

STRENGTHENING A VIBRANT RELATIONSHIP

Chance offered to deepen bilateral ties

'The prime minister's visit highlights the significance we attribute to our relations with Japan, as well as our desire to see those relations expanded and deepened for the benefit of both countries'

By ELIAS KATSAREAS
Ambassador of Greece to Japan

The arrival today of Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis on his official visit to Japan, the first of its kind, is of great importance to the relations shared by the two countries. Simitis worked

methodically and patiently to include Greece among the European nations that share a common currency, a goal achieved at the



beginning of this year.

The prime minister's visit highlights the significance we attribute to our relations with Japan, as well as our desire to see those relations expanded and deepened for the benefit of both countries.

It also provides an excellent opportunity to communicate with the people of Japan and convey to them the greetings and best wishes of the people of Greece.

Our two countries, though very distant geographically, share the common values of democracy, individual freedoms, human rights and the rule of law. We both have open societies with market economies and have descended from important ancient civilizations. We realize that the challenges of globalization and new technologies — constantly changing the world environment — should be managed for the benefit of humankind and harnessed to fight world poverty, social exclusion, deterioration of the environment, disease, drug trafficking and international crime.

Simitis boasts wealth of experience

Costas Simitis was born in Athens on June 23, 1936. His parents were active in the resistance during the occupation of Greece during World War II. He is married to Daphne Simitis, nee Arkadiou. They have two daughters: Fiona, a painter; and Mariena, a political scientist.

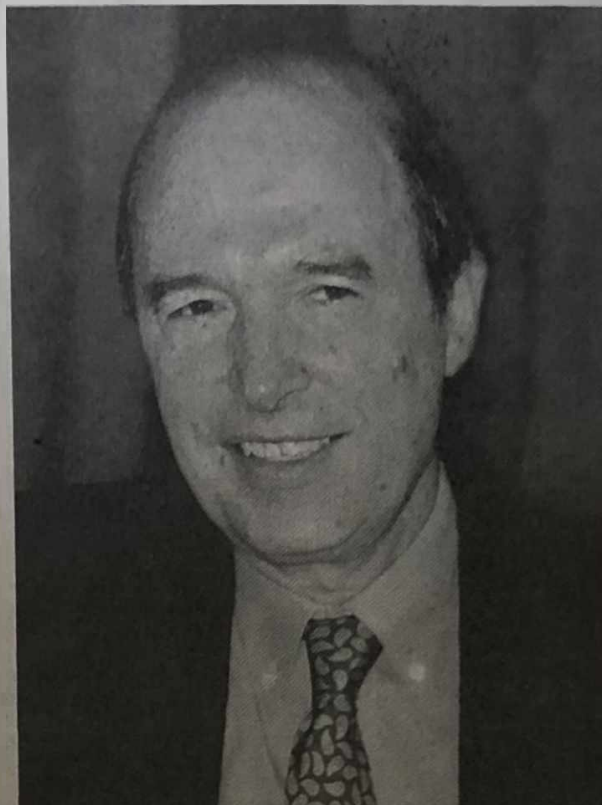
Academic career

Simitis studied law and economics in Germany and England. He was awarded a Doctor Juris degree by the University of Marburg in 1959 and engaged in postdoctoral studies at the London School of Economics between 1961 and 1963. He was reader in law at the University of Konstanz, Germany, during 1971 and professor of commercial and civil law at the Justus Liebig University, Giessen, between 1971 and 1975. He was appointed professor of commercial law at the Pantelion University of Political and Social Sciences, Athens, in 1977. During his academic career, he wrote extensively in Greek, German and English.

Political career

In 1965 Simitis cofounded the Alexandros Papanastasiou Society, a group dedicated to researching politics. The society's members subsequently formed the nucleus of Democratic Defence, an underground group that engaged in subversive activity against the military regime. In 1969 an arrest warrant was issued against him, forcing him to flee to Germany. As Simitis could not be made to stand trial in a court-martial, the military government arrested his wife and kept her in solitary confinement for two months.

Between 1969 and 1974 he actively continued to oppose



Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis

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the junta from Germany. In 1970 he became a member of the national council of the Panhellenic Liberation Movement.

After the restoration of democracy in 1974, Simitis became a founding member of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK). He helped draft the party's charter declaration and was a member of its first executive bureau.

In the first PASOK

government, which came to power in 1981, he was appointed minister of agriculture and supervised the integration of Greek farming under the Common Agricultural Policy. He held this position until 1985, when he was elected as the parliamentary representative for the port city of Piraeus, a post which he has won in every election since. In the same year he was appointed minister of national economy.

Until his resignation from the post in 1987, he presided over the implementation of the economic stabilization program, which had beneficial effects on all macroeconomic indicators.

Simitis was named minister of industry and commerce in 1993. During his tenure, he promoted industrial development based on competitiveness, upgrading of infrastructure and consumer protection. He resigned from the post in 1995.

On Jan. 18, 1996, following the resignation of Andreas Papandreu for health reasons, Simitis was elected prime minister by PASOK. On June 30, 1996, the fourth PASOK congress elected him president of the party. Elections on Sept. 22, 1996, returned PASOK to a majority, and Simitis was mandated to form a government. He also triumphed in the following election on April 9, 2000. On June 19 the same year, he signed the treaty for Greece's accession to the Economic and Monetary Union, which was the result of the consistent economic policies adhered to in the preceding years.

Simitis is the author of legal monographs in German on consumer protection as a legal principle and in Greek on patent law, as well as numerous articles on other topics in Greek, German and English.

Since 1979 he has published some 10 books of political thought and argumentation on socialist issues. The titles include:

- "The Structural Opposition" (1979).
- "Policy for Economic Stabilization" (1989).
- "Nationalistic Populism or National Strategy?" (1992).
- "Toward a Vigorous Society, Toward a Vigorous Greece" (1995).

Simitis speaks Greek, German, English and French

Greece and Japan welcome the recent adoption in Brussels of the EU-Japan 10-year joint action plan and

the declaration against terrorism. We believe the documents will contribute significantly to

international peace and security. As both our countries uphold the principles of

international law and the respect of international treaties, it is no wonder that our positions converge on many international issues.

This broad framework and our common values constitute the basis from which Simitis and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi can confidently strengthen an already vibrant relationship.

Also, the fact that both leaders have ambitious and bold reform agendas for their

respective economies and societies gives us all high hopes for fruitful exchanges during this visit.

In conclusion, I would like to convey best wishes for health and prosperity to Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress, other members of the Imperial family, as well as the government and people of Japan from the president, government and people of Greece.

Heartiest Welcome

to His Excellency Mr. Costas Simitis.

Heartiest Welcome

to His Excellency Mr. Constantinos Simitis,
Prime Minister of Greece,
on the Occasion of His Official Visit to Japan

Warmest Welcome

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