9, 1997, pp. 32-33 (in Greek).