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From Dictatorship to Democracy: US-Greek Relations at a Critical Turning Point (1 9 7 4 1 9 7 5)

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**From Dictatorship to Democracy:
US-Greek Relations at a Critical Turning Point
(1974–1975)**

Antonis Klapsis

On 15 July 1974 the Greek military junta instigated a coup in Cyprus in order to overthrow the president of the Republic of Cyprus, Archbishop Makarios III, and unite the island with Greece. The coup gave Turkey the pretext to invade Cyprus five days later and eventually to occupy almost 40 percent of the island's territory, thus forcing thousands of Greek Cypriots to abandon their domiciles in the north and become refugees in their own country. As a result of this ethnic disaster, the military dictatorship that had ruled Greece since 21 April 1967 collapsed, opening the way for the restoration of democracy in Greece.

In the early hours of 24 July 1974, Konstantinos Karamanlis returned to Athens after more than ten years of self-exile in Paris. Almost immediately he was sworn in as prime minister and formed a national unity government composed of prominent politicians of diverse political backgrounds. From the very first moments of its existence, the national unity government had to deal with enormous problems, such as confrontation with Turkey both in Cyprus and in the Aegean Sea, as well as reestablishing democratic normality in Greece. Given the fact that many of the supporters of the military regime, especially within the Greek armed forces, were not willing to accept the new political situation voluntarily, Karamanlis and his collaborators found themselves in a very difficult position. Greece was on the edge of war with Turkey,

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