

# A POLITICAL HISTORY OF MODERN GREECE (1821-2018)

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*Modern Greece has a history of almost two centuries. During these centuries, the country managed to move from the backwaters of Europe to a prosperous liberal democracy before economic crisis hit the country hard in 2010. Greece was founded after a War of Independence from the Ottoman Empire that was based on liberal and democratic principles. This left a political legacy which led to universal male suffrage as early as 1844 and one of the longest parliamentary histories in Europe, despite the tumultuous political life and brief periods of authoritarian regimes. The 19<sup>th</sup> century was a period of a slow modernization of the country (in infrastructure and institutions) but it was also suffocated by “Megali Idea”, the irredentist dream of the enlargement of the Greek state to include all lands, under Ottoman rule, inhabited by large Greek-speaking populations. A great part of Megali Idea was realized in early 20<sup>th</sup> century but the triumphs ended with a devastating catastrophe in 1922. Greek political elites were often incompetent and corrupt, but several reformist statesmen managed gradually to achieve convergence with other western European countries. Most importantly, they were very effective in steering Greece on the right (i.e. winning) side of history during every major European or Global conflict (Balkan Wars, World Wars, Cold War). Greece, after World War II and a ferocious Civil War, enjoyed one of the strongest, almost uninterrupted growth on a global level. This led to the accession to the European Communities in 1981 and later the Eurozone. Today, after ten years of economic crisis and painful austerity, Greece must meet one of the most difficult challenges: to achieve growth by adopting inclusive institutions.*

## I. GREEKS IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Greece became an independent state in 1830. Its independence was the result of a national uprising against the Ottoman Empire in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. After the end of the classical era, Greece was controlled by empires, mostly by the Roman, the Eastern Roman or Byzantine and the Ottoman empires. The Roman and the Byzantine empires were strongly influenced by the ancient Greek civilization and from the 7<sup>th</sup> century on, Byzantine Empire was linguistically Hellenized.

After the fall of Constantinople, in 1453, the Ottoman Empire recognized the Christian Orthodox Church and the Patriarch of Constantinople as the spiritual but also the

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political leader of the Greek Christian Orthodox (*Rum*) community. The Christian Orthodox Church, which was dominated by a Greek speaking clergy, was granted several privileges, including some autonomy and judicial jurisdiction in certain private law disputes among Orthodox Christians.

As a result of the power and the great influence of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Greek Christian Orthodox Commonwealth was so prominent as to capture even high-ranking political stations in the Ottoman administration. Since the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, Greek Christian Orthodox laypeople, “Phanariotes”, who inhabited Phanare, the area around the seat of the Patriarch, had a significant political power. Phanariotes dominated the influential position of Grand Dragoman, the official interpreter for the Imperial Council, but also the position of the Prince (*Voivode*) of the semi-autonomous Danubian Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, i.e. modern-day Romania. Phanariotes, many rich merchants, several local communities and the Church created, from 17<sup>th</sup> century on, a big number of local but also influential small schools which became, until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the standard educational units in the Balkan Christian Orthodox communities.

There was also a local Christian Orthodox landed class in Southern Greece, mostly in Peloponnese. The *Kodjabashis* in Turkish or *Proestoi* in Greek were the leaders of their communities. They were part of the Ottoman administration since they were usually responsible for tax collection. These local notables were supported by private armed groups and they had direct connections to the Ottoman administration and the Patriarchate. They had to deal with dangerous bands of brigands (*klephts*) who had managed to control the mountainous areas of Peloponnese and Central Greece (*Roumeli*) defying Ottoman power and Christian Orthodox notables. In some areas of Central Greece their power and influence were so significant as to be recruited by the Ottomans as militiamen (*Armatoloi*), supposedly to protect the area from their alter egos, the klephts. Nonetheless, they kept reversing their allegiances according to their interests by alternating between the two roles.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Greek merchants operating in the Balkans and the Asia Minor but also in Central and Northern Europe, including Russia and Greek shipowners living in small islands of the Aegean and operating in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, managed to amass great wealth since they controlled a great part of the trade in the Ottoman empire. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century, they exploited the vacuums in French and English maritime trade during the Second Hundred Years’ War (1714-1815), especially the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815). One of the consequences of the end in European Wars in 1815 was idle capital and labor in the Greek peninsula, mostly in the islands.

The intellectual elite of the Orthodox Christians who spoke Greek was influenced by the 18<sup>th</sup> century Enlightenment, earlier from the other elites in the Ottoman Empire.

By the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and in the first half of 19<sup>th</sup> century, major commercial, professional and academic (predominantly student) communities of Greek-speaking Orthodox Christians were formed in Vienna, Italian cities, Odessa and other European metropolitan and commercial centers. Some clergymen and sons of wealthy merchants educated abroad, were among the leading proponents of the Enlightenment ideas, major works were translated into Greek and schools teaching Greek were proliferated in key commercial centers. The backlash from the conservative ecclesiastical hierarchy after the French Revolution failed to stop the dissemination of ideas, even in mainland Greece. The half-baked Greek enlightenment undermined the authority of the Church, reconnected the Christian Orthodox elites with Ancient Greece and Western Europe and created the fertile ground for a revolution that was not only nationalist but also democratic and liberal.

## ***II. THE GREEK WAR OF INDEPENDENCE (1821-1832)***

The Greek War of Independence was not the first insurgency against the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans. Not even the first by Greek speaking people. The last major uprising by Greeks was the Orlov revolt (1770-1), incited by Russia's Catherine the Great to distract the Ottomans during the Russo-Turkish War of 1768-74 and it was rather easily suppressed by the Ottomans.

The French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars were the events that triggered the Greek Revolution. Rigas Feraios, an intellectual and early revolutionary, tried to secure Napoleon's support for an insurgency in the Balkans but he was betrayed and he was arrested by the Austrians who delivered him to the Ottomans who tortured and executed him. He became the first national hero of modern Greece and he inspired similar revolutionary activities, especially in the Greek diaspora, between merchants, students and some Phanariotes.

The Greek War of Independence was organized by unlikely revolutionaries: A group of small-time businessmen, with ties to freemasonry and Carbonarism, who founded *Filiki Etairia* (Society of Friends) as a secret organization, on September 1814 in Odessa. By 1821 Filiki Etairia had hundreds of members in the Greek peninsula, mostly in the Peloponnese, the islands and the Constantinople. The plan was to incite a revolution in the Balkans (from Bucharest to Crete) but the two major points for the break out was first the Danubian Principalities and then the Peloponnese. The leader of the revolution was Prince Alexandros Ypsilantis, a major general of the Russian army and aide-de-camp of Tsar Alexander I.

Still, leading Greek intellectuals, like the liberal Adamantios Korais and statesmen, like Count Ioannis Kapodistrias, foreign minister of Russia from 1816 to 1822, were negative to the idea. They, respectively, believed that Greeks were not ready or that

the international situation was extremely hostile to revolutions after the Congress of Vienna (1814-5).

The Ypsilantis Campaign in Moldavia and Wallachia started on February of 1821 and failed after four excruciating months. Ypsilantis was arrested and imprisoned by the Austrian authorities. He failed to obtain the support of other Balkan peoples, the uprising was renounced by Russia and the revolutionaries were excommunicated by the Patriarchate in Constantinople.

Nonetheless, Greeks took advantage from the fact that Ottomans were distracted by the uprising of Ali Pasha of Ioannina, a powerful warlord who challenged the Ottoman Empire. The suppression of his uprising occupied formidable Ottoman armies for almost a year before and a year after the breakout of the Greek revolution. These forces, thus, were unavailable to quash the insurgents in the Greek peninsula, offering to the revolutionaries the necessary breathing space. Ali Pasha's insurgency was instrumental for the decision by Filiki Etairia leadership to start the revolution during the Spring of 1821.

Even though the Greek revolution was dangerous for the *status quo* that the Congress of Vienna had established in 1815, it generated conflicting sentiments in Europe. Klemens von Metternich, the powerful Chancellor of the Austrian Empire was very hostile and suspicious of the Greek rebels. He thought that this was not a purely local insurgency of aggrieved Christians against the cruel and corrupted Ottomans but the sperm of a broader revolution in the Balkans, a threat to multiethnic empires, a radical uprising. He was right. The Greek War of Independence stroke a chord with liberal thinkers and activists but also with romantic poets and writers. These were the Greeks after all, fighting to liberate their "sacred" land from the "uncivilized" Muslim conquerors. The first victories of the Greeks in Peloponnese, Central Greece and the sea (several islands offered a strong makeshift fleet from converted merchant vessels), the Ottoman atrocities against Christian populations (in retaliation for the revolution but also for Greek atrocities) and the intelligent way the revolutionaries presented themselves to Europe, had two impressive results: the local insurgency became, almost instantaneously, an international event and scores of influential Europeans, poets (like Lord Byron) and intellectuals (like Jeremy Bentham) decided to support the cause financially or politically. This led to an impressive Philhellenic movement in Europe which was instrumental for the final liberation of Greeks.

The protagonists of the Greek War of Independence came under broad but not necessarily mutually exclusive, categories. Two important groups were:

(a) The former klephts and armatoloi who were brave and shrewd enough to defeat the superior military forces that Ottomans sent to the south. Theodoros Kolokotronis, an ex-klepht, was the most important military leader who also tried to capitalize

politically from his well-deserved fame and popularity. However, his view of the world was parochial and his behavior quite opportunistic. He failed to become the “Greek George Washington” because he lacked the American founder’s humility and the political sense to understand what the stakes were.

(b) The westernized intellectuals, most of them vehicles of liberal and democratic ideas, were the ones who managed to take over the Revolution. They were former Phanariotes or children of wealthy merchants who studied in Europe and came back to join the Revolution with a clear agenda: to transform the new country into a European constitutional democracy. Their leader was Alexandros Mavrokordatos. They passed, during the Revolution, three liberal and democratic constitutions, approved by national assemblies.

These two factions came to an eventual conflict which was far more multifaceted than a clash between liberals and traditionalists. After the initial military success of the Greeks, there was a ruthless struggle for domination which led to a civil war in two stages. The Ottomans found the opportunity to regroup, asking also the help of Muhammad Ali of Egypt who sent his son Ibrahim to Greece with cavalry and infantry of 20,000 well-trained, by European officers, Egyptian troops. Ibrahim, with the help of other Ottoman forces, managed to quench the revolution in the greatest part of central and southern Greece but his cruel tactics, the massacre of Missolonghi (April 1826) and geopolitical considerations, led to the intervention of three major European Powers. The warships of United Kingdom, France and Russia destroyed Ibrahim’s armada at Navarino bay in October 1827. It took another year for his forces to evacuate Peloponnese, under the pressure of a French expeditionary force. The independence of Greece was declared in February 1830 and with the London Protocol of August 1832 the Kingdom of Greece was established.

Instrumental to this result was the competition among the three Great Powers to influence the direction and the alliances of the new small state but mostly the smart policy of the British foreign minister, George Canning. He was the first to realize that Greece could be a natural and strategic ally in Eastern Mediterranean and the western oriented Greek faction managed, in 1825, to persuade the revolutionaries to officially ask for the protection of Great Britain. From the mid-1820 (esp. after 1854) to 1947 Greece remained in the orbit of the overbearing British Empire, being its staunchest ally but also benefitting from the strong political and diplomatic ties with the major power of the era.

Even though the intention of most Revolutionaries, as well as of the Great Powers, was for Greece to become a monarchy, Greeks elected, in 1827, as a President of the new independent state, Ioannis Kapodistrias. Kapodistrias arrived in Greece in early 1828 and realized that the only way to govern over the different factions was with a strong hand. He abolished the Constitution and he assumed dictatorial powers with

the initial consent of most representatives in the revolutionary assembly. This was the end of the first Greek republic (1822-1828). However, Kapodistrias was the only Greek who could do the job (statecraft) adequately. His authoritarian reformism, esp. his attempt to establish a centralized rule over local notables and warlords, led to his assassination in late September 1831. In less than four years he managed to transform Greece from something resembling a state with warlords and local notables reigning over poor farmers to a semblance of a European-oriented state. His political agenda was modernization. He organized the administration, he fought highwaymen and pirates, he organized tax authorities and the judiciary, and he tried to secure international loans. His most important legacy was land reform and the establishment of a rudimentary national education system.

### *III. GROWING PAINS: THE NEW KINGDOM (1833-1911)*

Kapodistrias' assassination is a traumatic event in Greek history. His death led to 16 months of civil unrest and anarchy. So, when the Great Powers elected the Bavarian Prince Otto from the House of Wittelsbach for the throne of the new Kingdom in 1832, almost everyone in Greece received their decision with a relief. The 17-year-old Otto arrived in Greece in early 1833 with a Regency council who governed Greece for almost three years, until Otto reached majority. Both the Regency Council and Otto were autocrats. Despite the popularity of the young King, his absolutism and the fact that he was a Roman Catholic, married to the Protestant and childless Amalia, were among the causes of resentment together with austerity measures he had to adopt, including suspension of benefits to war veterans, due to Greece's insolvency. This led to a bloodless insurgency on September 1843. The uprising was supported by the military garrison of Athens and several politicians. Otto had to yield to their demands. He promised to grant a constitution and to terminate the involvement of Bavarians in the administration. The new Constitution was proclaimed in March 1844, transforming Greece into a constitutional monarchy with a bicameral parliament. With the electoral law of March 18, 1844, Greece was the first country in the world introducing universal male suffrage – 9 out of 10 male adult citizens obtained voting rights. However, Otto's destabilizing constitutional transgressions and his direct involvement in politics led to more bitterness and criticism. In October 1862 he was forced to abdicate and leave Greece.

The Bavarian legacy is mixed. The three decades were a period of establishing hierarchy and bureaucracy in the public administration and the army, of organizing education and judiciary, of modernization and Europeanization. One of the regents, the law professor Georg Ludwig von Maurer, was instrumental in the process of the adoption of modern European institutions and legal codes by the new state but also of the unpopular "nationalization" of the Greek Orthodox Church, even though he stayed in office for only 18 months. Otto had moved the capital from Nafplion to Athens for

obvious symbolic reasons. During his reign he adopted the irredentist policy of the "Great Idea" (*Megali Idea*), i.e. the enlargement of the Greek state to include all lands under Ottoman rule inhabited by large Greek-speaking populations, including Constantinople, southern Balkans, the Aegean Sea islands, Crete, Cyprus and the western part of Asia Minor. From 1844 to 1922 irredentist nationalism became the dominant policy for Greece leading to impressive territorial expansions but also to a major catastrophe. One of Otto's major failures was to take advantage of the Crimean War (1853-1856) in order to expand against the Ottoman Empire.

Otto's abdication was the result of an uprising against his reign. His successor was a Danish Prince from the House of Glücksburg who became King George I and reigned for half a century, from 1864 to 1913. He was a solid anglophile and willing to accept a democratic constitution. With the new constitution of 1864, Greece became one of the first parliamentary democracies in the world, especially when the democratic principle was reinforced in 1875 when popular sovereignty was guaranteed by the introduction of the constitutional principle that the government should enjoy the confidence of the Parliament.

The leading reformist political leader of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was the liberal Charilaos Trikoupis. From 1875 to 1895 he dominated Greek politics. He became prime minister seven times and he governed more than a decade in total. He began his career fighting the constitutional transgressions of King George I. During his tenures the infrastructure which modernized Greece was built, but it was funded by foreign loans, leading the country to bankruptcy in 1893. A few years later, in the summer of 1896, Athens hosted the first international Olympic Games in modern history but Greece had also to face an "unfortunate" war with Turkey in 1897.

From 1864 to 1881 Greek territory was enlarged peacefully. Britain ceded the Ionian islands to Greece in 1864 as a gift and rewarded Greece with Thessaly and part of Epirus, for not siding with Russia, despite the nationalistic temptation, in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-8. However, these minor territorial gains couldn't satisfy Megali Idea, in an era where the Eastern Question preoccupied the minds of governments and people in the Balkans. The evolving Cretan question (Cretans revolted almost uninterruptedly against the Ottoman authorities during the 19<sup>th</sup> century) pressured enormously the Greek governments and kindled nationalistic feelings. Nevertheless, British protection again, ensured that Greek territory remained intact, even after the Greco-Turkish War of 1897 while Crete became autonomous in 1898 under Prince George of Greece. But Greece's military defeat led to a national humiliation and the imposition of international control of Greek finances which led to an impressive fiscal consolidation.

Belle Époque was not so superb for Greece. The bitter military defeat and the bankruptcy led to the disillusionment of Greeks and resentment against the Palace. The

Cretan issue was not considered resolved since Cretans themselves were not satisfied with autonomy, they wanted to be united with the “motherland”. At the same time a new antagonism begun in Ottoman Macedonia, mostly between Greeks and Bulgarians. From 1893 to 1908 (when the Young Turks Revolution took place) the two countries used armed propaganda, cultural and religious influence to attract and subdue the mixed-ethnically people living in Macedonia. Additional chronic problems, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, were political corruption, rigged elections, a powerful clientelist system and a dysfunctional bureaucracy.

The turmoil in Macedonia but mostly in Crete and the initial success of the Young Turks led to the first military coup in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Greece. The pronunciamiento was bloodless, organized by young and politically inexperienced military officers without a clear political agenda, in mid-August 1909. The government capitulated to their demands, but a political stalemate was the inevitable outcome of their indecisiveness. Finally, they offered the political leadership to Eleftherios Venizelos, a middle-aged brilliant Cretan politician and former revolutionary. Venizelos arrived in Greece and decided, reluctantly at first, to play the political game by levelling first the play field. He was a political genius and the greatest statesman in modern Greek history. He dominated Greek politics for 25 years with his impressive successes but also failures and his polarizing figure. From 1910 to 1915, he managed to gain the trust of King George I, he was appointed Prime Minister, he won election after election, he founded the first modern Greek political party (the Liberal Party), he amended the constitution (in 1911), he enforced many structural reforms in almost every area: from the reorganization and training of the army to education.

#### *IV. THE DECADE OF TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY (1912-1922)*

The disappointment that followed the promise of the Young Turks Revolution for equality and democratic representation of the minorities and the ripening of the Eastern Question were two of the reasons behind the Balkan Wars of 1912-3. A military alliance of Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro and Greece attacked the Ottoman Empire in October 1912. Bulgarians and Serbians, with their strong armies never believed that the relatively weak Greek army would be so successful and fast as to reach the finishing line first by capturing Thessaloniki, the bone of contention between the Balkan allies. Bulgaria was so disillusioned by the unforeseen Greek success as to attack Greece and Serbia after the first stage of the Balkan Wars. The Greek army was able to defeat the strong Bulgarian army and gain some additional territory. The greatest part (51%) of the apple of discord, Macedonia, became a part of the Greek state. This was the result of Venizelos’ political and diplomatic genius. But he shared the credit with Prince Constantine, the son and heir of King George I who was also the military commander in chief. Venizelos and Constantine’s relationship at the end of the Balkan wars was overcast by their disagreement as to the strategic objectives of the Greek

expansion. King George managed to control his insolent son and to satisfy his successful prime minister, minimizing the cost of their divergence. He moved temporarily to Thessaloniki to symbolize the accession of the new territory to Greece. A few months before his golden jubilee in 1913, he was assassinated by a drunkard with anarchist sympathies. The box of Pandora was now open, as his son, became King Constantine I.

Greece had managed to double its territory and population by acquiring southern Macedonia, southern Epirus, most Aegean islands and Crete. The integration of these new territories with sizable ethnic and religious minorities and the efficient administration was not an easy task for the small Kingdom. Nevertheless, for almost a century, Greeks waited impatiently for the Megali Idea to be realized and now, after all these years and many disappointments, everything signified that they were on a roll. They saw Venizelos as the one who made it happen politically, but Constantine was also extremely popular as a successful military leader and a symbol: he was the first King born in Greece and raised as a Greek-Orthodox, the one destined to restore Greece to greatness.

The confrontation between the two seems inevitable with hindsight. They both were strong-minded, but their views differed. Venizelos was a liberal, a staunch anglophile and he represented the interests of the most dynamic part of the new bourgeoisie. Constantine was a believer in the divine rights of monarchy, with populist impulses and rather unrelenting in his prejudices. But worst of all, Constantine was strongly pro-German. When the first World War I broke out their conflict evolved into a National Schism, a traumatic experience with devastating consequences. From 1915 to 1936 Greece was bitterly divided between anti-Venizelists and Venizelists and eventually (after 1924) to royalists and republicans.

It was a conflict of foreign policy. But it was also a constitutional crisis. Venizelos insisted that Greece should enter the Great War on the side of Entente but Constantine was adamantly against, he favored neutrality but he also schemed in the back rooms for the benefit of the Central Powers. Venizelos resigned but even though he triumphed at the national elections, Constantine didn't relent. He saw foreign policy as his royal prerogative. Venizelos resigned for the second time. Entente pressured ruthlessly the royal governments that followed to submit to its demands and, when German-escorted Bulgarian troops seized part of the Greek Macedonia, Venizelos decided to set up a provisional government in Thessaloniki with the support of the French army. Greece was torn. There was even an armed confrontation in the streets of Athens between the army of the royalist government and French forces in November 1916, which led to an even deeper wedge between royalists and Venizelists. A naval blockade by the Allies made Constantine leave Athens (he didn't abdicate) together with his firstborn son and heir, George, in June 1917. Venizelos returned to Athens and assumed power. Alexander, the second-born son of Constantine, became a kind of

“interim” King. He was ideal for the job. A malleable individual, he was easily handled by Venizelos. Greece entered the war on the side of the Allies at the last stage of it helping them in their offensive in May 1918 that led to the capitulation of Bulgaria.

The fact that Bulgaria but also the Ottoman Empire sided with the Central Powers who lost the war, gave Greece an enormous diplomatic advantage. Venizelos reinforced this advantage by sending Greek troops, in 1919, to fight the Red Army together with the White Forces at the multi-national military expedition in Ukraine. Venizelos proved himself the most credible ally in the Balkans and he was splendidly rewarded in the Treaty of Sèvres of 1920. Western and Eastern Thrace were delivered to Greece. The Greek army reached the outskirts of Constantinople and landed in western Asia Minor, Smyrna (today Izmir) and a large surrounding area with the objective to annex it to Greece, with the approval of the Allies, after a referendum.

Venizelos could not enjoy his well-deserved triumph. King Alexander died unexpectedly and himself was nearly killed in an assassination attempt by two royalist officers. The elections his government held in November of 1920 to capitalize politically on his successes, led to a defeat. A disheartened Venizelos left Greece for France. The exultant royalists organized a plebiscite to bring back Constantine, despite stern warnings by the Allies.

An ailing and less confident Constantine and his incompetent governments ruled Greece for the next two years taking revenge against the Venizelists and trying to cajole the British. Their foolish blunder was a futile attempt to destroy the Turkish forces led by Mustafa Kemal (later Atatürk) by reaching and capturing Ankara. This was a strategic mistake comparable to the French and German invasion of Russia in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. After two years of pyrrhic victories, the Greek army was defeated and retreated, leaving Smyrna to the advancing Turkish army. Smyrna was literally destroyed, and its Greek inhabitants were killed, captured, fled or deported. The, more than 2,500 years, Greek presence in Asia Minor ended with the greatest catastrophe in Modern Greek history. It was also the end of Megali Idea. Greece had to abandon eastern Thrace, Smyrna and two small Aegean islands. Greeks left their ancestral homelands in Pontus and Cappadocia.

## ***V. BITTER DIVIDE: THE INTERWAR PERIOD (1922-1940)***

After the catastrophe, a military coup, organized by mostly Venizelist officers, made Constantine abdicate in favor of his firstborn son who became King George II, but only temporarily. The process of transforming Greece into a republic had started. The radical Venizelist officers organized a mock martial court trial of the leadership of the royalists. Six of them were sentenced to death and they were speedily executed. Their execution led to political scars that for several decades plagued Greece. The royalists

abstained in the 1923 national elections and the result was the political dominance of republican liberals for the next decade. On March 25, 1924, the second Greek Republic was proclaimed and a new constitution was adopted in 1927, but most royalists didn't accept the new regime and the National Schism deepened. To make matters worse, one radical republican, General Theodoros Pangalos, assumed dictatorial powers for a year. One of the challenges was to accommodate 1,3 million refugees from Asia Minor who integrated themselves completely only after decades.

Venizelos returned to power after a landslide electoral victory in 1928. His tenure from 1928 to 1932 was one of the most fruitful in almost all areas. From structural and institutional reforms to international relations. Even though the refugees were a great part of his electorate, he dared to visit Ankara and sign a friendship agreement with Atatürk, ending a century of conflict. However, the Great Depression led Greece to economic destabilization and to the loss of majority support to Venizelists. The anti-Venizelists ("People's Party") came back to power with a vengeance in the 1933 elections, ending the dominance of the Liberal Party and eventually capturing the bureaucracy and the military. Venizelos (dismayed after a second attempt against his life) and the republican officers tried to prevent the restoration of the King with an ill-executed coup in 1935 which led Venizelos to an exile in Paris where he died the following year. George II came back with a rigged plebiscite. This was the end of the second Greek Republic (1924-1935). The Liberals accepted the regime change, but it was not enough. The rise of the Greek Communist Party and a wave of labor strikes was used as pretext by George II to accept a dictatorship under Ioannis Metaxas, an experienced and competent but ruthless retired officer and royalist politician. The Greek people, tired by almost three decades of wars and political turmoil didn't resist to the new regime which was developed into a conservative authoritarian government fashioned after Fascist Italy.

## ***VI. THE DECADE OF WARS (1940-1949)***

Despite the rise of Nazi Germany, George II and Metaxas had learned their lesson from World War I. They had decided to keep Greece neutral, if possible, but if there was no choice, to remain faithful to Britain. When Mussolini, in October 1940, invaded Greece, the King and Metaxas decided to fight back, the Greek people totally agreeing with their decision and fighting bravely. The Greek army not only fended Italian forces off, it managed to humiliate Mussolini by advancing in the under Italian control Albania capturing one city after another. This was the first military success against the Axis, so Hitler had to intervene while he prepared Operation Barbarossa against the Soviet Union. Germans invaded Greece in April 1941. The exhausted Greek army and a small British expeditionary force was not able to protect the country. Nevertheless, it took Germans almost two months to occupy the whole of Greece due to the fierce resistance by Greek and British forces in Crete.

King George (Metaxas died unexpectedly in early 1941) fled to Egypt where he appointed a new prime minister, the former Venizelist, Ioannis Tsouderos. In Athens, a puppet regime was established by collaborationists. Greece was separated in three different zones, occupied respectively by German, Italian and Bulgarian forces. Several resistance groups were established from the very beginning in mountainous areas with the help of the British. The most well organized was EAM, that was controlled by the Communist Party with the same agenda as similar partisan organizations in occupied Eastern Europe, i.e. to distract German forces in their invasion of Soviet Union and to seize power after the end of the war.

EAM and its military branch, ELAS, managed to annihilate almost every rival resistance group and dominate the field. When the defeat of Germany was more than obvious the puppet regime tried to organize paramilitary groups to prevent the capture of power by the communists after the German retreat. EAM formed a provisional government in order to impose its participation to the government in exile. A compromise was achieved with the backing of the British and a coalition government was formed under a seasoned liberal politician and a former associate of Venizelos, George Papandreou. Papandreou returned to Athens after the departure of German forces in October 1944 but EAM/ELAS, controlled the rest of the country. The communists could have grabbed power rather easily. However, Winston Churchill had already secured Greece for the West in his negotiation with Stalin and the latter didn't encourage Greek communists who were baffled. The behavior of EAM ministers in the coalition government was not cooperative and the non-communist members didn't trust them. EAM didn't want to disarm its army and relinquish the control of the periphery.

After the bitter resignation of its ministers, EAM organized a strong demonstration in early December 1944. The demonstration had a wretched ending after police killed several demonstrators. This led to a bloody confrontation in the streets of Athens: The numerically superior EAM/ELAS tried to seize control of the capital against the British forces stationed in Athens which were supported by a coalition faithful to the government: veterans from the Greco-Italian war and the North Africa Campaign, right-wing guerilla groups, policemen, even some former collaborationists. The communist forces were far superior, but they couldn't defeat this unlikely pro-government coalition. Winston Churchill ordered troops from the Italian front to join the small contingent in Athens and quell the rebellion. Under considerable domestic pressure, the British prime minister deemed the situation critical enough for him to spend Christmas day in Athens, in an inconclusive mediation effort. Overpowered, the communists capitulated and accepted the disarmament of ELAS.

However, atrocities from both sides (Red/White terror), the decision of the Communist Party to abstain from the first post-war national elections in March 1946 (leading to a triumph for the royalist Right) and the return of King George II after a

referendum, polarized even more the Greeks and led to the final stage of the Civil War (1946-1949). This time the Communist Party had decided to fight to the end. The prospects were good: the communists controlled many parts of Greece, the kindred governments of Albania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria already provided material support and safe haven for the communist army, Soviet aid was anticipated while the exhausted British Empire relinquished its traditional role in Greece. But, it was replaced immediately by the United States who decided to assert its role as the post-war superpower, providing abundant economic and military support to the Greek government, under a veteran leader of the minority Liberals, Themistoklis Sofoulis. The failure of the communists to capture and hold any significant town was exacerbated by the Tito-Stalin split which eventually led to Yugoslavia closing its borders. After two inconclusive years of fighting, in summer 1949, the government forces launched their final assault against the communist stronghold on the mountains of northwestern Greece. By the end of August, the remnants of the defeated communist forces fled to Albania.

## ***VII. FROM ILLIBERAL DEMOCRACY TO DICTATORSHIP (1949-1974)***

Greece remained part of the western democratic world (joining NATO in 1952), but the price was an illiberal (tutelary) democracy which treated the defeated communists (and fellow travelers in general) harshly, deepening the rift instead of investing in reconciliation. The United States had an enormous influence on Greek politics and the King (Paul, the third son of Constantine I succeeded George II in 1947 and Paul's son Constantine II succeeded his father in 1964) antagonized elected governments, especially during the mid-sixties. Nevertheless, Greece remained a democracy. The Communist Party was banned but it was represented by a leftist party, a political front, which, nine years after the end of the Civil War, managed to become, for a brief period, the second strongest party in parliament. The leading politician of the period was Konstantinos Karamanlis, a conservative reformist who in eight years (1955-1963) transformed Greece. He successfully pursued Greece's association with the European Communities and he was responsible for the most spectacular economic growth due to rapid industrialization and investment in infrastructure and tourism. Karamanlis also managed to reach a compromise solution for the Cyprus problem which since the early 1950s had plagued Greece's foreign relations and domestic politics. Greek Cypriots were the majority (78%) in the, under British administration, island. Nonetheless there was a sizable Turkish Cypriot minority (18%) who felt threatened by the prospect of *Enosis* (the union of the island with Greece). Rather than insisting on *Enosis*, Greece agreed with Turkey and Great Britain for Cyprus to become an independent Republic in 1960. After a quarrel with King Paul, Karamanlis resigned and then lost the elections of 1963 to a centrist party led by George Papandreou. Papandreou himself had to resign in the summer of 1965 when the young King Constantine denied him his constitutional prerogative to discharge the defense minister of his government.

A period of political turmoil led to a military coup, organized by colonels against the political system in general in April 1967. Constantine II fled the country eight months later, after a failed counter-coup, and all political activity ceased for seven years. The self-confident leader of the military junta, George Papadopoulos, proclaimed Greece a “republic” in 1973, appointed a docile civilian government and announced (controlled) elections for the following year. His plans went awry after student riots in November 1973 gave to the regime hardliners an excuse to sack Papadopoulos and forestall the supposed liberalization process. Their foolish mistake was the attempt to assassinate the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Makarios, in order to annex Cyprus to Greece in mid-July of 1974. Turkey invaded Cyprus (the north of the island is still occupied by Turkish forces) and the chain of events led to the fall of the humiliated military junta. Konstantinos Karamanlis returned on July 24, 1974 to Greece after a self-imposed exile of 11 years.

### **VIII. THE THIRD GREEK REPUBLIC: FROM METAPOLITEFSI TO THE ECONOMIC CRISIS (1974-)**

Karamanlis, as the prime minister in a coalition government, managed to restore democracy (*metapolitefsi*) in a paradigmatic way, he legalized the Communist Party, and he passed several necessary structural reforms. Greece became a Republic with the constitution of 1975 (currently in force) after the 1974 referendum which ended Greek monarchy. It was the beginning of the current period of the Third Greek Republic which is the less tumultuous in modern Greek history. Karamanlis governed from 1974 to 1980 when he was elected President of the Republic. In January 1981, Greece became a full member of the European Communities.

The 1980's were dominated by the socialist party PASOK under its charismatic leader Andreas Papandreou (son of George) whose welfare populism triumphed. He governed Greece from 1981 to 1996 with a short interval (1989-1993) when the conservative party of Karamanlis (New Democracy) returned to power with a liberal reformist leader, Constantine Mitsotakis. PASOK's dominance continued after the death of Papandreou with the reformist social democrat, Kostas Simitis, as prime minister. Simitis' eight-years tenure was marked by high growth rates and Greece's accession to the Eurozone but with no major structural reforms. He was succeeded by Kostas Karamanlis (the nephew of the former Prime Minister and President) whose free-spending policies precipitated the Greek debt crisis of 2009-10.

Karamanlis lost the 2009 elections to PASOK's George Papandreou (son of Andreas) who had to deal with the sovereign debt crisis. In May 2010 Greece entered a bailout agreement with the Eurozone countries and the IMF. Two more bailouts followed since reaching loans to Greece to a total of over €250 billion. The adopted austerity

measures agreed between Greece and its creditors (three economic adjustment programs) led to a remarkable fiscal consolidation but they stagnated the economy. This was so, because mostly fiscal measures were adopted and only some half-baked institutional reforms were enforced. The first bailout agreements were enforced by PASOK and then two coalition governments formed by New Democracy and PASOK. At the end of 2014 Greece was in a process of fragile recuperation which was upset by the victory of the radical leftist and populist SYRIZA. SYRIZA tried to renegotiate the bailout agreement by following a self-defeating brinkmanship strategy which led to its bitter capitulation in July 2015. The third bailout agreement included austerity measures, harsher than the preceding ones. Since then SYRIZA and its leader Alexis Tsipras managed to secure their power by cooperating with the creditors in a government coalition with a minor ultra-right-wing party. Despite its obvious failure to deliver on its electoral promises to get rid of austerity, this coalition outlived all preceding bailout governments.

## ***IX. GREECE IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY***

Modern Greece has a history of almost two centuries. During these centuries, the country managed to move from the backwaters of Europe to a prosperous liberal democracy. From 1929 to 1980, Greece had an average annual rate of growth of income per capita of 5,2% (during the same period, Japan had an average of 4,9% and Germany 3,0%). However, this development was based on extractive institutions. The membership in the European Union and the Eurozone helped Greece put its extractive institutions under the rug of EU convergence funds, cheap international borrowing and fudged statistics. The crisis of 2008 was the triggering effect of the perfect storm that hit Greece in early 2010. Greece must replace its extractive institutions with inclusive institutions suitable for economic growth. This should be the new “Megali Idea” for the Greek people.

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