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Doors and Engines: A Theory of Selection and Treatment Effects in European Integration, with Evidence from Greece and Türkiye

Okyar, Aida Idil

McGill University

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Doors and Engines: A Theory of Selection and Treatment Effects in European Integration, with Evidence from Greece and Türkiye

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by

Aida Idil Okyar

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Abstract

This mixed-methods study examines whether economic development preceded or was strengthened by European Economic Community (EEC) membership through a comparative analysis of Greece and Türkiye. Drawing on economic growth, transformation, and institutional theories, it uses comparative, qualitative, and quantitative evidence to assess European integration's determinants and consequences. The findings indicate that Greece's accession depended mainly on democratic consolidation, institutional quality, and macroeconomic stability, not economic development, with long-term economic benefits emerging gradually after accession. Although full European Union (EU) membership offers larger economic gains than Türkiye's partial integration, these benefits depend on domestic institutional capacity and reform. Overall, the study concludes that accession was a political and institutional selection process, while membership acted as a conditional driver of long-term economic growth.

Keywords: European integration; European Union (EU); Europeanization; Greece; Türkiye; economic development; institutional quality; structural transformation; political conditionality.

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

European integration refers to the process through which European states participate in common political and economic institutions, particularly the European Economic Community (EEC) and its successor, the European Union (EU). Since its establishment, it has promoted economic cooperation through trade liberalization, institutional integration, and common economic policies. However, its economic consequences remain debated. While some studies argue that membership promotes long-run economic growth through improved resource allocation and productivity, others contend that accession depends on prior macroeconomic stability and institutional development. This study examines this debate through the contrasting experiences of Greece and Türkiye (Henrekson et al., 1997; Campos et al., 2019; Dreyer & Schmid, 2017).

Greece and Türkiye have followed divergent paths toward European integration. Greece signed the 1961 Association Agreement before becoming a full EEC member in 1981 despite relatively low per capita income, a large agricultural sector, protected manufacturing industries, and weaker infrastructure, technological capacity, and institutional development than most existing member states. By contrast, Türkiye applied for association in 1959, became an associate member through the 1963 Ankara Agreement, formally applied for membership in 1987, entered a Customs Union with the European Union in 1995, and obtained candidate status in 1999. During this process, it adopted constitutional and legislative reforms to strengthen the rule of law, bureaucratic quality, fundamental rights and freedoms, and harmonization with the *acquis communautaire*, yet full membership has not been achieved (Oltheten et al., 2003; Hisamoğlu, 2014; Harrison et al., 1997).

The literature links economic development to institutional quality, macroeconomic stabilization, structural reform, trade integration, and productivity growth. Oltheten et al.

(2003) argue that peripheral countries should address structural deficiencies before accession while preserving their comparative advantage, whereas Hisamoğlu (2014) identifies law and order, bureaucratic quality, internal conflict management, and ethnic tensions as key determinants of economic growth during Türkiye's accession process. Likewise, Henrekson et al. (1997) and Campos et al. (2019) argue that European integration can promote long-run growth, although its effects vary across countries.

Consequently, it remains unclear whether Greece's successful accession reflected stronger pre-accession institutional and economic conditions or whether European integration generated subsequent economic development. This question constitutes the central inquiry of this study.

1.2 Political Background

To situate the divergent trajectories of Greece and Türkiye, this paper examines how each country's relationship with European integration was established and subsequently evolved.

1959 to 1970

Understanding Greece's accession to the European Economic Community (EEC) requires examining its early relationship with European integration. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, successive Greek governments viewed closer cooperation with Western Europe as a means of promoting economic modernization, political stability, and integration into Europe. This culminated in the 1961 Athens Association Agreement, the first association agreement between the EEC and a non-member state, establishing the basis for eventual membership (Karamouzi, 2015).

The 1967 military coup interrupted this process by bringing the Colonels' dictatorship to power. The European Community suspended the Association Agreement, while Greece

withdrew from the Council of Europe in 1969. Consequently, European integration also became associated with constitutional democracy and the rule of law along with economic cooperation (Karamouzi, 2015; Larsen, 2023). These developments shaped Greece's eventual accession after democratic restoration and established democratic governance as a central principle for future candidate countries, including Türkiye.

1974 to 1981

Following the collapse of the military dictatorship in 1974, Greece entered a democratic transition under Konstantinos Karamanlis, whose government pursued EEC accession to consolidate democracy and prevent future authoritarian rule. The 1975 membership application therefore extended beyond economic integration, becoming closely associated with political stability, democratic legitimacy, and Greece's long-term orientation toward Western Europe. Despite domestic political divisions, Greece became the tenth EEC member in 1981 (Nafpliotis, 2018).

An alternative vision emerged through the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) under Andreas Papandreou. Drawing on dependency theory, PASOK argued that the EEC served as an instrument of Western economic and political domination, leaving Greece dependent on wealthier European economies. The party therefore opposed full membership and advocated a "special relationship" that would preserve national sovereignty, economic planning, and political independence (Nafpliotis, 2018).

As PASOK approached government during the late 1970s, however, its position shifted from hard Euroscepticism toward political pragmatism. Growing public support for European integration, the expected economic benefits of membership, and electoral considerations encouraged Papandreou to moderate his rhetoric by advocating reform from within the Community. This paper argues that this shift laid the foundations of Greece's

subsequent relationship with European integration and demonstrates how domestic political strategy shaped the country's evolving position toward the EEC (Nafpliotis, 2018).

1987 to 1999

After Türkiye returned to parliamentary democracy in 1983, Turgut Özal renewed the country's objective of European Community membership by submitting a full membership application in 1987. Although the application was rejected, the Customs Union, agreed by the Association Council in 1995 and in force from 1 January 1996, became the deepest form of integration with the European Union and was widely viewed as a transitional step toward eventual membership. During the 1990s, however, the European Union increasingly emphasized democratization, human rights, and constitutional governance, making political conditionality central to enlargement (Öniş, 2000).

At the Luxembourg Summit in 1997, Türkiye was excluded from the enlargement process despite the progress of several Central and Eastern European countries. The decision reinforced perceptions that the European Union questioned both Türkiye's democratic standards and its place in Europe (Öniş, 2000).

Before the Helsinki Summit in 1999, a different political environment had emerged. The rapprochement between Greece and Türkiye following the 1999 earthquakes, with growing recognition of Türkiye's strategic importance, encouraged a more inclusive enlargement policy. Consequently, the European Union granted Türkiye candidate status, reversing the Luxembourg decision and renewing expectations for democratic reform (Öniş, 2000).

1999 to 2005

The Helsinki European Council of 1999 made minority rights central to EU-Türkiye relations. Candidate status required compliance with the Copenhagen political criteria, prompting an unprecedented program of constitutional and legislative reform. Successive

European Commission Progress Reports, rulings of the European Court of Human Rights, and EU conditionality placed sustained pressure on Türkiye to align its legal framework with European standards (Grigoriadis, 2008).

Between 2001 and 2004, constitutional amendments and seven reform packages expanded fundamental rights and freedoms, removed the phrase "language prohibited by law" from Articles 26 and 28 of the Constitution, recognized the property rights of non-Muslim foundations, permitted the construction of non-Muslim places of worship, and legalized the teaching and broadcasting of Kurdish and other minority languages. The reforms also sought to desecuritize minority rights, reduce military influence, and redefine Turkish national identity along more inclusive lines (Grigoriadis, 2008).

Reviewing this body of scholarship, Bölükbaşı et al. (2010) characterize Europeanization as the principal analytical framework for studying the European Union's domestic impact on Türkiye, one extending beyond individual reforms across policy, politics, and polity, from public administration and policymaking to state-society relations.

2005 to 2013

Understanding why Türkiye's Europeanization weakened after 2005 requires examining the declining credibility of EU conditionality. Whereas 1999 to 2005 was characterized by broad support for EU-driven reforms, the opening of accession negotiations was followed by growing uncertainty over membership. According to Eldem (2013), the open-ended negotiations, absence of a fixed accession date, changing EU expectations, and opposition from France and Germany to full Turkish membership reduced domestic support for further democratization.

This uncertainty intensified after the 2006 suspension of eight negotiating chapters over the Cyprus dispute and proposals for a privileged partnership. Consequently, European Commission Progress Reports between 2006 and 2012 repeatedly identified limited progress

in freedom of expression, freedom of the media, women's rights, and freedom of religion, while the European Parliament had already urged action on minority rights and the independence of the judiciary in its 2006 report on accession. By 2013 Türkiye had opened 13 of the 35 negotiating chapters. Eldem (2013) argues that the declining credibility of EU membership substantially weakened its capacity to promote democratization.

2013 and Onwards

The period after 2013 marked the breakdown of Türkiye's Europeanization process and the consolidation of competitive authoritarianism. According to Esen and Gümüşçü (2016), the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) relied on state-controlled media, regulatory agencies, legal proceedings against journalists and critics, the securitization of political dissent, and the partisan use of public resources to create an uneven electoral playing field while maintaining regular elections. Despite continued electoral competition, Türkiye no longer satisfied the minimum requirements of democracy.

The failed coup attempt of 15 July 2016 and the 2017 constitutional referendum accelerated this transformation. Çalışkan (2018) argues that the referendum concentrated executive authority in the presidency, weakened parliamentary and judicial oversight, and produced all eleven indicators of competitive authoritarianism identified by Levitsky and Way (2010, as cited in Çalışkan, 2018), placing Türkiye on a trajectory toward full authoritarianism. Somer (2016) further argues that the AKP shifted from democratizing to conquering state institutions, reinforcing hegemonic state control without democratic accountability.

Meanwhile, the European Union's leverage declined substantially. Öniş and Kutlay (2019) identify the eurozone crisis, the Arab uprisings, the refugee crisis, the suspension of eight negotiating chapters, proposals for a privileged partnership, and the EU's handling of the Annan Plan as developments that weakened the credibility of EU conditionality. Building on

this decline, Aydın-Düzgit (2023) argues that Türkiye reframed the European Union as applying double standards on democracy, migration, Cyprus, and counterterrorism, replacing its earlier accession-oriented discourse with one centered on national sovereignty, non-interference, and regime security.

1.3 Hypothesis and Specific Aims

As discussed above, Greece and Türkiye established formal relations with the European Economic Community (EEC) during the early 1960s but ultimately experienced different accession outcomes. Although both pursued European integration for decades, the relative importance of democratic consolidation, institutional quality, macroeconomic stability, and European Union membership in explaining their divergent development trajectories remains insufficiently understood. This uncertainty motivates the study's research question and two central hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Greece's accession to the European Economic Community depended more on pre-1981 democratic consolidation, institutional quality, and macroeconomic stability than on its level of economic development.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Beyond accession, Greece's full European Economic Community/European Union membership generated greater long-term gains in productivity, trade integration, foreign direct investment, and economic growth than Türkiye's partial integration through the Ankara Agreement, the Customs Union, and candidate status.

The following specific aims guide this study:

1. Determine the contribution of democratic consolidation, institutional quality, and macroeconomic stability to Greece's accession to the European Economic Community.

2. Determine the contribution of full European Union membership to productivity growth, trade integration, foreign direct investment, and long-term economic performance relative to Türkiye's partial integration.

Examining similarities (e.g., early EEC ties and commitment to European integration) and differences (e.g., accession, institutional quality, and economic integration) between Greece and Türkiye helps determine whether economic development preceded or was strengthened by European Union membership.

2. Literature Review

The scholarship on European integration and economic development can be organized around three principal traditions in development economics, each offering a different explanation for Greece's successful accession to the European Economic Community (EEC) and Türkiye's continued candidate status.

Economic growth theory attributes long-run development to capital accumulation, productivity gains, and technological progress, implying that European integration may promote sustained growth. Structural transformation theory emphasizes reallocating labor and capital from low-productivity agriculture to higher-productivity manufacturing and services, suggesting that countries must achieve sufficient structural development before integration yields substantial gains. Institutionalist theory argues that democratic governance, macroeconomic stability, institutional quality, and the rule of law are the principal determinants of both economic development and successful European Union accession. This review examines each perspective, its application to Greece and Türkiye, and the gap addressed by this study.

2.1 Economic Growth Theory and the Effects of European Integration

Economic growth theory explains sustained improvements in living standards through continuous increases in GDP per capita over time, distinguishing long-term growth from temporary increases in aggregate output. Within development economics, GDP per capita is the principal indicator of long-run economic performance because it measures average output per person and reflects improvements in material living standards (Karaguesian & Montelpare, 2026a). Cross-country comparisons use purchasing power parity (PPP) exchange rates, which adjust for differences in prices and living costs by valuing output using a common basket of goods and services, providing a more comparable measure than market

exchange rates. PPP-adjusted data are published by the World Bank, the IMF, and the OECD (Karaguesian & Chandralal, 2026b; Karaguesian & Montelpare, 2026a).

Income-based measures are complemented by the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index (HDI), which combines life expectancy, mean and expected years of schooling, and gross national income per capita into a single index ranging from 0 to 1. Since its 2010 reformulation, the HDI has used a geometric mean to allow for imperfect substitutability between income, health, and education (Karaguesian & Montelpare, 2026a). Nevertheless, this study retains GDP per capita at PPP as its principal outcome measure, consistent with the empirical integration literature.

The determinants of long-run growth are formalized in an aggregate production function of the form:

$$Y_t = K_t{}^{\alpha}(A_t N_t)^{1-\alpha}$$

where Y_t denotes total output, K_t the capital stock, N_t labor, and A_t a scaling factor representing labor-augmenting technology, human capital, and knowledge, so that $A_t N_t$ measures the effective contribution of the labor force to output; the parameter α, with $0 < \alpha < 1$, is the elasticity of output with respect to capital, and α and $(1-\alpha)$ correspond to the shares of capital and labor in production (Karaguesian & Chandralal, 2026a; Karaguesian & Montelpare, 2026a). Under constant returns to scale, the production function can be rewritten in per-effective-worker terms as $y_t = Y_t / (A_t N_t) = k_t{}^{\alpha}$, where k_t denotes capital per unit of effective labor.

Two implications follow. First, when capital is scarce relative to labor, its marginal return is high, so capital accumulation generates rapid growth in economies at early stages of development (Karaguesian & Chandralal, 2026a). Second, because $\alpha < 1$ implies diminishing marginal returns to capital, accumulation alone cannot sustain long-run growth in output per person. As in the Solow growth model, higher saving and investment raise the steady-state

level of output per effective worker, but sustained growth in GDP per capita ultimately requires continuous growth in A_t, that is, technology, human capital, and productive efficiency (Karaguesian & Chandralal, 2026a).

Applied to European integration, economic growth theory predicts that European Economic Community membership should strengthen the determinants of growth. Participation in a larger common market encourages more efficient resource allocation, stimulates domestic and foreign investment, facilitates technological diffusion, and raises productivity through greater competition and knowledge spillovers (Henrekson et al., 1997).

Cross-country growth regressions, synthetic control analyses, and comparative studies generally support these predictions. Henrekson et al. (1997) find that European Community and EFTA membership permanently increased long-run growth through improvements in productivity and resource allocation. Thus, these effects do not account only for higher levels of economic development among member states. Using synthetic control methods that construct country-specific counterfactuals, Campos et al. (2019) similarly estimate substantial long-run gains in per capita income following accession, although Greece is an important exception to this broader pattern. Dreyer and Schmid (2017), however, distinguish between European Union and Eurozone membership, concluding that EU membership promotes growth while adoption of the euro provides little additional long-run growth premium, particularly during the financial crisis.

2.2 Structural Transformation Theory and the Sequencing of Development

A second theoretical tradition identifies structural transformation as the principal mechanism of economic development. Development is characterized by the gradual reallocation of labor, capital, and production from low-productivity agriculture to higher-productivity manufacturing and, subsequently, advanced service sectors, accompanied by

sustained investment in transportation networks, communications infrastructure, industrial technology, education, and productive capital (Karaguesian & Chandralal, 2026a).

The canonical statement is Lewis's (1954, as cited in Karaguesian & Chandralal, 2026a) two-sector surplus model, in which a modern capitalist sector absorbs surplus labor from a subsistence agrarian sector at low wages. Because the productivity of capital is high while labor remains abundant, this transfer generates rapid capital accumulation and economic growth until surplus labor is exhausted. Wages begin to rise at the Lewis (1954, as cited in Karaguesian & Chandralal, 2026a) turning point (Karaguesian & Chandralal, 2026a).

Subsequent patterns-of-development research associated with Chenery and Gerschenkron documented how the timing and shape of this transformation vary with a country's size, resources, history, and initial conditions (Karaguesian & Chandralal, 2026a), while Hirschman (1958, as cited in Karaguesian & Chandralal, 2026a) emphasized that expanding manufacturing generates backward and forward linkages that stimulate investment, technological learning, and productivity growth throughout the economy (Karaguesian & Chandralal, 2026a; Karaguesian & Montelpare, 2026b). Post-war development economists accordingly treated development and industrialization as nearly synonymous, viewing industrialization as the central mechanism through which low-income economies could raise productivity, diversify production, and achieve sustained income growth (Karaguesian & Montelpare, 2026b).

Structural transformation theory therefore represents a qualitative change in an economy's productive structure and carries a distinctive implication for the sequencing of integration. The analysis views membership as a consequence of development, suggesting that countries must first achieve sufficient economic modernization to withstand the competitive pressures of integration. This interpretation echoes Rostow's (1960, as cited in Karaguesian & Chandralal, 2026b) claim that preconditions, including commercialized agriculture and a

developing manufacturing base, must exist before take-off into sustained growth is possible (Karaguesian & Chandralal, 2026a).

Oltheten et al. (2003) apply this logic directly, arguing that small peripheral economies should address structural deficiencies before accession to withstand the competitive pressures of trade liberalization. Their analysis therefore raises the question of whether Greece satisfied the economic conditions for accession before 1981 or whether accession accelerated industrial restructuring, productivity growth, and convergence after membership. Because it permits the direction of causality between development and accession to be examined empirically, structural transformation theory bears upon both hypotheses. Greece's accession in 1981 despite incomplete transformation further suggests that the effective criterion for admission may have been political and institutional, an asymmetry addressed by the third theoretical tradition.

Whereas economic growth theory predicts that integration stimulates productivity and structural upgrading after accession, Oltheten et al. (2003) argue that structural modernization should largely precede accession. The disagreement therefore concerns the sequencing of development, with Greece providing an important case for evaluating whether membership primarily rewarded prior modernization or generated it.

2.3 Institutionalist Theory and European Union Conditionality

The third perspective holds that institutions are the fundamental determinant of long-run economic development. In this tradition, associated with North, Olson, Acemoğlu, and Rodrik, development depends on both physical capital and technological progress and on political and economic institutions that protect property rights, enforce contracts, provide public goods such as education, infrastructure, health care, and security, and legitimize the economic system by making it more equitable. Institutions are therefore understood as a

necessary, though not sufficient, condition for sustained development (Karaguesian & Chandralal, 2026a).

Effective institutions promote growth by improving governance, increasing policy credibility, reducing transaction costs, and creating incentives for productive investment. In contrast, weak institutions generate uncertainty, discourage investment, and depress long-run productivity. Development economics increasingly recognizes that development extends beyond output growth to encompass effective governance, education, health, social welfare, and the state's capacity to formulate and implement development policies (Karaguesian & Chandralal, 2026b; Karaguesian & Montelpare, 2026a).

The European Union's accession process embodies this institutional logic. Hisamoğlu (2014) identifies bureaucratic quality, law and order, internal conflict management, and ethnic tensions as significant determinants of economic growth during Türkiye's accession process. Öniş (2000) shows that the European Union placed democratic governance, constitutional reform, and human rights at the center of its enlargement policy through political conditionality during the 1990s. Grigoriadis (2008) demonstrates that compliance with the Copenhagen political criteria required extensive constitutional amendments, judicial reform, and expanded minority rights, while Bölükbaşı et al. (2010), in their review of the Europeanization literature, frame such reforms as part of a wider domestic transformation encompassing public administration, policymaking, and state institutions beyond individual legislative measures.

Subsequent scholarship, however, questions whether European Union conditionality retained sufficient credibility to sustain these reforms over time. Eldem (2013) argues that the open-ended nature of accession negotiations, declining confidence in eventual membership, and changing expectations among member states substantially weakened domestic incentives for reform after 2005, while Esen and Gümüşçü (2016), Somer (2016), and Çalışkan (2018)

trace the subsequent consolidation of competitive authoritarianism. The transition from rapid constitutional reform during accession to competitive authoritarianism after 2005 suggests that formal legal harmonization may coexist with, and even conceal, weak *de facto* institutions, a distinction examined further in the Discussion. Ultimately, this literature supports H1, proposing that democratic consolidation, institutional quality, and macroeconomic stability were more important determinants of accession than economic development alone.

2.4 Synthesis and Contribution

These three traditions disagree over the sequencing of development. Economic growth theory sees European integration as driving sustained investment, innovation, and productivity after accession; structural transformation theory argues modernization must largely come before integration; and institutionalist theory highlights democratic governance and state capacity as key for accession and long-term growth.

Existing scholarship often examines economic consequences of membership or political determinants of accession separately. This study combines these perspectives within a framework that views accession as a selection process and membership as a factor influencing economic development, using Greece and Türkiye as case studies.

3. Methods

3.1 Unit of Analysis

The principal unit of analysis is the nation-state, with Greece and Türkiye observed from the late 1950s to the present. At this level, the two countries' political institutions, economic conditions, and degrees of European integration will be compared using secondary academic and quantitative sources.

Greece and Türkiye are neighboring Mediterranean states that established relations with the European Economic Community at roughly the same time, yet Greece was the one to attain full membership. Comparing them reduces confounding factors, making their divergence a more direct reflection of integration.

To complement the country-level comparison, the unit of analysis shifts to the individual through a supplementary survey of McGill University students affiliated with Greek and Turkish student communities, particularly the McGill Hellenic Students' Association (MHSA) and the Turkish Students' Society of McGill University (TSSMU). Members of these associations will serve as the sampling frame. Students who join national community associations are likely to engage with questions of identity and integration and are therefore well positioned to hold informed views on European Union membership, making association membership a suitable means of maximizing the eligible sampling frame. A sample of approximately 30-50 respondents will be drawn to ensure representation from both groups.

This study examines how these communities perceive the divergent integration paths of the two nations, focusing on EU membership, democratic reform, institutional quality, trade, and economic development, thereby adding a community perspective to the mixed-methods approach.

3.2 Data Collection Methods

As established previously, this study examines two hypotheses: that Greece's accession to the European Economic Community depended more on pre-1981 democratic consolidation, institutional quality, and macroeconomic stability than on its level of economic development (H1), and that full membership yielded greater long-term economic gains than Türkiye's partial integration (H2). Addressing these hypotheses requires a mixed-methods approach combining comparative-historical analysis based on secondary academic and quantitative sources with a survey instrument. No original interviews will be conducted; the qualitative analysis draws on previously published interviews.

For the literature review, sources will be identified through the McGill University Library catalog and databases including JSTOR, OpenEdition Journals, ScienceDirect, Springer Nature, and Google Scholar using search terms such as "European integration and economic growth," "EU conditionality," "Greece EEC accession," "Türkiye Customs Union," and "Europeanization." Priority will be given to peer-reviewed scholarship in economics, political economy, and European studies. At the same time, primary institutional materials, including European Commission Progress Reports, the Athens and Ankara Association Agreements, and the Copenhagen criteria, will anchor the historical narrative.

To trace the two countries' economic trajectories quantitatively, this study will also draw on the World Bank's World Development Indicators, the International Monetary Fund, the Penn World Table, Eurostat, and the OECD for measures of GDP per capita, productivity, trade openness, and foreign direct investment, with established indices of institutional quality and democratic governance. Comparing these series across Greece's pre- and post-accession periods and the successive stages of Türkiye's partial integration will help determine whether economic development primarily preceded accession or was strengthened by membership.

To complement the country-level comparison, the study develops an online questionnaire for subsequent administration, consistent with the Study Design. Because the sampling frame consists of two clearly defined student communities, the McGill Hellenic Students' Association (MHSA) and the Turkish Students' Society of McGill University (TSSMU), an online instrument provides the most practical means of reaching the targeted 30-50 respondents. As questions of national identity and European Union membership remain politically sensitive within both communities, responses will be collected anonymously to reduce social desirability bias.

The questionnaire uses closed-ended, interval-scale semantic differential items with follow-up questions exploring views on EU membership, reform, institutional quality, trade, and economic growth. This structure allows multiple variables to be examined simultaneously. It produces data suitable for analysis, helping identify the key factors shaping each community's views on European integration and whether Greeks and Turks assess its costs and benefits differently.

The questionnaire will be built and hosted on Qualtrics, selected for its survey logic, security infrastructure, and compliance with academic data protection standards. It will be distributed through an anonymized link circulated by email invitation and secure posting within the MHSA and TSSMU networks, allowing participants to respond confidentially from any device without retaining identifying information such as IP addresses. The full questionnaire is available from the author on request.

Particular attention will be devoted to question sequencing, beginning with demographic items before progressing to evaluative questions, and to balancing implicit and explicit formulations of the same underlying constructs to strengthen construct validity. The instrument will be kept deliberately brief to minimize respondent burden. An information and consent form accompanies the questionnaire.

The Discussion will include anecdotal events related to the two countries' integration experiences to illustrate the quantitative and survey findings. It will also connect the results to Dr. Andrew O'Donohue's doctoral research on judicial institutions, court capture, and democratic backsliding in Türkiye (O'Donohue, 2025), which I became familiar with through my research assistantship at the Istanbul Policy Center (IPC) on part of the project supporting his Harvard dissertation.

Drawing on more than 5,000 decisions of Türkiye's Constitutional Court and interviews with high-ranking judges, O'Donohue (2025) shows how elite capture of judicial institutions subverted democratization from within, even during EU-driven reforms. This supports H1 by demonstrating how court capture contributed to democratic backsliding, affecting Türkiye's compliance with the Copenhagen criteria and, consequently, its integration under H2. These findings will inform the Discussion of how institutional weaknesses shaped the two countries' trajectories, while observations from my assistantship will contribute anecdotal illustrations of how these institutional weaknesses operated in practice.

4. Findings

4.1 Qualitative Evidence

Greece joined the European Economic Community despite incomplete structural reforms and a large income gap with existing members, whereas Türkiye's bid stalled during rapid economic growth. This study first examines qualitative evidence from two elite interviews supporting this asymmetry and revealing its mechanism. The discourses of European and Turkish decision-makers indicate that political, institutional, and cultural factors were the primary drivers of accession, supporting H1 that pre-existing political and institutional conditions were more important than economic development.

On the European side, these dynamics are reflected in remarks by Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, the former French president who sponsored Greek accession and, by 2002, chaired the Convention on the Future of Europe. In an interview published by *Le Monde* on 8 November 2002, three years before accession negotiations with Türkiye formally opened, Giscard declared himself fiercely opposed to Turkish membership. His objections to Turkish membership were geographic, cultural, and institutional instead of economic. Although acknowledging that Türkiye was an important country close to Europe with a genuine elite, he insisted that *"ce n'est pas un pays européen"* ("it is not a European country"), noting that its capital and 95% of its population lay outside Europe (Leparmentier & Zecchini, 2002). All translations from the French are the author's own.

Discussing enlargement beyond the European continent, he offered what he expressly presented as his personal view: *"c'est la fin de l'Union européenne !"* ("it is the end of the European Union!"). His objections were explicitly cultural, arguing that the Union's legislation could not be extended to countries that had, for entirely respectable reasons, *"une autre culture, une autre approche, un autre mode de vie"* ("a different culture, a different approach, a different way of life"). He favored a partnership and cooperation pact similar to

that linking the Fifteen with Ukraine as an alternative to membership. Stated differently, these statements suggest that cultural identity and perceptions of European belonging constituted considerations independent of the economic criteria formally governing accession (Leparmentier & Zecchini, 2002).

Giscard's admission regarding the sincerity of the membership perspective is particularly significant. He regretted European leaders' ambiguous language toward Turkish officials, explaining that most European Council members had decided against Turkish accession without communicating this to Türkiye (Leparmentier & Zecchini, 2002). This statement by the chairman of the EU's constitutional convention indicates that the incentive created by conditionality was compromised from the outset because the promised reward for reform was unlikely to be delivered by key member governments.

The same article documents the resulting institutional contradiction within the European Union. German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer urged an end to the pretense of treating Türkiye as a candidate that would indefinitely remain without a date for negotiations. At the same time, the European Union officially praised Ankara's progress toward meeting the Copenhagen political criteria, including abolishing the death penalty, lifting prohibitions on non-Turkish languages, and partially ending the state of emergency. Formal compliance with political conditionality therefore coexisted with private opposition among influential member governments. The credibility deficit that Eldem (2013) identifies after 2005 thus appears to have originated before accession negotiations formally began. More broadly, this evidence indicates that political acceptance within the European Union extended beyond measurable institutional reforms, supporting the argument that accession reflected a selection process shaped primarily by political and institutional considerations, with economic performance playing a secondary role.

On the Turkish side, these dynamics are reflected in an interview given by Egemen Bağış, Türkiye's Minister for EU Affairs and chief accession negotiator, to *The Irish Times* during a November 2010 visit to Dublin. Bağış inverted the dependency implicit in candidacy, stating that "Europe does need Turkey more than Turkey needs Europe" and that excluding Türkiye would cost Europeans more than admitting it (Fitzgerald, 2010). His argument rested on the same economic and structural indicators examined in the quantitative analysis. Contrasting Europe's economic crisis with the 11% growth rate he claimed for Türkiye that year, he emphasized Türkiye's strategic importance for European access to regional energy resources. That the chief accession negotiator could cite superior economic performance while accession nevertheless remained blocked suggests that economic development alone did not determine accession outcomes.

Instead, Bağış identified politics as the principal constraint, accusing certain member states of using the Cyprus dispute to conceal broader objections to Turkish membership while applying double standards throughout the negotiation process. His statement that "What Turkey expects is fair negotiations" (Fitzgerald, 2010) therefore reinforces the argument that political considerations increasingly outweighed economic indicators during accession.

Bağış's response to Giscard's cultural framing is equally significant. He described Türkiye as "the most eastern part of the West and the most western part of the East," presenting the country as a strategic bridge that Europe required more than ever. This directly challenges the categorical exclusion articulated by Giscard in 2002 and illustrates the fundamentally different understandings of European identity held by the two sides of the negotiations. Finally, having predicted that opinion in Ireland and other member states would shift once negotiations concluded, Bağış remarked that he would be "more worried about public opinion in Turkey" (Fitzgerald, 2010). This provides direct qualitative evidence for the

mechanism identified by Eldem (2013). As the credibility of eventual membership declined, domestic support for accession weakened, reducing incentives for continued political reform.

Combined with the quantitative evidence, these interviews show that Greece's successful accession and Türkiye's continued candidacy can be explained once combined with other factors instead of relying just on economic development. Political acceptance, institutional credibility, and perceptions of European identity emerged as the principal influences on the accession process, while Türkiye's lack of full membership limited its long-term economic benefits. The evidence supports H1 and contextualizes H2 by showing that the effects of full membership depend on political feasibility.

4.2 Quantitative Evidence

Turning to the quantitative record, this analysis provides substantially stronger support for H1 than for H2. Greece entered the European Economic Community with comparatively weak economic fundamentals, whereas the long-run benefits of European integration emerged gradually after accession. The findings therefore suggest that pre-accession political and institutional conditions played a greater role in determining membership than economic development alone.

The quantitative evidence is interpreted through two theoretical traditions introduced in the Literature Review: structural transformation theory, from Lewis (1954, as cited in Karaguesian & Chandralal, 2026a) through Rostow (1960, as cited in Karaguesian & Chandralal, 2026a), and economic growth theory as formalized in the Solow model (Karaguesian & Chandralal, 2026a; Karaguesian & Montelpare, 2026a). Evaluating the evidence through these frameworks allows their predictions and limitations to be assessed.

Before accession, Greece was among the least-developed members of the European Community. In 1981, GDP per capita was 68% of the EU average, ranking above only Ireland

(Oltheten et al., 2003). Agriculture remained dominant, manufacturing was protected, and Greece lagged in infrastructure, modernization, and technology, indicating that it joined the EEC before completing the structural transformation associated with advanced economies.

Viewed through structural transformation theory, these indicators show that Greece had not completed the shift of labor and capital from low-productivity agriculture to higher-productivity manufacturing and services identified by Lewis (1954, as cited in Karaguesian & Chandralal, 2026a), nor had it met Rostow's (1960, as cited in Karaguesian & Chandralal, 2026a) preconditions for take-off, including commercialized agriculture and a developing manufacturing base (Karaguesian & Chandralal, 2026a).

Macroeconomic performance likewise indicates that convergence had not been achieved before accession. Growth accounting by Leounakis and Sakellaris (2014) records average annual growth in real GDP per capita of 7.51% between 1960 and 1973, 0.70% between 1974 and 1993, and 3.12% between 1994 and 2007, followed by an annual fall in GDP of 4.62% during the depression of 2008 to 2013. Their statistical tests locate the structural breaks in the series at 1974 and 2008. Neither coincides with accession. Greece therefore entered the Community in the middle of a prolonged stagnation that had begun with the end of the dictatorship, and the recovery arrived in the mid-1990s, more than a decade after entry, which is consistent with the delayed convergence that Campos et al. (2019) identify.

A second series, reported by Oltheten et al. (2013), traces the same shape at a considerably higher level, giving average annual real GDP growth rates of 12.2% for 1960-1980, 6.6% for 1981-2001, 7.0% for 2001-2008, and -2.2% for 2009-2011, with an OECD series measured in United States dollars at 13.6%, 4.7%, 6.6%, and -2.8%. These figures differ from those above because they report growth in aggregate GDP, while the preceding figures report growth in GDP per capita. That difference accounts for part of the gap, because

aggregate growth exceeds growth per capita by the rate of population growth. Still, Greek demographic change across these decades is far too small to explain a divergence of this magnitude.

The figures therefore still warrant caution, since the authors observe that reliable Greek data are difficult to generate and the figures sit well above every growth-accounting estimate for the same periods. They are nonetheless reported here for two reasons. First, they are drawn from a peer-reviewed study whose periodization brackets the two events of interest to this analysis, accession in 1981 and Eurozone entry in 2001, which the growth-accounting periods do not. Second, disclosing a disagreement between sources is more informative than selecting whichever series best suits the argument, particularly where both describe the same trajectory and the conclusions drawn here do not depend on the level of either.

By 1999, almost two decades after accession, Greece still recorded a government budget deficit of 3.1% of GDP, public debt equal to 94% of GDP, inflation of about 2.0% compared with an EU average of 1.5%, and a 10-year government bond yield of 6.5% compared with 5.2% in Germany (Oltheten et al., 2013). These are the statistics as reported at the time; Eurostat's 2004 revision of the Greek deficit and debt series subsequently raised the ratios recorded for the late 1990s (Eurostat, 2004).

Moreover, an evaluation of the EU economies in 1998 found that 4 of the 15 member states satisfied the Maastricht public debt criterion of 60% of GDP, and the criterion was consequently dropped before the euro's introduction (Oltheten et al., 2013). Despite these imbalances, Greece entered the Eurozone in 2001. These indicators collectively show that neither full macroeconomic convergence nor complete structural transformation was required for membership, providing strong support for H1.

This finding also exposes a limitation of structural transformation theory. If modernization must precede integration, as Oltheten et al. (2003) argue, the theory cannot

explain Greece's admission despite incomplete transformation. This study argues that political and institutional considerations ultimately determined accession.

Support for H2 is more conditional. Using a computable general equilibrium model, Harrison et al. (1997) project that Türkiye's 1996 Customs Union would generate welfare gains of about 1.0-1.5% of GDP. In their analysis, the largest of these gains arise from improved access to third-country markets under the European Union's reciprocal preferential agreements, with tariff reductions making a smaller contribution, since the post-union average tariff on non-agricultural imports falls below 2% and the associated costs of trade diversion are correspondingly small. Because the Customs Union excluded Structural and Cohesion Funds, the Common Agricultural Policy, free movement of labor, and participation in European institutions, the gains from partial integration remained limited.

Within the Solow framework, this outcome is consistent with theory: one-time improvements in allocative efficiency raise the level of output but not its long-run growth rate, which ultimately depends on sustained advances in technology, human capital, and productive efficiency (Karaguesian & Chandralal, 2026a). Those dynamic channels were precisely the mechanisms excluded from the Customs Union.

Cross-country evidence nevertheless indicates larger gains from full European integration. Henrekson, Torstensson, and Torstensson (1997) estimate that European Community and European Free Trade Association membership increased long-run growth by roughly 0.6-0.8 percentage points, while cautioning that the result is not fully robust to changes in the set of control variables. Earlier estimates were confined to static effects. The Cecchini Report (1988, as cited in Henrekson et al., 1997) calculated a 2.5-6.5% increase in Community income arising from the 1992 internal market. Gasiorek et al. (1991, as cited in Henrekson et al., 1997) found a static gain in total factor productivity of 1.5% from the single market program. Using synthetic control methods, Campos, Coricelli, and Moretti (2019)

estimate that per capita income across the accession countries in their sample would have been, on average, about 10% lower in the decade after accession without EU membership.

Greece, however, is the single exception in their analysis. Following its 1981 accession, Greece diverged from the EU average until the mid-1990s, after which stronger convergence emerged. The estimated effect of membership for Greece is therefore negative. In contrast, other entrants experienced positive effects, indicating that the cross-country average of roughly 10% characterizes the typical accession country and differs from Greece's experience. As Campos et al. (2019) emphasize, this result does not imply that Greece would have been better off outside the European Union.

Greece's post-1981 experience also reveals a limitation of economic growth theory. Although the Solow model predicts that a capital-scarce economy joining a larger market should experience rapid growth because $\alpha < 1$ implies diminishing returns to capital, Greece diverged from the EU average for almost fifteen years after accession (Karaguesian & Chandralal, 2026a). The model emphasizes investment and technological diffusion but underestimates the importance of institutional quality and absorptive capacity in determining whether these mechanisms generate sustained growth.

Structural transformation theory explains the delayed benefits of integration, which appeared after Greece reallocated labor and capital in the 1990s. However, it cannot explain Greece's admission before completing that transformation. Neither theory fully explains the evidence: the findings support H1, offer conditional support for H2, and the institutionalist view best accounts for the gap.

Figure 1 summarizes these findings. Panel A shows that Greek growth had already collapsed well before accession, which is consistent with the argument that political and institutional factors primarily determined entry, while economic convergence exerted less influence. Panel B places Türkiye's Customs Union gain beside the average first-decade gain

from full membership, indicating that deeper integration is associated with larger estimated benefits. Because that average excludes Greece as its one negative case, the comparison is best read as evidence that such gains are conditional.

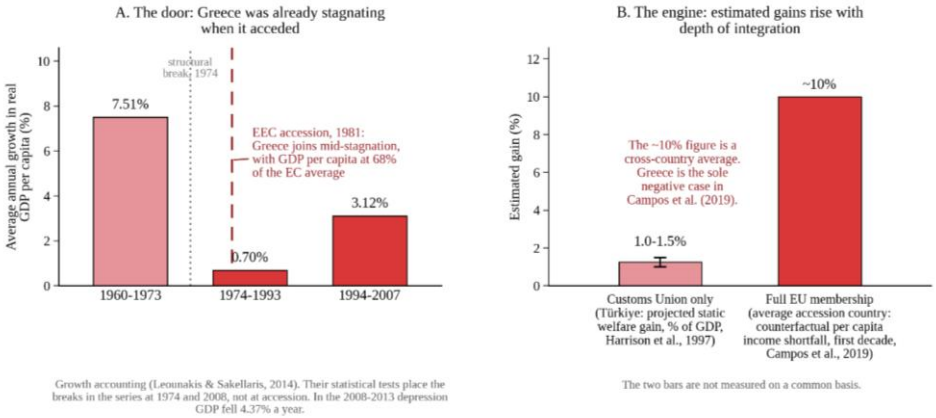

Figure 1. Selection versus treatment in Greece's and Türkiye's European integration. Panel A reports Greece's average annual growth in real GDP per capita by period, drawn from growth accounting (Leounakis & Sakellaris, 2014); the dotted line marks the 1974 structural break identified in that series and the dashed line marks accession in 1981, when Greek GDP per capita equaled 68% of the European Community average (Oltheten et al., 2003). Panel B places two distinct estimates side by side: the projected static welfare gain of Türkiye's Customs Union, expressed as a percentage of GDP (Harrison et al., 1997), and the estimated counterfactual shortfall in per capita income for the average accession country in the decade following entry (Campos et al., 2019). The two quantities do not rest on a common basis of measurement, and Greece is the sole negative case within the second.

5. Discussion

This section interprets the findings through the three theoretical traditions introduced in the Literature Review. Economic growth theory links integration to investment and productivity, structural transformation theory emphasizes modernization before integration, and institutionalist theory highlights governance, institutional quality, and EU conditionality as determinants of accession and development. Each explains part of the pattern shown in Figure 1, but solely their combination fully accounts for it.

The first result requiring explanation is that Greek growth had already decelerated sharply before accession. Growth in real GDP per capita fell from 7.51% over 1960-1973 to 0.70% over 1974-1993, and the structural breaks in the series occur in 1974 and 2008, while 1981 does not emerge as a structural break (Leounakis & Sakellaris, 2014). Greece therefore entered the Community while already stagnating, reinforcing the argument advanced here. Part of this deceleration is consistent with the Solow model: post-war Greece was capital-scarce, so the marginal return on investment was high, whereas diminishing returns meant that this pace could not be sustained regardless of membership (Karaguesian & Chandralal, 2026a).

However, economics alone cannot explain accession. Greece joined the European Community in 1981 with GDP per capita equal to 68% of the Community average because, following the 1974 restoration of democracy, both Athens and Brussels viewed membership as a means of consolidating democracy and preventing renewed authoritarianism (Karamouzi, 2015; Nafpliotis, 2018). The door therefore opened on political and institutional grounds.

The second result is Greece's divergence from the European Union average between 1981 and 1995 (Campos et al., 2019). Structural transformation theory best explains this delay. Because Greece entered the Community before completing the shift of labor and capital out of low-productivity agriculture, it could not immediately benefit from the common market. The macroeconomic imbalances documented in the Findings, including persistent deficits, public

debt equal to 94% of GDP, and high bond yields, further delayed convergence until the reforms of the mid-1990s (Oltheten et al., 2013). Membership functioned as an engine of development after domestic conditions improved.

The third result is the gap in Figure 1, Panel B, between the 1.0-1.5% of GDP projected for Türkiye's Customs Union and the roughly 10% average income gain associated with full membership across accession countries (Harrison et al., 1997; Campos et al., 2019). Because the two estimates rest on different methods, and because Greece is the negative exception within the second, the gap should be interpreted as an approximate indication of what Türkiye forwent. The Solow framework explains this asymmetry: the Customs Union improved allocative efficiency once, whereas full membership affects long-run growth through investment, technological diffusion, and policy credibility, channels excluded from Türkiye's partial integration (Karaguesian & Chandralal, 2026a).

That Bağış could set Europe's crisis against the rate of Turkish growth he claimed for 2010 while accession remained blocked (Fitzgerald, 2010) further indicates that economic performance was not the principal obstacle. The rhetorical figure he cited exceeds contemporaneous estimates, but the underlying contrast holds.

Why, then, did the door never open for Türkiye? The qualitative evidence points to the institutionalist perspective. Giscard d'Estaing's admission that most European Council members had privately decided against Turkish accession suggests that the incentive created by EU conditionality was compromised from the outset (Leparmentier & Zecchini, 2002). As Eldem (2013) argues, once the credibility of eventual membership declined after 2005, domestic incentives for reform weakened accordingly. Political acceptance and perceptions of European identity primarily governed the accession process, with measurable economic indicators carrying less weight (Öniş, 2000).

An observation from my research assistantship at the Istanbul Policy Center further illustrates this institutional mechanism. I contributed to part of Dr. Andrew O'Donohue's Harvard University dissertation on judicial selection institutions, court capture, and democratic backsliding in Türkiye (O'Donohue, 2025). Drawing on more than 5,000 Constitutional Court decisions, text-as-data analysis, and interviews with high-ranking judges, the study shows that judicial selection institutions concentrated power in nonelected elites: the president prevailed in 82% of Constitutional Court cases and was about 30 percentage points more likely to succeed than other actors. Between 2002 and 2010, despite EU-driven democratizing reforms, the Court annulled military-related legislation in 82% of cases, struck down the 2008 constitutional amendment lifting the university headscarf ban despite support from more than 80% of parliament, and came within one vote of closing the governing party (O'Donohue, 2025).

Assisting with this research made tangible a distinction also reflected in this study's findings: formal harmonization with the *acquis communautaire* coexisted with *de facto* institutions that undermined democratization from within. Court capture therefore helps explain why the reforms of 1999-2005 failed to consolidate, weakening Türkiye's compliance with the Copenhagen criteria (Grigoriadis, 2008), and why subsequent executive-judicial conflict contributed to the democratic backsliding documented after 2013 (Esen & Gümüşçü, 2016; O'Donohue, 2025). Institutional quality, not economic performance, ultimately marked the margin on which Türkiye's candidacy failed. Two limitations qualify these conclusions. First, the analysis relies on secondary quantitative sources, and the estimates compared in Figure 1 reflect different concepts because one measures a one-time welfare gain and the other estimates a counterfactual income difference. Second, the survey of the McGill Hellenic and Turkish student communities described in the Methods had not yet been administered, so its community-level evidence remains for future analysis.

In light of these findings, H1 is supported. Greece was admitted despite weak economic fundamentals, while political, institutional, and cultural considerations, with evidence on court capture, indicate that democratic consolidation, institutional quality, and macroeconomic stability were more important than economic development alone. H2 receives partial support. Although full membership is associated with larger long-run gains (Henrekson et al., 1997; Campos et al., 2019), Greece diverged from the EU average for nearly fifteen years after accession, indicating that membership alone did not generate these gains; domestic reforms were also necessary. Membership therefore depended on domestic institutions, as the political "door" to accession and the economic "engine" of development were sequential, thus not independent.

6. Conclusion

This study encountered several limitations. First, the quantitative analysis relied upon secondary datasets and published empirical estimates, with original econometric estimation lying beyond the scope of the study. Second, although a survey instrument was developed, it had not yet been administered, preventing the incorporation of community-level evidence into the mixed-methods framework. Finally, because European integration reflects interacting political, economic, institutional, cultural, and geopolitical factors, isolating the independent effect of any single determinant remains difficult.

The findings provide strong support for Hypothesis 1 and conditional support for Hypothesis 2. Greece's accession depended primarily upon democratic consolidation, institutional quality, macroeconomic stability, and political acceptance, while economic development played a secondary role. The long-run economic benefits of European Union membership also proved conditional upon continued domestic institutional development and structural transformation. Accordingly, accession functioned primarily as a political and institutional selection process, whereas membership served as a conditional engine of long-run economic development.

Future research should administer the survey developed for this study through the McGill Hellenic Students' Association (MHSA) and the Turkish Students' Society of McGill University (TSSMU), allowing sufficient time to obtain responses and incorporate original community-level evidence into a revised version prepared for publication through the McGill Library. This project also establishes a foundation for a future Honours thesis in International Development Studies, where the comparative analysis could be strengthened through original econometric estimation, an expanded survey, additional case studies, further qualitative evidence, and a comparative examination of judicial institutions in both Greece and Türkiye to

evaluate more directly how courts, institutional quality, and democratic governance influenced their divergent European integration trajectories.

Ultimately, the comparison between Greece and Türkiye demonstrates that European integration cannot be explained through economic indicators alone. Political and institutional selection governed accession, with the developmental gains of membership emerging gradually and remaining contingent upon effective domestic institutions.

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