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# Enlargement and the historical origins of the EC's democratic identity, 1961–1978

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## Abstract:

This article examines how and when democracy entered the discursive politics of the Community to finally become one of the fundamental tenets of European political identity - and in the process influenced how decision-makers approached the question of enlargement. Building on multiple archival sources, the article traces how all three Community institutions (Commission, Council and the European Parliament) legitimized the expansion and continuation of the process of European integration through the discursive construction of democracy. It will focus on the debates elicited by the attempts of Southern European countries to accede to the EEC in the 1960s and 1970s: the rebuttal of Spain's initial overtures in 1962, the challenge of Greece – the Community's first Associate member – being taken over by a military dictatorship in 1967, the democratizing of Greece, Spain and Portugal after the fall of their respective dictatorships in the 1970s and finally the formalisation of such democratic ideas in the Declaration on Democracy of 1978

## Introduction

Questions of democracy, legitimacy and shared values in Europe have existed long before the genesis of the European Community (EC). All of these questions essentially amount to a single, overarching quest to define what 'Europe' is.<sup>1</sup> Assumptions about shared cultural and religious values have always underpinned the idea of European integration – certainly in the eyes of the founding fathers of the EC.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, over the course of its history, and in fits and starts, the European Community has aspired to develop what is first and foremost a community of political principles values. This is particularly true every time a new aspiring member state lodges its application to join the

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of how today's European Union has progressively appropriated the discursive space of 'Europe' see Richard Hermann, Thomas Risse-Kappen and Marilyn Brewer, *Transnational Identities—becoming European in the EU* (New York: Rowan and Littlefield, 2004). Although this is not the focus of this article, it is possible to trace how EEC actors slowly started to build the equation of 'Europe' with their own institutions over the course of the first two decades of its existence. See also Emma De Angelis, 'The European Parliament's Identity Discourse and Eastern Europe, 1974-2004', *Journal of European Integration History*, 17,1 (2011), 103-117.

<sup>2</sup> Emma De Angelis, 'The political discourse of the European Parliament, enlargement, and the construction of a European identity, 1962 – 2004', PhD thesis, The London School of Economics and Political Science, 2011.

EC and enter 'Europe'.<sup>3</sup> Ever since Britain's ill-fated application in 1961, the question of enlargement has been intrinsically linked to the question of European identity: deciding which countries had the right to become members of the EC/EU, and on what basis, played a crucial role in the emergence and evolution of the existing organization's identity. The definition of what European identity amounts to is at the very least extremely controversial and cannot be addressed here: what this article focuses on instead is the way in which EC actors - the Council of Ministers (Council), the European Commission (Commission) and the European Parliament (EP) - progressively defined a general concept of 'being European' for the specific purposes of joining the Community.<sup>4</sup>

This article seeks to unravel a specific – and crucial – aspect of this identity: the democratic elements underpinning its political values, as defined by the key political and institutional actors involved in the enlargement of the Community to Southern European countries in the 1960-70s. It does so by focusing in particular on how and when democracy entered the discursive politics of the European Community to finally become one of the fundamental tenets of the European self-image - and in the process influenced how decision-makers approached the question of enlargement. The analysis of newly released documents of major member states and EC institutions and of the untapped source of the debates of the European Parliament shows how, in response to states seeking EC membership, the Commission European, Council and Parliament slowly – and at times grudgingly – used reference to 'democracy' to legitimize the expansion and continuation of the process of European integration. From a general discussion in the EP in the 1960s, the idea slowly percolated through to the policy-makers, influencing their response to the requests presented by newly democratic Southern European states

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<sup>3</sup> The concept of identity is subject to ongoing scrutiny and debate across a variety of disciplines – with 'European identity' alternatively being approached as an identity created by political leaders, one identified by scholars across centuries of historical and cultural developments, or the identification with 'Europe' and/or the EU among specific communities. The literature is vast but some examples include: Michael Bruter, *Citizens of Europe? The emergence of a mass European identity* (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Bo Strath, *Europe and the Other and Europe as Other* (Brussels: PIE Lang, 2001); Jeffrey T Checkel and Peter J Katzenstein, *European Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Richard Herrmann, Thomas Risse and Marilyn Brewer, eds., *Transnational Identities: Becoming European in the EU* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004); Gerard Delanty, *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995); Klaus Eder, 'A theory of collective identity. Making sense of the debate on a "European identity"', *European Journal of Social Theory* 12,4 (2009), 427-447.

<sup>4</sup> For ease of reference, the article will refer to the European Economic Community as European Community (EC), the Council of General Affairs as the Council, and the European Parliamentary Assembly as the European Parliament (EP) (as the institution chose to call itself in 1962).

in the 1970s. The concept of democracy used in this context was closely associated with the idea of ‘respect for human rights’ and the rule of law: to a large extent, democracy was understood to signify a system based on the respect and protection of the human rights that the Community wished to uphold. The two concepts were often conflated into an all-encompassing idea of democratic principles in the institutional and political discourse of the 1960s and 1970s. Rather than tracing both as separate ideas, the article will look at the overarching articulation of the EC’s political identity. It will focus on the debates elicited by the attempts of Southern European countries to accede to the EEC in the 1960s and 1970s: the rebuttal of Spain’s initial overtures in 1962, the challenge of Greece – the Community’s first Associate member – being taken over by a military dictatorship in 1967, and the difficulties of dealing with the democratizing of Greece, Spain and Portugal after the fall of their respective dictatorships in the 1970s.<sup>5</sup> Finally, it will analyse how these ideas were formalised in the Declaration on Democracy issued in 1978.<sup>6</sup>

Political scientists have claimed that the debates articulated around the question of enlargement gradually shaped a political identity based on the idea of democracy, which had not originally been part of the EC’s self-image. For instance, Daniel Thomas’s analysis of the reaction to Spain’s bid for association in 1962 suggests that the identification of Europe as a promoter of fundamental democratic principles did not start with the ‘drafting of a treaty or the crafting of a court opinion’ but was gradually and commonly articulated through the enlargement process.<sup>7</sup> Frank Schimmelfennig uses the idea of ‘rhetorical entrapment’ to describe the way in which the norms, values and collective identity constructed through discourse can be used strategically by political actors to advance their interest.<sup>8</sup> Uli Sedelmeier reprised this analysis in his work on the European Union’s Eastern Enlargement.<sup>9</sup> Thomas Diez goes even further, arguing in his

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<sup>5</sup> In the 1970s, European actors often grouped Spain and Portugal together whenever the issue of ‘democracy’ and political practices was under scrutiny. In spite of the obvious differences, the treatment of the political identity question was remarkably similar across the three countries – being the first country to go through the process, Greece was also the one that first gave rise to questions about the political dimensions of enlargement. Much of what follows will therefore focus on Greece as a key case study.

<sup>6</sup> Conclusions of the Sessions of the European Council (1975-1990), Copenhagen 7-8 April 1978, Archive of European Integration, University of Pittsburg.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas, D.C., ‘Constitutionalization through Enlargement: the contested origins of the EU’S democratic identity’, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13,8 (2006), 1190-1210.

<sup>8</sup> Frank Schimmelfennig, ‘The Community Trap: Liberal Norms, Rhetorical Action, and the Eastern Enlargement of the European Union’, *International Organization* 55,1 (2001), 47-80.

<sup>9</sup> Ulrich Sedelmeier, *Constructing the path to Eastern enlargement: the uneven policy impact of EU identity*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); Verney has dealt with EEC’s Southern European

analysis of language in the construction of the European Union that the terms used to describe the EU by politicians and academics alike are not merely descriptive, but influenced the way in which the EU developed in the first place.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the general consensus in political science is that discourse (for instance that of the media, EC political and institutional actors, and leaders and politicians of the aspiring member states) is important for understanding ideas and self-images of Europe that exist within the European political arena.<sup>11</sup> However, so far no thorough historical examination of this claim based on the scrutiny of primary sources has been put forward. It is only through a historical approach that looks at change over a protracted period of time that it is possible to understand how this discourse emerged, was articulated and adapted over time as the EC's political and institutional actors sought to shape their policy towards applicant states.

#### The EP introduces the idea: the Birkelbach Report

Far from always being a dominant feature of European political discourse, democracy was in fact no mentioned anywhere in the Treaties of Rome. Although the preamble makes general references to 'liberty' and article 237 states that any European nation 'may apply to become a member of the Community', this does not in any way make democracy a prerequisite for membership or even mention it as one of the fundamental values underpinning the movement towards 'closer union'.<sup>12</sup> In fact, Daniel Thomas has claimed that the omission of democracy and human rights from the Treaties was a deliberate shift away from the 'constitutionalisation of democracy and human rights' previously found, for instance, in the 1948 Brussels Treaty or the 1949 Statute of the

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enlargement through the EP lens in Susannah Verney, 'Creating the democratic tradition of European Integration: the South European catalyst', in Helen, Sjursen, ed., *Enlargement and the Finality of the EU*, ARENA Report No7/2002, 97-128.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Diez, 'Speaking Europe: the politics of integration discourse', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 6, 4 (1999), 598-613.

<sup>11</sup> See also Helene Sjursen, 'Why Expand? The Question of Legitimacy and Justification in the EU's Enlargement Policy', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40, 3 (2002), 491-513 and Helene Sjursen, ed., *Enlargement in Perspective* (Oslo: Arena, 2005); Paul Maignette and Kalypso Nicolaidis, 'The European Union's Democratic Agenda' in Mario, Telò, ed., *The EU and Global Governance*, (London/New York: Routledge, 2009), 43-63.

<sup>12</sup> Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, 25 March 1957. Gerard Quinn explains how 'this fixation on economic means (and the legal tools needed to effectuate them) rather than on grand political ends allowed those who held diametrically opposed visions of the ultimate ends of European integration to sign up together to the technocratic process of economic integration'; in Gerard Quinn, 'The European Union and the Council of Europe on the Issue of Human rights: Twins separated at birth', *McGill Law Journal* 46(2001), 860.

Council of Europe.<sup>13</sup> Rather than being an original tenet of the European construction, democracy was slowly introduced and built into the core political value of European identity over more than two decades.

The initial impetus for what would become the Community's political identity discourse came in 1962, with the European Parliament's response to Spain's increasing overtures towards the Community and open interest in associating itself with the EC with a view to becoming a member. In fact, when the UK first applied the previous year, nobody would have thought to question its democratic credentials, any other objections notwithstanding. Spain, on the other hand, was still in the grips of the Francoist regime and was not even a member of the Council of Europe. The possibility of an application led German MEP Willy Birkelbach, a member of the socialist group, to draft a Report on the political and institutional aspects of accession (*adhésion*) or association with the Community.<sup>14</sup> Based on the work undertaken by the Political Affairs Committee between November and December 1961, the now well-known Birkelbach Report formed the basis of the first general debate on the principles of enlargement held by the European Parliament.

The report put forward an interpretation of the Treaty of Rome according to which states wishing to join would have to fulfill certain conditions, and affirmed the EP's intention to engage in the definition of the political and institutional aspects of accession in general terms: the stated aim was not to pass judgment on the specificities on any particular membership application, but to establish the general principles under which an accession should take place. In addressing the political conditions for eligibility, the report asserted that the political regime of an applicant state should ensure that the new state would not be a 'corps étranger' among the existing states, which the document

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<sup>13</sup> Thomas, D.C., 'Constitutionalization through Enlargement: the contested origins of the EU's democratic identity', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13,8 (2006), 1190-1210. The absence of human rights and democracy in the Treaties of Rome is discussed in Martin Conway and Volker Depkat, 'Towards a European History of the Discourse of Democracy - Discussing Democracy in Western Europe 1945-60' and Tom Buchanan, 'Human Rights, The Memory of War and the Makings of the 'European' Identity, 1945-75', both in Martin, Conway and Kiran Klaus Patel, eds., *Europeanisation in the Twentieth Century: Historical Approaches* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Kai Habel and Tobias Lenz, 'The identity/policy nexus in European Foreign Policy', *Journal of European Public Policy*, (2015) DOI: 10.1080/13501763.2015.1047398 (last visited 19 October 2015).

<sup>14</sup> Willi Birkelbach, Report on behalf of the Political Affairs Committee on the political and institutional aspects of accession or association to the Community, 15 Jan 1962, European Parliamentary Assembly (hereafter EPA), Documents de Séance, Doc. 122; Rapporteur Willi Birkelbach was a member of the German SPD and hence of the Socialist Group within the EP. Throughout the article, any time reference to a member of the EP speaking to the assembly is made for the first time, the speaker's national and political affiliation will be indicated, as well as the title of the debate and the date.

explained as the ‘guarantee of the existence of a form of democratic state’ as a condition for accession.<sup>15</sup>

It defined this democratic state as a state in which governments enjoy democratic legitimation and the people take part in decision-making either directly or through directly elected representatives.<sup>16</sup> It also stated that applicant states should be required to recognise the principles indicated by the Council of Europe as a condition for membership, especially the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms (art. 3 of the Statute of the Council of Europe).<sup>17</sup> In presenting the report to the EP, Birkelbach affirmed the desire to establish guidelines (‘lignes directrices’) for accession and association. He highlighted the fact that democracy, in the form of the respect of fundamental rights and freedoms, was to be considered an essential requirement for Community membership.<sup>18</sup> The same ideas were expressed by his colleagues in the ensuing parliamentary debate.<sup>19</sup> In January 1962, the EP was a largely symbolic institution and would have had no formal role in any enlargement process. Its members, however, were seeking ways to carve out a role for their institution within the framework of the European Community. The prospect of a membership request from a country that was under dictatorial rule and did not share any of the democratic make-up of the EC’s existing member states proved the ideal opportunity for the EP to both define the EC as a political actor and to highlight the concept of democracy as its fundamental value. The debate surrounding the Birkelbach report, albeit hypothetical at this stage, was thus significant for introducing three concepts: that the EC had a political identity; that this identity was based on the democratic principle, as respected by its existing member states; and that any state wishing to join should adhere to the same principle in order to be eligible. Over the following two decades, these ideas would be honed by the

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<sup>15</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>16</sup> EPA, 15 January 1962, Birkelbach Report, 4.

<sup>17</sup> EPA, 15 January 1962, Birkelbach Report, 5; for more on the Council of Europe’s human rights policy, see Pamela A. Jordan, ‘Does membership have its privileges? Entrance into the Council of Europe and compliance with human rights norms’, *Human Rights Quarterly*, 25, 3 (2003), 660-688; Jonathan L. Black-Branch, ‘Observing and enforcing human rights under the Council of Europe: the creation of a permanent European Court of Human Rights’, *The Buffalo Journal of International Law*, 3, 1 (1996), 1-33.

<sup>18</sup> Willi Birkelbach, Socialist, Germany, EPA, Débats, Aspects politiques et institutionnels de l’adhésion ou de l’association à la Communauté, 23 January 1962.

<sup>19</sup> See for instance Jean Pierre Duvieusart, Christian Democrat, Belgium, EPA, Débats, Aspects politiques et institutionnels de l’adhésion ou de l’association à la Communauté, 23 January 1962 and Fernand Dehousse, Socialist, Belgium, EPA, Débats, Aspects politiques et institutionnels de l’adhésion ou de l’association à la Communauté, 23 January 1962.

European Parliament and, increasingly, the Commission and the Council, as they defined the terms of the expansion of the EC to new member states.

A scant month after the EP's approval of the Birkelbach report, in February 1962, the Spanish government made a formal request for talks,<sup>20</sup> with the clear intention of negotiating association and eventual integration into the Community.<sup>21</sup> Birkelbach's reaction was immediate. On behalf of the socialist group in the EP, he posed the first oral question to the Council ever asked by a representative of the parliament: he asked whether the Council and the Commission would find it appropriate to consider such an application, coming from a country whose 'political philosophy' was in complete opposition to the 'conceptions and structures' of the EC. He then quoted the reference to 'freedom' in the Preamble of the Rome Treaties and linked it directly with human rights and fundamental democratic liberties, giving an interpretation based on the values shared by the Six and that it would be hard for them to reject. He was explicitly espousing the interpretation of these words that had already been given by trade unions across the Six, who emphasised the 'caractère non-démocratique' of the Spanish government as 'en contradiction avec les principes fondamentaux de la Communauté'.<sup>22</sup>

The EP directly questioned the position of the Commission and the Council on the place of democracy within the EC – and both were left wrong-footed by this move. The Council's written reply simply stated that it was, for the time being, unable to provide an answer. Commissioner Jean Rey, responsible for external relations and thus a key actor in the multiple applications, provided a rather vague reply during the debate of 29 March: while stating that the preoccupations of Parliament were important and that the Commission had debated the Birkelbach report with interest, and that the Commission aimed to devise some 'general principles' on association and enlargement that would enjoy Parliament's consent, he would not go any further in his assessment of Spain's political eligibility.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, EC member states were also grappling

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<sup>20</sup> Charles Powell, 'The long road to Europe. Spain and the European Community, 1957-86', in Julio Baquero Cruz, and Carlos Closa, eds., *European integration from Rome to Berlin*, (Brussels: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2009), 39-64.

<sup>21</sup> Daniel Thomas, 'Constitutionalisation Through Enlargement: the contested origins of the EU's democratic identity', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13, 8 (2006), 1190-1210.

<sup>22</sup> Willi Birkelbach, Socialist, Germany, EPA, Débats, Question orale sur l'ouverture de négociations avec l'Espagne, 29 March 1962; Victor Fernández Soriano, 'La CEE face à l'Espagne franquiste', *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, 108 (2010), 85- 98.

<sup>23</sup> Jean Rey, Commission, EPA, Débats, Question orale sur l'ouverture de négociations avec l'Espagne, 29 March 1962. Belgian Liberal Jean Rey was responsible for external relations in the Hallstein Commission, and President of the European Commission between July 1967 and July 1970.



with the request: while Germany and France seemed more open to the possibility, the reaction of the Benelux countries was a more ‘frosty’ one.<sup>24</sup> Spain’s request did, indeed, raise some fundamental political questions about the identity of the Community and its values.<sup>25</sup> Such concerns were not limited to Community actors and the governments of the member states, but were also considered pressing by trade unions and transnational political movements.<sup>26</sup> In fact, the EP served as the main conduit into the European Community’s institutional system of concerns that existed quite widely within European society, but may likely have been ignored by both the Council and the European Commission, in which the political left amongst which such sentiments were most acute, was much less well represented than in the parliament. Eventually, this first Spanish attempt came to naught, but the ripples caused by this initial debate on political values continued to reverberate.

#### Greece’s 1967 coup and the reaffirmation of the EC’s democratic principle

The debate on the role of democracy within the political identity of the Community came back to the fore in 1967 when the Colonels’ coup in Greece gave rise to a new problem: how was the Community to react to such a crisis in the first European state to have signed an Association agreement with the EEC?<sup>27</sup> The 1961 Athens Association agreement was uniquely privileged in comparison with later agreements in that it had been specifically designed to lead to full membership.<sup>28</sup> According to Hans-August Lücker: ‘Greece’s application for association in 1962 was greeted with enthusiasm in Europe, especially by Walter Hallstein. The first President of the Commission reveled in the idea that the country that was the cradle of European democracy, the Greek spirit that had made Europe great, wanted to come and be a

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<sup>24</sup> Birgit Aschmann, ‘The reliable Ally: Germany Supports Spain’s European Integration Efforts, 1957-67’, *Journal of European Integration History*, 7,1 (2001), 40.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Thomas, op. cit. See also Pilar Ortuño Anaya, *European Socialists and Spain. The Transition to Democracy 1959-1977* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); Tom Buchanan, ‘Human Rights Campaigns in Modern Britain’, in Nick Crowson, Matthew Hilton and James McKay, eds., *NGO’s in Contemporary Britain. Non-State Actors in Society and Politics since 1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 117.

<sup>27</sup> There is a plethora of studies investigating the American and British role during the Greek dictatorship; please see: James Edward Miller, *The United States and the Making of Modern Greece. History and Power, 1950-1974* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 157-6; Robert Keely, *The Colonel’s Coup and the American Embassy. A Diplomat’s View of the Breakdown of Democracy in Cold War Greece* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 83-84; Effie Pedaliu, ‘“A Discordant Note”: NATO and the Greek Junta, 1967-1974’, *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 22,1 (2011), 101-120.

<sup>28</sup> George Yannopoulos, *Greece and the EEC: The First Decade of a Troubled Association* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1975).

member'.<sup>29</sup>

A military coup in Greece, the first associate member and the perceived cradle of democracy, rekindled the debate on the Community's stance on issues of democracy. On 8 May 1967, Edoardo Martino, chairman of the EP's Political Affairs Committee, addressed an oral question to the Council expressing the committee's anxiety about the suspension of civil and political rights in Greece and its incompatibility with the principles at the basis of the Community, which also formed the basis of the Association agreement. He also affirmed that Parliament considered itself the 'democratic guarantor' of freedom in Europe, and that it would do everything in its power to facilitate the return of democratic legality in Greece.<sup>30</sup> In the ensuing debate, Dutch Christian Democrat Wilhelmus Schuijt explicitly asked for the freezing of the association agreement with Greece until parliamentary democracy was restored.<sup>31</sup> He justified this request by referring to the political nature of the Association agreement with Greece, claiming that the joint parliamentary commission between the European Parliament and the Greek Parliament represented the embodiment of this political relationship. Based on this understanding of the Association agreement as a political one, Schuijt argued that the suspension of the powers of the Greek parliament by the military regime and the consequent suspension of the joint commission denied the nature of the agreement: depriving the Greek parliament of its crucial role as the representative of the people also deprived the Association agreement of its 'most important political element'.<sup>32</sup> Fellow speakers from the Socialist and Liberal groups echoed these sentiments.<sup>33</sup> While in 1962 Spain's potential accession was only a

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<sup>29</sup> Interview with Hans-August Lücker: the Association Agreement between Greece and the EEC (Bonn, May 2006) (last visited on 19 October 2015) [http://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/interview\\_with\\_hans\\_august\\_lucker\\_the\\_association\\_agreement\\_between\\_greece\\_and\\_the\\_eec\\_bonn\\_15\\_may\\_2006-en-c0a40276-36e3-4263-ad73-888578b88254.html](http://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/interview_with_hans_august_lucker_the_association_agreement_between_greece_and_the_eec_bonn_15_may_2006-en-c0a40276-36e3-4263-ad73-888578b88254.html)

<sup>30</sup> Edoardo Martino, Christian Democrat, Italy, EPA, Débats, Question orale n. 4/67 avec débat relative a l'association CEE-Grèce, 8 May 1967. Martino, a former partisan and a member of the European Parliament since 1958, was Chair of the Political Committee between 1964 and 1967, and would then be Commission for external affairs in the Rey Commission.

<sup>31</sup> Wilhelmus Schuijt, Christian Democrat, Netherlands, EPA, Débats, Question orale n. 4/67 avec débat relative a l'association CEE-Grèce, 8 May 1967. Schuijt was president of the Committee of Association with Greece.

<sup>32</sup> EPA, Débats, Question orale n. 4/67 avec débat relative a l'association CEE-Grèce, 8 May 1967.

<sup>33</sup> Walter Faller was a German member of the Socialist group. Cornelis Berkhouwer was a Dutch member of the European Parliament from 1964 to 1984. A member of the Dutch Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy), he was chair of the Liberal and Democratic group from February 1970 to March 1973 and President of the EP between March 1973 and March 1975; Cornelis Berkhouwer, Liberal and Democratic Group, Netherlands, EPA, Débats. Question orale n. 4/67 avec débat relative à l'association CEE- Grèce, 8 May 1967.

hypothetical possibility, the EC-Greece Association agreement established clear institutional and legal links, which the dictatorial regime now threatened. It also was a clear precursor to full membership for Greece, and the EP asking for the Agreement to be suspended showed once again the cross-party consensus on the idea of democracy as a condition for membership.<sup>34</sup>

Initially, the Commission and the Council both gave cautious responses to the European Parliament's pressures. The differences likely reflected the diverse nature of the three institutions involved – as the EP took an immediate and clear stance against the regime in public, behind closed doors the debates in the Commission and Council showed the warring opinions and concerns harboured by the member states. There was immense pressure within the circles of the Commission, as many worried that a failure to take a clear stance on the question would be interpreted as support for the new regime.<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile, on 5 June 1967, the Council could not even reach a consensus on issuing a declaration on the establishment of the Greek dictatorship, deciding that a prudent stance of wait and see was the most suitable course of action. However, France and West Germany opposed any open condemnation of the Colonels' regime. They underlined the strategic importance of Greece for NATO following the Soviet penetration in the Mediterranean – thus highlighting the wider geopolitical repercussions on the Cold War chessboard.<sup>36</sup>

In the case of the Greek junta, the Council had manifested the innate contradiction which characterized the EC's dealings with third parties: its rhetoric on human rights and democratization was repeatedly undermined by the strategic and economic interests of its member states, thereby providing the Greek regime some – albeit limited – room for maneuver.<sup>37</sup> In their authoritative works on French and German policies towards the Greek dictatorship, Plassmann and Pelt respectively have

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<sup>34</sup> Résolution sur l'association entre la C.E.E. et la Grèce, EPA, Débats, 11 May 1967, Association C.E.E.-Grèce. The resolution was approved by all party groups.

<sup>35</sup> Note for Jean Rey, Brussels, 30 May 1967, Historical Archives of the European Union, Florence, Edoardo Martino Files (hereafter EM) 76.

<sup>36</sup> Minutes of Council of Ministers, Brussels, 5 June 1967, EM 77; Study on the Strategic Situation in the Mediterranean due to Increased Presence of Soviet Fleet, Athens, 13-February-1968, Historical Archive of Greek Foreign Ministry [hereafter HAFGM], Athens, London Embassy Series, 1968, N2324-45; Konstantina Maragkou, 'Favouritism in NATO's South-eastern flank: The case of the Greek Colonels, 1967-74', *Cold War History*, 9,3 (2009), 347-366; Miller, *The United States*, 157-61.

<sup>37</sup> Meeting between Stavros Roussos and Jean Rey, Brussels, 7 November 1968, EM 79; Barbara Keys, 'Anti-Torture politics: Amnesty International, the Greek Junta, and the Origins of the US Human Rights Boom', in Akira, Iriye, Petra, Goedde and William Hitchcock, eds., *The Human Rights Revolution: An International History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 201-223.

documented the close relationships that both countries maintained with the dictatorial regime, in supply of military equipment and financial assistance.<sup>38</sup> There was no coordination of bilateral and multilateral relations towards Greece. At the same time as the EC was moving to freeze the association, France was furnishing the junta with arms in its effort to create a third pole in the Mediterranean while West Germany, Greece's second largest supplier of arms, and the US's closest ally vis-à-vis Athens, adopted a very lenient policy.<sup>39</sup>

While the Council grappled with these difficulties, new Commission President Jean Rey was pressed by German Socialist Ludwig Metzger to clarify the Commission's position during a parliamentary debate in September 1967. Rey stated that the Community would maintain the daily management of the agreement but – crucially – it would not negotiate on new issues (agricultural harmonisation and a new financial agreement) as originally envisaged,<sup>40</sup> 'until the democratic and parliamentary structures are restored in Greece'.<sup>41</sup> The Community's financial aid was also suspended. Only 69 of the 125 million dollars worth of credit made available to Greece under the first financial protocol had been used up.

Thus, while the initial reactions to the Greek developments of the EP, Commission and Council were very different, the three did to some extent converge toward a similar stance on the issue. In fact, a Commission paper stated that three factors made it necessary to take a clear position: firstly, the worsening of the domestic situation in Greece; secondly, the totalitarian tendencies of the new regime; thirdly, the stances taken by the different European governments and the unequivocal position of the Council's consultative assembly, which reinforced the thesis put forward by the EP.<sup>42</sup>

The actual impact of the freezing of the Association agreement on the dictatorial regime remains an open question, although most studies so far have reached a negative

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<sup>38</sup> Lorenz Plassmann, *Comme dans une nuit de Paques? Les relations franco-grecques, 1944-1981* (Peter Lang, Brussels, 2012); Mogens Pelt, *Tying Greece to the West. US-West German-Greek Relations, 1949-1974* (Museum Tusulanum Press, Copenhagen, 2006).

<sup>39</sup> Effie Pedaliu, 'A Sea of Confusion?: The Mediterranean and Détente, 1969-1974', *Diplomatic History*, 33, 4 (2009), 735-750.

<sup>40</sup> See Jean Rey, EPA, *Débats*, 20 September 1967, Débat sur la déclaration de M. le Président de la Commission des Communautés Européennes.

<sup>41</sup> Bulletin Europe Information on Greece and the European Community, Brussels, 14/78, 3

<sup>42</sup> Report for E. Martino, Brussels, 5 May 1968, EM 78.

verdict in term of concrete results.<sup>43</sup> Nonetheless, its symbolic impact combined could not be ignored: even the dictators were troubled by the blow dealt by the EEC decision to the regime's legitimacy, and tried to lift the freeze by threatening the European Commission with legal action while, at the same time, trying to dispel perceptions that they were diplomatically isolated. In refusing to reconsider the suspension of the Association, the European Community was demonstrating that a lack of democracy was, and would be, the principal hurdle to any further integration. This also contrasted with the position of the US and NATO, widely perceived to be indifferent or even tolerant of the new Greek regime.<sup>44</sup> As Greece emerged from the dictatorship years later, this perceived contrast would play an important role in the transition strategy of the country's political elite. A parallel response from the Council of Europe led the Greeks to withdraw before a vote could sanction their exclusion in 1969. Thus, in the eyes of the Greeks, the EC and the Council of Europe were the two organisations that had, at least symbolically, denounced the dictatorship - unlike the transatlantic allies.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, taking this stance proved important for the EC itself: the debates and even disagreements in the EP, the Commission and the Council over Greece's Association enhanced the idea of the European Community as a community of values with both the right and the duty to uphold democracy within the European continent - no matter that this may have been an unintended consequence of discussions that had started before they could actually be thought to have concrete policy implications.

### The EC as the promoter and guarantor of 'European democracy'

In the 1970s, as the dictatorships of Greece, Spain and Portugal collapsed and the three countries set their sights on EC membership, the Community no longer merely intended democracy as a requirement prior to accession: in addition, it set itself up as a 'guarantor of democracy'. In the discourse of the applicants and in that of the EC,

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<sup>43</sup> Van Coufoudakis, 'The European Economic Community and the Freezing of the Association', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 16, 2 (1978), 114-131; C.M.Woodhouse, *The Rise and Fall of the Greek Colonels* (London: Granada, 1985).

<sup>44</sup> Although the NATO's preamble contains references to democracy, one of its founding members was under dictatorship, namely Portugal and military coups never resulted in pressures to end their authoritarian rule (Turkey, Greece); on NATO and Greek dictatorship please see Effie G. H. Pedaliu, "A Discordant Note": NATO and the Greek Junta, 1967-74', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 22,1 (2011), 101-20; Effie G. H. Pedaliu, 'Human Rights and Foreign Policy: Wilson and the Greek Dictators, 1967-1970', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 18,1 (2007), 185-214

<sup>45</sup> *The Council of Europe fights for democracy in Greece, 1967-1969*, Andreas G. Papandreou Foundation, Athens, Historical Series No.1; Dimitris Conostas, "The Greek Case" *Before the Council of Europe, 1967-69*, (Athens: Papazisis, 1976), 76, 87-96, [in Greek];

enlargement was identified as a way of anchoring the new Mediterranean democracies to democratic Western Europe.<sup>46</sup> Many historical studies of the applicant states show that they themselves interpreted accession to the European Community as a confirmation of their successful transition to democracy and an official acceptance back into the fold of the ‘true’ Europe.<sup>47</sup> Tsoukalis shows how there was a widespread consensus among the Spanish political elites, and indeed its population at large, on EC membership as a way of stabilising the volatile political situation<sup>48</sup> while in Greece the pro-membership elite saw membership as a way to consolidate democracy and referred to the freezing of the Association agreement and the EC’s denunciation of Greece’s military regime to support this argument.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, the Community’s focus on democracy stood in marked contrast with the attitude of NATO and the United States, who had not denounced the dictatorship in the same way.<sup>50</sup> This strengthened the claim that by joining the Community, Greece would be joining a pole of democracy. De la Guardia also identifies Spanish motivations for entry with the consensus between Spanish political and social forces on the necessity of European integration to engineer the socio-economic modernisation and full democratisation of the country after the collapse of Franco’s dictatorship.<sup>51</sup> This consensus was shared by Spanish public opinion, which was based on an idealistic, and rather vague, understanding of ‘Europe’ coupled with the desire for international recognition.<sup>52</sup> Charles Powell also focused on the idea of democracy as an essential aspect of Spain’s desire to join the EC.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Paul Preston & Denis Smyth, *Spain, the EEC and NATO*, Chatham House Papers 22 (Routledge: London, 1984), 66.

<sup>47</sup> Eirini Karamouzi, *Greece, the EEC and the Cold War, 1974-1979. The Second Enlargement* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Alice Cunha, *O Alargamento Ibérico da Comunidade Económica Europeia: A Experiência Portuguesa*, PhD Thesis, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 2012; Nuno Severiano Teixeira (ed.), *The International Politics of Democratization. Comparative Perspectives* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008); Special issue on transition: Maria Fernanda Rollo, Alice Cunha, Jean-Pierre Darnis (eds.), ‘Democratic Transition, European Economic Community Accession and Southern Europe’, *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, 90 (June 2015).

<sup>48</sup> Loukas Tsoukalis, *The European Community and its Mediterranean enlargement*, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1981), 122.

<sup>49</sup> Tsoukalis, *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Miller, *The United States*; Konstantina, Maragkou, ‘The Wilson Government’s Responses to ‘The Rape of Greek Democracy’’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 45,1 (2010), 162-180.

<sup>51</sup> De La Guardia, R., ‘In search of lost Europe: Spain’, in Wolfram, Kaiser and Jürgen Elvert, eds., *European Union Enlargement* (London: Routledge, 2004), 93-11.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Powell, ‘The long road to Europe’, See also Matthieu Trouvé, *L’Espagne et l’Europe – De la dictature de Franco à l’Union européenne*, (Brussels: PIE – Peter Lang, 2009); see also Mario Del Pero, Víctor Gavín, Fernando Guirao and Antonio Varsori, *Democrazie. L’Europa meridionale e la fine delle dittature*, (Milano: Le Monnier, 2010).

Such a perception of the EC as a champion of democracy in the eyes of the applicants makes it all the more compelling to ask why this also became a crucial concept for the Community actors themselves. After all, the practical functioning of the EC was hardly a model of democratic practice: at the time of the Southern European applications, the European Parliament was not yet directly elected and talk of the democratic deficit was beginning to emerge. In 1973, the established democracies of the UK, Ireland and Denmark joined the EC without raising any questions with regards to democratic practice within Community discussions.<sup>54</sup> Their accession did, of course, introduce new voices with strong national democratic traditions in the Community arena.<sup>55</sup> However, the sense of crisis remained and led EC actors to seek a new *raison d'être* for the project of European integration. It was in this context that they converged on the emerging self-image of the EC as a champion of democracy became a way of finding a new *raison d'être* at a time of crisis.<sup>56</sup> In the early 1970s, the international economic structures established after the Second World War were in crisis with the collapse of the Bretton Woods system and the repeated Oil crises, while the geopolitical order was also being called into question by the Vietnam War, the multiple crises in the Middle East and the changing dynamics of superpower relations linked to detente. With the US focused on these broader issues and detente led to the 'amplifying and aggravating [of] local and regional tensions',<sup>57</sup> the political developments in Southern Europe presented the EC with the need to address what was potentially a destabilising change on its immediate periphery.

The general sense of international crisis was compounded by the Community's own sense of internal crisis, as initiatives such as EMU unravelled and disagreements persisted about the economic and even institutional shortcomings of the EC. A new catalyst was needed if the EC itself was to find a new common direction. Ongoing

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<sup>54</sup> The question of democracy at national level in the acceding countries, or indeed in Norway, which eventually rejected membership, is beyond the scope of this article. Neumann, Iver B. Norge, 'This little piggy stayed at home. Why Norway is not a member of the EU', in Lene, Hansen and Ole Wæver, eds., *European Integration and National Identity: The challenge of the Nordic States* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 88-103.

<sup>55</sup> For instance, see the UK Conservative MEP Geoffrey Rippon's contribution to the debate on Enlargement of the Community, 1 October 1977, on the relationship between democracy and security. See also Caroline Jackson, 'The First British MEPs: Styles and Strategies', *Contemporary European History*, 2:2 (1993), 169-195

<sup>56</sup> Bo Strath, 'A European Identity: to the historical limits of the concept', *European Journal of Social Theory*, 5 (2002), 387-401.

<sup>57</sup> Mario Del Pero, *The Eccentric Realist. Henry Kissinger and the making of American foreign policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 148.

discussions about the political nature of European integration and its democratic character presented an opportunity to find just such a rallying cry. At the same time, this internal quest took place as human rights emerged as a vital new element of the international political discourse, of which the Helsinki Act in 1975 was but one example.<sup>58</sup>

At the end of 1973, there had been an attempt to give European integration a more explicitly political dimension with the *Document on European Identity*:

‘sharing as they do the same attitudes to life, based on a determination to build a society which measures up to the needs of the individual, they are determined to defend the principles of representative democracy, of the rule of law, of social justice — which is the ultimate goal of economic progress — and of respect for human rights. All of these are fundamental elements of the European Identity’.<sup>59</sup>

The Southern European applications for membership, and in particular the first, lodged by Greece in June 1975, presented the ideal opportunity to refine the EC’s identity beyond the rhetoric articulated in the previous decade, and the challenge of translating it into policy when faced with hard-edged economic and political considerations.

### The Greek Case: Converging Rhetoric

The suspension of the Association agreement to the status of ‘current administration’ after the coup, coupled with the forced withdrawal of Greece from the Council of Europe in 1969 had contributed to the erosion of domestic approval for the junta and frustrated the attempts of the dictators to gain support from important European political elites.<sup>60</sup> In Greek eyes, the Community became associated with liberal

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<sup>58</sup> Keys, ‘Anti-Torture’, 201-222; Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010); Jan Eckel & Samuel Moyn, eds., *The Breakthrough. Human Rights in the 1970s* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014)

<sup>59</sup> Declaration on European Identity, in Bulletin of the European Communities, December 1973, No 12. See also Marloes Beers, ‘L’Identité Européenne Déclarée en 1973’, *Richie Europa Newsletter* n. 4, March 2007; Aurelie Gfeller, ‘Imagining European Identity: French Elites and the American Challenge in the Pompidou-Nixon Era’ *Contemporary European History*, 19, 2 (2010), 133–49; Ine Megens, ‘The December 1973 Declaration on European Identity’, in Jan van der Harst, ed., *Beyond the Customs union: The European Community’s Quest for Deepening, Widening and Completion, 1967-1975* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2007), 317-340.

<sup>60</sup> For a general account, see Woodhouse, *The Rise and Fall*, 98-130; Paulos Tsakaloyannis and Susannah Verney, ‘Linkage Politics: The Role of the European Community in Greek Politics in 1973’, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 10 (1986), 179-94; For a detailed analysis of the EEC policy towards the Greek dictatorship, see Van Coufoudakis, ‘The European Economic Community’, 114-31.



democratic values, after the decision to freeze the Association created ‘an interesting phenomenon where the process of European integration was identified with the defence of democratic values’.<sup>61</sup> This helped Greece’s leader during the transition, Konstantinos Karamanlis, to use the EC link to positively influence Greece’s political trajectory and its international positioning by reintroducing Greece into the Western family of democracies.<sup>62</sup>

The positive view of the EC was important when confronted with the strong anti-Americanism that permeated Greek public opinion during and after the dictatorship, derived from the US failure, as perceived by the Greeks, to oppose the junta.<sup>63</sup> This led Greek foreign minister George Mavros, in discussion with Helmut Schmidt, the German chancellor, to sigh dramatically that ‘every Greek [is] convinced that the Greek dictatorship was supported by the USA’.<sup>64</sup> This sentiment reached its height with the double Turkish invasion of Cyprus and the perceived lack of reaction from the US and NATO, which led to Greece’s withdrawal from the military wing of the transatlantic alliance. Karamanlis would later comment that ‘the withdrawal from NATO was not only justified but necessary. The fury of the Greek and Cypriot people was so great at that time that the only alternative would have been war’.<sup>65</sup> In this climate of volatile and heightened public sentiment, the Greek perception of the Community as the symbol of liberal democratic values presented a vital option to Greek policy-makers during transition - compounding the longstanding choice to move closer to the EC already made with the Association agreement in 1958.<sup>66</sup>

The EC’s response to Greece’s application was mixed, if not in public, then certainly behind closed doors. The Commission and the member states were fully aware of the largely political reasons that had guided the Greek request; although positive in

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<sup>61</sup> Emanuel Gazzo, ‘Enlargement of the Community: Attitudes of Member States’, in J.W. Schneider, ed., *From Nine to Twelve: Europe’s Destiny* (The Netherlands: Sijthoff & Noordhoff, 1980), 10

<sup>62</sup> Nikos Poulatzas, *The crisis of the dictatorships. Portugal – Greece - Spain* (Athens, 1975) [in Greek], 27.

<sup>63</sup> For the rise of anti-Americanism in Greece, see Ioannis D. Stefanidis, *Stirring the Greek nation: Political Culture, Irredentism and anti-Americanism in Post-War Greece*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Konstantina E. Botsiou, ‘Anti-Americanism in Greece’ in Brenan O’Connor, ed., *Anti-Americanism: History, Causes, and Themes Comparative Perspectives*, vol. 3 (Westport, CT: Green, 2007), 213-234.

<sup>64</sup> Meeting between Schmidt and Mauros, Bonn, 10 September 1974, Akten Zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (henceforth, AAPD) 1974, Doc. 257, 1131.

<sup>65</sup> Karamanlis’s interview in *New York Times*, 27 May 1978.

<sup>66</sup> Greek Government to the Council of Ministers, Athens, 22 August 1974, in Photini, Tomai, ed., *Greece’s Participation in the Course towards European Integration* [henceforth FMA], vol. 2 (Athens, 2006), 197; Antonio Varsori, ‘The EEC and Greece from the military coup to the Transition to Democracy (1967-1975)’, in Konstantinos Svolopoulos, Konstantina Botsiou and Evanthis Hatzivassiliou, eds., *Konstantinos Karamanlis in the Twentieth Century* (Athens: K. Karamanlis Foundation, 2008), 317-338.

their official response, they were much less enthusiastic in private, given the serious political and economic implications of a possible accession. The Commission's Opinion, published on 28 January 1976, understood fully the political importance of supporting the Greek application, but at the same time, it considered that enlargement called for speeding up the process of integration.<sup>67</sup> The suggestion made of having a pre-accession period stemmed from several considerations.<sup>68</sup> It presented an opportunity for the Community to reform its institutions and at the same time to develop a substantial programme for economic aid that would enable Greece to overcome its structural weaknesses and adapt more easily to the Community's obligations and mechanisms. Moreover, a preparatory period seemed to reflect the desire of some member states to delay Greece's accession without causing a political rebuff.

Despite the problems it had raised, the Commission's Opinion concluded that 'it is clear that the consolidation of Greece's democracy which is a fundamental concern not only of the Greek people but also of the Community and its member states, is intimately related to the evolution of Greece's relationship with the Community. It is in the light of these considerations that the Commission recommends that a clear affirmative reply be given to the Greek request'.<sup>69</sup> Therefore, notwithstanding serious misgivings about the challenges of a Greek accession, the Commission concluded that democratic concerns overshadowed all others when it came to providing a rationale in favour of accepting the Greek application. Both the Commission's lukewarm Opinion and the ambivalent responses of member states are testament to the Community's attempt to walk the thin line between the need to welcome a recently democratised Greece and impact that its accession would have on the EC's institutional and economic structures. Two weeks after it had been submitted, the Council unanimously rejected the Commission's Opinion - an unprecedented and unexpected decision. At a press conference following the Council meeting, Gaston Thorn - Luxembourg's prime minister, speaking on behalf of the Council - stated that 'for the nine delegations there could be no trial period or political considerations attached to Greece's accession'.<sup>70</sup> Finally, after eight months of

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<sup>67</sup> Commission Working Document, HAEC, no.373, 28 January 1976.

<sup>68</sup> See Karamouzi, *Greece, 1974-1979*, 35-62.

<sup>69</sup> European Commission, 'Enlargement of the Community: Conclusion', *Bulletin of the European Communities* 1/78.

<sup>70</sup> European Commission, 'Position adopted by the Council', *Bulletin of the European Communities* 1/76.

deliberations, the Community had decided to open negotiations for Greece's potential membership.

The promises that the Community had made to Greece when the Association agreement had been frozen and then when the dictatorship collapsed gave Karamanlis the opportunity to push for the argument that democratic obligations should trump economic concerns. In the face of this, the Community could do little else but be persuaded by the combined force of its own rhetoric and the Greek claims that only by being accepted into the EC fold would their transition succeed and avoid the potential destabilisation that a relapse into authoritarianism - or a detachment from the Western camp - would bring.<sup>71</sup>

Underlying strategic imperatives laid at the root of the second enlargement: as the Southern European states emerged from the dictatorships and turned to the EC with the aim to become full members, the Community found itself in the position of having to respond to two interconnected problems. The first was to ensure that the transition to democracy remained on course; the second, that the international alignments on the Cold War game board remained at the very least unaltered by the regime changes.<sup>72</sup> In formulating their response to these demands, the Community actors found that the principles voiced over the previous decade, and their reception by the applicants, would provide them with the ideal means to bring Greece, and then Spain and Portugal into the Western European institutional fold.

In order to meet these twin goals, the Community used the democratic norms it has been building up as its core political identity to justify enlargement through the rhetoric of democratic norms and values. In doing so, it could both reinforce its internal evolving self-perception and maintain the Southern European countries on the course of democracy and, crucially for the wider Cold War context, alignment with Western Europe through participation in its political and economic institutions at a time when NATO was unable to bind them together.

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<sup>71</sup> For a similar use of this shaming strategy in the 2004 enlargement, and a conceptualization of the idea, see Frank Schimmelfennig and Ulrich Sedelmeier, eds., *The Politics of European Union Enlargement. Theoretical Approaches* (London: Routledge, 2005), 166.

<sup>72</sup> For more analysis on the Southern European crisis, Mario Del Pero, 'A European Solution for a European Crisis', *Journal of European Integration History*, 15:1 (2009); Effie Pedaliu, 'A Sea of Confusion. The Mediterranean and Détente, 1969-1974', *Diplomatic History*, 33:4 (2009), 735-750; Elena Calandri, Daniele Caviglia and Antonio Varsori, eds., *Detente in Cold War Europe: Politics and Diplomacy in the Mediterranean and the Middle East* (I.B.Tauris, London: 2012); Jussi Hanhimäki, 'Conservative goals, revolutionary outcomes: the paradox of détente', *Cold War History*, 8:4 (2008), 503-512;

### Democracy as the new binding principle of European integration

Greece's approach proved all the more successful because it resonated with the Community's perception of itself and how this had evolved during the 1970s. Internal talk focused not only on how to tackle the Community's economic and institutional problems, but also on its future trajectory and on 'defining Europe'. This led to the attempt to give European integration a more explicitly political dimension with the December 1973 *Document on European Identity*<sup>73</sup> followed in January 1976 by the Tindemans Report, which appeared just a few days before the Commission's Opinion on Greece. In this document Leo Tindemans, the Belgian prime minister, sought to compile an overview of the EEC with the aim of setting out a common concept of a European Union.<sup>74</sup> His report stated that the Community 'had lost its guiding light, namely the political consensus between our countries on our reasons for undertaking the joint task',<sup>75</sup> and the Community must find a new *raison d'être* in order to push European integration forward. What had once been the key appeal - the pursuit of economic interdependence - was no longer sufficient, and in any case the general economic crisis did not make it likely that the Community would be able to make any significant economic advance. The other driving motive behind the Treaties of Rome, namely the pursuit of peace and stability in Western Europe, was by the 1970s considered to have been attained.

However, if these two forces had lost momentum, the advancement of 'democracy' could offer the Community a new way forward.<sup>76</sup> Thus, enlargement potentially offered the opportunity to shape the Community's political dimension.<sup>77</sup> In the words of Hans-Dietrich Genscher, the West German Foreign Minister, the decision to welcome the poor southern countries showed that 'Europe had emerged from the

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<sup>73</sup> Megens, 'The December 1973', 317-340.

<sup>74</sup> Jürgen Nielsen-Sikora, 'The Ideas of a European Union and a Citizen's Europe. The 1975 Tindemans Report', in Van der Harst, *Beyond the Customs Union*, 380.

<sup>75</sup> Leo Tindemans, 'European Union: Report by Mr Leo Tindemans to the European Council', *Bulletin of the European Communities* 1/76.

<sup>76</sup> Geoffrey Edwards & Williams Wallace, *A Wider European Community? Issues and Problems of Further Education*, (London: Federal Trust, 2006), 2.

<sup>77</sup> Fernando Guirao also points out how enlargement is an opportunity for self-definition, 'Solving the Paradoxes of Enlargement: The Next Research Challenge in our Field', *Journal of European Integration History*, 11:2 (2005), 5-11.

stage of an economic community, today being a political community'.<sup>78</sup> Such sentiments were echoed in the communiqués of the recently formed European Council, which identified the process of European integration with the defence of democratic values.<sup>79</sup>

Thus the central legitimating strategy that had originally moved the project of European integration forward, that of promoting peace, found its complement in the Community's new obligation to promote democratic ideals.<sup>80</sup> Thus Greece's request to enter the EC as a means of strengthening its own nascent democracy resonated with the Community's efforts to promote itself as a protector of democracy. In the Greek case, the discussions over enlargement affected the EEC's self-image while, in turn, this evolving self-image positively influenced the attitudes of the existing member states towards Greece. This created a sort of reciprocal relationship which meant that the manner in which the Nine responded to the Greek application would be the test-case for the Community's own credibility in formulating a policy that was consistent with its newly self-proclaimed identity. The EC's emphasis on the importance of democracy for gaining membership essentially amounted to an explicit articulation of the fundamental characteristics of its new identity along with its new goals.

The fact that Greece was widely perceived to be the cultural 'cradle of democracy' only served to strengthen the process. The French President, for instance, eventually described Greece's entry as a 'return to the roots',<sup>81</sup> and wrote in his memoirs that 'it was impossible to exclude Greece, the mother of all democracies, from Europe'.<sup>82</sup> Moreover, accepting Greece's application made it all the more difficult for the EC to deny the same request from Spain and Portugal in 1977 provided they also continued along the path of democratization.

The discussions of enlargement to the Southern European countries provided the

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<sup>78</sup> Quoted in Thomas Derungs, 'The Integration of a Different Europe. The European Community's Enlargement to the South and Evolving Concept of the Civilian Power', in Michele Affinito, Guia Migani and Christian Wenkel, eds., *The Two Europes. Proceedings of the Third Annual RICHIE Conference* (Brussels, Peter Lang: 2009), 311-326.

<sup>79</sup> Emmanuel Mourlon-Druol, 'More than a prestigious spokesperson: the role of the Summits and the European Council in the European Political Cooperation, 1969-1981', in Francois Foret and Yann-Sven, Rittelmeyer, eds., *The European Council and European Governance. The Commanding Heights of the EU* (London & New York, Routledge: 2014), 43-53.

<sup>80</sup> Address by F. - X. Ortoli, 10 February 1976, *Ninth General Report on the Activities of the European Communities* (Brussels, 1976).

<sup>81</sup> Statement by L. de Guiringaud, 31 May 1977, Constantinos G. Karamanlis Foundation [henceforth CKP], Athens, CKP 139A.

<sup>82</sup> Serge Berstein & Jean-Francois Sirinelli, *Valery Giscard d'Estaing et l'Europe* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2005), 135.

essential context for the Nine's idea of subscribing to a *Declaration on Democracy* in 1978. As all three southern Mediterranean applicants claimed that joining the Community would help them to consolidate their nascent democracies, the time seemed ripe for a declaration on the fundamental principles on which the Community was based. In addition, the decision to hold the first direct elections to the European Parliament in 1979 heightened the need to find a way to 'establish a link between the practice of pluralistic parliamentary democracy and membership of the Community'.<sup>83</sup> The declaration was to clearly commit the Community to democratic principles, which could then be reflected in the Acts of Accession of each new member state. However, the meeting of the European Council of December 1977 rejected the idea of incorporating such a declaration in the preamble of the eventual accession treaties,<sup>84</sup> concluding instead that the Declaration would be sufficient, as it would form part of the *acquis* to which acceding states would have to subscribe.<sup>85</sup> What mattered the most was to find the right moment to implement it without raising suspicions.<sup>86</sup>

The European Council of 7–8 April 1978 adopted the *Declaration on Democracy*, at the same time as the announcement of the date for the first direct elections of the European Parliament. The text of the declaration drew heavily on the 1973 *Declaration on the European Identity* and it also included references to the Community's *Joint Declaration on Fundamental Rights* adopted under the UK Presidency on 5 April 1977. Its most crucial innovation was to include a final paragraph declaring 'that respect for and maintenance of representative democracy and human rights in each member state are indispensable for membership of the European Communities'.<sup>87</sup> Ultimately, the Nine were not particularly interested in giving more specific definitions of democracy. Indeed, steering clear of a more specific definition allowed them to muster convergence on the principle without having to address the question of how much and how far this idea of democracy would be realized in practice. As democratic practice varied considerably amongst the Nine, attempts to agree a clear set of democratic norms may arise strongly divergent opinions and lead to disagreement.

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<sup>83</sup> Telegram by L. de Nanteuil, Brussels, 23 September 1977, Archives du Ministère des Affaires étrangères [henceforth AMAE], d/e, 1389. La Courneuve.

<sup>84</sup> Meeting between Anderson and Jenkins, Brussels, 14 June 1977, Historical Archives of the European Union, Emile Noel Papers [henceforth EN] 1544, Florence.

<sup>85</sup> Letter by M. J. Fretwell, London, 10 March 1978, MWE021/3, 26, FCO 30/3873, The National Archives, Foreign Commonwealth Office [henceforth FCO], Kew Gardens.

<sup>86</sup> Report by É. Noël, La Roche, 17 September, EN 48.

<sup>87</sup> Meeting of COREPER, Brussels, 22 March 1978, MWE04/8, 63D, FCO 30/3874.

Roy Jenkins, the then Commission President, commented on the declaration: ‘a directly elected European Parliament will introduce a major new democratic dimension to the institutions of the Community. And for this reason, it was entirely appropriate that we should also adapt at this European Council a declaration on democracy, for our system of pluralist parliamentary democracy lies at the very basis of the Community’s existence’.<sup>88</sup> The Commission was very pleased with this development, seeing it as part of a bigger plan that would allow enlargement to take place without diluting the Community. Specifically, when Jenkins spoke about the emerging European Monetary System (EMS), direct European Parliament elections and enlargement, he revealed that these three developments were powerfully interrelated: ‘we could not envisage monetary union without a European direct democracy. What better way of underwriting democracy in the three applicant countries than by inviting them to a new shared parliament? What better way of assuring that enlargement does not dilute the integration of Europe than by resuming the move towards EMU?’<sup>89</sup>

The declaration on democracy was thus an effective way of formally tying the ideas that had been developed over the previous two decades with the process of enlargement to Southern Europe: it formally set democratic principles as the basis for a shared political identity, which the new members would have to accept as part of the *acquis*.

### Conclusion

The evolution of the EC’s democratic tradition was hardly linear, and it would be inaccurate to suggest that the course followed – uneven as it was – would inescapably lead to the formal constitutionalisation of democratic values in the 1993 Copenhagen criteria. Nonetheless, it is possible to identify how the different institutions of the Community developed a discourse of political identity in the 1960s and 1970s, introducing the idea of the Community as a political entity based on shared values, and then articulating these values around the concept of democracy in a way that became significant not merely in purely rhetorical terms, as a means of self-identification, but also as a framework within which policies had to be formulated. The prospect of enlargement served as a catalyst for the identification of the Community’s mission and goals. As Spain, Greece and Portugal underwent momentous political change, their leaders turned

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<sup>88</sup> Meeting of European Council, Copenhagen, 8 April 1978, MWE021/2, 256, FCO 30/3862.

<sup>89</sup> Note by G. Exarxos, Brussels, 7 January 1978, CKP 0178.

expectant eyes to the EC, clearly demanding a political response. This, in turn, called for a definition of the shared political values binding the Community together. As part of this search, different actors within the EC came to identify democracy as a fundamental requirement for membership of the Community – starting with MEPs, who managed to turn the existence of their at the time near-powerless institution into a symbol of the Community’s commitment to democracy. Once the idea had been introduced into the public discourse, it became very difficult for the Council and the Commission to not engage with it on some level, in the same way that they had to contend with *realpolitik* considerations when formulating their approach to their relations with the Southern European countries throughout the period.

Through subsequent re-interpretations of the Treaties of Rome, and in particular its Preamble, adherence to democratic principles in a country’s governing institutions was first introduced as a requirement for any country seeking Community membership, as a means to preserve the allegiance to the fundamental political values shared by all member states. Once this criterion had been established – even if not formally enshrined in law – a further articulation of the relationship between EC membership and democracy added additional meaning to the EC’s commitment to democratic values, by bestowing upon the Community the role of guarantor for the democratic commitment and practice of its member states – thus providing an anchor for the democratic transitions of Greece, Spain and Portugal away from dictatorship. Finally, the 1978 *Declaration on Democracy* made the commitment to democratic values part of the *acquis*.

It may thus appear as a paradox that, as MEPs, Commissioners and even Council spokesman and these institutions’ official documents elevated democracy to the highest political value of their shared identity, all of them refrained from actually providing a definition of what democracy actually entailed. The term was ubiquitous but vague, and even the 1978 declaration on this very subject stopped short of specificity. By analysing the way in which democracy was spoken about, one can see that it was used in general and interchangeably as part of a ‘trptych’ alongside the protection and respect of human rights and the rule of law.<sup>90</sup> However, no definition was ever provided beyond this. Nonetheless, rather than as a paradox, this may also be understood as a general desire to converge on a broad common principle in a group composed of states whose specific

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<sup>90</sup> Kalypso Nicolaidis and Rachel Kleinfeld, ‘Rethinking Europe’s Rule of Law and Enlargement Agenda: The Fundamental Dilemma’, *Jean Monnet Working Paper* 12:12, 2012, 1-93.



historical and political traditions of democratic practice were often rather different from one another. A general political commitment to democracy as a fundamental value avoided any clashes that may have come from attempts to define what such adherence would look like in practice, while still providing a sense of belonging to a shared political community.

The 1980s would see the EC focus on other issues – even in the context of enlargement, once the political principles of the basis of which the applicants were to be accepted were established, attention would turn to practical matters. The Single European Act was dedicated to institutional reform and moving forward towards a common market. Yet the idea of democracy remained at the heart of the EC's identity, and by the end of the decade the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the unravelling of the Cold War framework brought it back into the limelight in full force. As countries in Central and Eastern Europe also started on the path to transition towards democracy, their demands for the Community's support had much to do with the seeds that had been sown in the 1960s and 1970s.