

Paper on modern greece in historical concept: the post world war ii period essay

[Economics](#), [Budget](#)



Modern Greece in historical concept is considered as the post-world war II period. The economic distress of the 1930s provoked social unrest and this was exploited by the small Communist Party of Greece, which held the balance of power in parliament as a result of a deadlock between Venizelists and royalists in elections in 1936. Exaggerated fears of a possible Communist seizure of power enabled General Ioannis Metaxas, the leader of a small right-wing party who was supported by the now royalist army, to establish a dictatorship in 1936. Metaxas abolished political parties, established rigid press censorship, and persecuted his opponents, Communists in particular. Metaxas also suspended the Parliament, which did not meet again for 10 years. Despite domestic repression, that resembled that found under the dictatorships in Germany and Italy, Metaxas maintained a foreign policy oriented towards Britain.

On October 28, 1940, Italian dictator, Benito Mussolini presented Greece with a humiliating ultimatum. He demanded that Greece allow Italian troops to occupy strategic points within the country. Metaxas, expressing the feelings of the overwhelming majority of the Greek population, unhesitatingly rejected Mussolini's demand. Against the odds, the Greek army not only repulsed the Italian invaders but also captured a large area of southern Albania, which had a significant ethnic Greek population. Greece declared war against Albania, which was then ruled by an Italian puppet government and served as Mussolini's stage of operations. In April 1941, German troops invaded Greece. The Germans rapidly overran the Greek armies and the British forces that had been sent to their aid.

A collaborationist government controlled by Germany was established in Athens, Greece was divided up among the Italians, Germans, and Bulgarians, with the latter permitted to occupy a part of northern Greece.

The harshness of the occupation regime led to terrible famine and spiraling inflation. More than 100, 000 Greeks died as a result of the famine.

Despite the hardships of the occupation, the Greek people maintained the will to resist, and a number of resistance groups formed. By far the largest of these was the National Liberation Front (known by its Greek acronym, EAM). Along with its military arm, the National People's Liberation Army (ELAS), the EAM was under Communist control, although its membership was far from being exclusively Communist. Of the smaller organizations, the most significant was the National Republican Greek League (EDES), which held to a more conservative political program than the EAM. Virtually all resistance groups opposed the return of George II, whom most Greeks identified with the repression of the Metaxas dictatorship. In 1942 the British began parachuting in arms and personnel to aid the Greek resistance.

In September 1943, the Italians surrendered following the Allied invasion of Italy. The prospect of the liberation of Greece led to rivalry and jockeying for power between the EAM/ELAS and the EDES. The ELAS attacked the EDES in October 1943, and the two resistance groups fought actively through the winter before reaching an uneasy truce in February 1944.

In August, representatives of all the resistance organizations joined in support of a government-in-exile established in Cairo, Egypt, under the

prime minister ship of Georgios Papandreou. Greece lurched toward outright civil war in October 1946, when the Communists formed the Democratic Army as a successor to the ELAS. By December, the Communist insurgents had begun guerrilla warfare in earnest. Concentrated in the north, they benefited from the support of newly established Communist regimes in Greece's northern neighbors, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Albania. In December 1947, a Communist-backed provisional democratic government was established. The Greek national government received support from Britain, but it especially benefited from the support of the United States. Following the proclamation of the Truman Doctrine in March 1947, the United States pledged large amounts of military and economic assistance to the anti-Communist forces. Air power and the presence of American military advisers gradually caused the tide to turn, and the last strongholds of the Communist forces in the mountains on the Albanian frontier fell to government troops in the summer of 1949.

The remnants of the Democratic Army fled to safety in the countries of the Communist Eastern bloc. The two-and-a-half years of fierce fighting left numerous villages destroyed, nearly 160, 000 combatants and civilians dead, and 800, 000 people homeless. In 1948, at the height of the civil war, Greece acquired the Dodecanese Islands as a consequence of a treaty with Italy. The islands had been under Italian rule since 1911.

Wartime occupation and the civil war that followed devastated the Greek economy.

However, Greece recovered quickly, and the 1950s ushered in a period of rapid economic and social development. Greater political stability arrived with a change in the electoral system from proportional to simple majority representation. In 1952, the right-wing Greek Rally party won the election, and Field Marshal Alexandros Papagos became prime minister. Greece joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) that year. A new constitution gave women the right to vote, and Papagos's cabinet included Greece's first female minister.

After Papagos died in 1955, King Paul chose as his successor the relatively unknown Konstantinos Karamanlis, who was to dominate Greek political life for the next four decades. Karamanlis immediately dissolved the Greek Rally and founded his own party, the National Radical Union. The leadership and right-wing politics of the new party were essentially the same as those of the Greek Rally.

Much of Karamanlis's first prime ministership was overshadowed by an increasingly bitter conflict over Cyprus, an island south of Turkey that had been administered by Britain since 1878. Greeks constituted about 80 percent of Cyprus's population; the rest of the island's inhabitants were Turkish. From the time, Britain acquired control of Cyprus; most Greek Cypriots had advocated enosis, or union with Greece. However, Britain considered Cyprus crucial to its oil supply lines from the Middle East and refused to agree to the union. In 1959 Britain, Greece, and Turkey (which put itself forward as the protector of the Turkish Cypriot minority) reached an agreement that the island would become an independent republic within the

British Commonwealth. Cyprus's independence was proclaimed in 1960. However, an elaborate power-sharing agreement between the Greek and Turkish communities on the island soon broke down in violence. By the time of the 1958 election, the popularity of Karamanlis's National Radical Union government had begun to slip.

After the party lost seats that year, Karamanlis asked for early elections in 1961, and his party received 51 percent of the vote. Karamanlis pursued his goal of closer relations with Western Europe by securing associate membership for Greece in the European Community in 1962. However, allegations that the 1961 election had been manipulated soured the political climate.

Georgios Papandreou, who had been able to unify the centrist political forces into the Center Union party in 1961, fought a vigorous campaign to reverse the result of the election. In this effort, he was able to exploit a growing resentment toward autocratic policies instituted by the government since the civil war years. Karamanlis, who had clashed with King Paul and his strong-willed, German-born wife, Frederika, resigned in 1963. In the February 1964 elections, Papandreou's Center Union party won a clear majority. Within 18 months however, Papandreou was ousted. Before the elections could take place, however, a group of middle-ranking army officers led by Colonel Georgios Papadopoulos launched a bloodless military coup on April 21, 1967. The junta, who came to be known collectively as the Colonels, claimed that they had acted to forestall a Communist-inspired coup, although no evidence

for this was ever produced. The Colonels' primary motivation was clearly to forestall the elections planned for May.

These elections were widely expected to return Georgios Papandreou's Center Union to power. Andreas Papandreou was expected to wield considerable influence among the more radical elements in such a government. The Colonels had feared that a Center Union victory would be followed by a purge of ultra-right-wing army officers such as themselves. Following the coup, a civilian, Konstantinos Kollias, was appointed prime minister, but it was immediately apparent that real power lay with the military. The regime rounded up hundreds of people with records of left-wing political activity along with politicians from across the political spectrum and sent them to prison camps on the islands.

Before long, reports emerged of torture and other maltreatment of political prisoners. Whereas previous military juntas in Greece had soon made way for their allies in the political sphere, the Colonels made it clear that they intended to remain in power for as long as it took to recast Greece in their image. The Colonels suspended the constitution, abolished political parties, imposed censorship, and annulled a number of reforms that had been introduced by the Papandreou government. The Colonels did not enjoy total support within the army, however, and in December 1967, Constantine II launched a countercoup.

After this failed, the king went into exile. Colonel Papadopoulos became prime minister, with General Georgios Zoitakis as regent for the absent king.

After investigating complaints, in 1969 the Commission of Human Rights of the Council of Europe determined that political prisoners in Greece had suffered torture and degrading treatment. Facing certain expulsion, Greece then withdrew from the council.

The country remained a member of NATO, however. Despite its persecution of Communists within Greece, the junta established good relations with the countries of the Communist bloc, including China, and ended a technical state of war with Albania that dated from World War II. Western governments criticized the regime at times but took no formal action against it. The United States continued to provide aid to Greece, which it considered crucial to stability in the eastern Mediterranean.

The junta introduced a new constitution in 1968 that institutionalized the military's grip on the government. This followed a plebiscite conducted while martial law was in force. In 1973, following an unsuccessful mutiny within the navy, Papadopoulos abolished the monarchy and declared Greece a presidential republic. In a referendum in which he was the sole candidate, Papadopoulos was elected to an eight-year term as president. He then declared a broad amnesty for political offenses and announced that elections would be held in 1974. They were to be overseen by Spyros Markezinis, one of the few politicians prepared to collaborate in any way with the junta. After Turkey invaded Cyprus to protect the Turkish minority, the Greek regime, troubled by incompetence and international isolation and unable to mobilize for war with Turkey, collapsed. Karamanlis, who had been in exile in Paris, France, since 1963, was recalled and sworn in as prime minister.

Karamanlis was to resolve the problems left by the junta and ensure that the army returned to the barracks. He achieved this difficult feat with great skill, ending the seven-year military dictatorship without bloodshed. Meanwhile, by late August 1974 Turkish forces controlled the northern third of Cyprus. In elections held in November, Karamanlis's conservative New Democracy (ND) party secured a clear victory and he retained his position. A subsequent referendum resulted in an unambiguous vote against the restoration of the monarchy, and in June 1975, the parliament approved a republican constitution. In the elections of 1977, Andreas Papandreou's radical Panhellenic Socialist Movement (known by its Greek acronym, PASOK) emerged as the principal opposition party with a 25 percent share of the vote.

As president, Karamanlis achieved one of his long-standing objectives when he helped secure agreement for Greece to enter the European Community (EC; subsequently the European Union, or EU) in 1981. In elections held in October 1981, Andreas Papandreou's PASOK party swept to power with 48 percent of the vote, easily defeating Rallis and the ND. Papandreou became Greece's first socialist prime minister. Once in power, however, Papandreou did not carry out the threats he had made as an opposition leader to withdraw Greece from NATO and the EC. Although his anti-American rhetoric proved popular with Greeks who blamed the United States for its support of the junta, the government agreed to allow U. S. military bases to remain in Greece. The collapse of Communism and the subsequent turmoil in the Balkans in the late 1980s had important

consequences for Greece. In 1991 the Yugoslav republic of Macedonia, a northern neighbor of Greece, declared its independence as the Republic of Macedonia.

Greece objected to the republic's name and flag, claiming that Macedonia was a Greek name and that the flag appropriated a Greek symbol—the 16-pointed Star of Vergina of Alexander the Great. Greece also asserted that articles of the republic's constitution implied territorial claims to the Greek province of Macedonia. Bowing to international pressure, the republic amended its constitution to state that it had no territorial aspirations in Greece or any other country. In 1993 the United Nations admitted the republic under the name Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). Greece found these measures unsatisfactory, however, and in 1994 imposed an economic blockade on the republic.

Following international mediation, the foreign ministers of Greece and FYROM signed an interim accord on mutual relations, confirming their border and establishing diplomatic ties. Greece lifted its embargo, and FYROM dropped the symbol claimed by Greece from its flag. The issue of the republic's name remained unresolved. Greece also had disputes with Albania arising from allegations of mistreatment of the Greek minority in southern Albania and from the large influx of Albanian illegal immigrants into Greece. Another major issue in the 1990s was Greece's ongoing conflict with Turkey. Long-simmering issues included the continued Turkish occupation of northern Cyprus (Turkish Cypriots had declared the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in 1983) and disputes over conflicting claims in the Aegean.

Thaws in the Greek-Turkish relationship in the late 1980s and in 1993 proved short-lived.

By 1994 the countries were at odds over territorial waters and airspace, the right to prospect for minerals (especially oil) in the Aegean, and other issues. There were also disagreements over the treatment of minorities in the two countries. Periodically these disputes gave rise to serious confrontations. Despite their common membership in NATO, in January 1996 Greece and Turkey came to the brink of war in a dispute over a barren Aegean islet near the Turkish coast, known as Imia in Greek and Kardak in Turkish. Under pressure from the United States, the Simitis government defused the situation in February 1996, withdrawing military vessels and Greek flags from the disputed area. Tensions between the two countries continued in the late 1990s.

In the late 1990s Simitis's government focused its attention on making Greece eligible to share a proposed single currency, the euro, with other members of the European Union (EU). The EU excluded Greece from the list of 11 countries that joined Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) in 1999, but Simitis maintained austerity measures intended to reduce inflation and the country's budget deficit. PASOK retained a slender majority in the April 2000 national elections, and Simitis returned as prime minister. The austerity measures backed by the government proved successful, and in June 2000, the EU invited Greece to join EMU.

Greece officially adopted the euro on January 1, 2001.

In January 2004, Simitis resigned as leader of PASOK. Just a month before the March 2004 general election, PASOK elected George A.

Papandreou, Greece's foreign minister and the son of Andreas Papandreou, as the party leader. However, PASOK failed to win enough votes, and the conservatives of the New Democracy Party swept to power. The party's leader Costas Karamanlis, nephew of former Prime Minister Constantine Karamanlis, became Greece's new prime minister. REFERENCES:

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