



A recent series of annual meetings I attended in Brussels, with European American Chambers, has put into sharp perspective emerging issues of the day as well as long-standing issues related to Greece. My European counterparts and I are clearly concerned about the wider implications of Brexit and the course of U.S. policies on trade, the economy, and wider geopolitical issues within the new American administration.

In relation to Greece, the concerns of my European colleagues are, of course, more direct. Following eight years of attending these meetings—corresponding to the years of crisis in Greece—it is becoming increasingly frustrating to respond to my colleagues' questions about Greece: Why is Greece not able to put its affairs in order and leap forward effectively, as other countries have done? And it is even more troubling for me when I explain to them the vast opportunities that Greece presents.

And here I understand the peculiar nature of Greece's political and social character. Greece has allowed itself to become captive to outdated perceptions, impotent practices, and narrow—and narrow-minded—vested interests. Interests that prevent the healthy and needed reforms to change the course of the country and take advantage of its immense opportunities.

The shameful and endless parody of costly negotiations, based on populist approaches, unrealistic goals and fanciful expectations, has led us to a dead end. As Europe confronts major issues of its future Greece is wasting precious time and throwing away irreplaceable political capital. For instance, Greece's debt, rather than being assessed on pragmatic economic and internationally accepted accounting terms, has become a tool of deception and political exploitation. The same is true of taxation levels and pension numbers. Rather than using past errors to build future wealth and prosperity, boost employment and investment, our governments prefer to engage in immature tactics and maneuvers that create apparent short-term gains—with long-term losses.

The cherry on the cake, so to speak, becomes ever so distasteful when the government imposes tax burdens, social security increases, and pension cuts on citizens and businesses, all of whom have decided to stay in Greece and support its future, and exempts its own politicians from austerity measures, from sharing the burden. This is not only a case of not leading by example, it is a gross insult to every Greek and to the democratic ideal that arose from this soil.

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THE AMERICAN-HELLENIC CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

A DYNAMIC, PROACTIVE CHAMBER

The American-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce was established in 1932 and is one of the largest, most active, and dynamic American Chambers in Europe. Virtually all American companies that do business in Greece and Greek companies that engage in trade with the United States are members of the Chamber.

The Chamber's membership is comprised of more than 1,000 proactive companies that seek to expand business horizons, create new business partnerships, and take advantage of trade and investment opportunities in today's global economy.

The American-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce is an active mem-

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