



Greece's call for an embargo on weapons sales to Turkey: a seminal step for the EU's collective defence identity?

SECURITY & FOREIGN POLICY

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November 2020
Policy Paper #44/2020

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Summary

- Greece's recent call to its fellow EU members to place an embargo on the sale of weapons to Turkey is informed by its own experience when, after the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974, it achieved an embargo on weapon transfers from the US to Turkey.
- Additionally, in the case of the Falklands war of 1982, the EEC embargoed weapons sales to Argentina upon the request of the UK. Subsequently, in 2014, France heeded calls from fellow EU member states and annulled the sale of two helicopter carriers to Russia.
- Notwithstanding the historically limited collective defence role of the EC/EU (henceforth EU), its capacity for collective action means that militarily threatened member states will both value and see solidarity, expressed via a weapons sanctions policy, as integral to the *raison d' être* of the European enterprise.
- Thus Greece, on the basis of its own experience and of EU precedents such as the above, and assuming continued Turkish assertiveness in the Eastern Mediterranean, can be expected to persist with its demand for an EU embargo on weapons sales to Turkey.
- The case of Greece demonstrates how, in the context of partial US retrenchment, demands with regard to the EU's collective defence capacity are driven by both: (a) consumers of such capacity--namely, peripheral EU member states threatened by non-EU neighbours, and (b) producers of such capacity—namely, core EU countries with advanced weapons development and manufacturing capabilities and/or powerful armed forces.

“The call for an embargo on arms sales to Turkey by the Greek PM to his European colleagues at the meeting of the European Council on 16/10 is potentially a seminal moment for the evolution of the European Union's (EU) collective defence identity.”

Introduction

The call for an embargo on arms sales to Turkey by the Greek PM to his European colleagues at the meeting of the European Council on 16/10 is potentially a seminal moment for the evolution of the European Union's (EU) collective defence identity. Such an identity can be built on powerful Greek, as well as non-Greek, precedents which we will examine in this policy brief.

“The best expression of European solidarity towards two states [Greece and Cyprus] that are being tested by such [military] threats would be a European initiative, or potentially initiatives, at the level of the member states of Europe, which would no longer allow the sale of weapons to Turkey, weapons which could potentially be used to threaten the sovereignty and sovereign rights of two member states”, said Greek Prime Minister K. Mitsotakis on 16 October 2020, following the meeting of the European Council.¹

Firstly, we will place the Greek government's current call for an embargo on weapons sales to Turkey in the context of Greece's past experience, namely in the period after the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974.

Secondly, we will examine another two past--non-Greek--incidences of embargos on weapon exports to a warring or militarily threatening third country being called for by one or more EU member state. The first involved Argentina during the Falklands war in 1982; the second France's aborted sale of Mistral class helicopter carriers to the Russian Federation in 2014.

Thirdly, we will analyse the current state of play *re* arms export policy in the EU, primarily as it relates to France and Germany. We will evaluate this situation in the light of the past and current calls for weapons embargoes we have selected, all of which involve the national security of EU member states.

Fourthly, we will assess the impact that an EU embargo on weapons transfers and sales to Turkey could have on the EU's policy on weapon exports by its member states, on EU–NATO dynamics, and on the operationalization of the EU's collective defence identity.

Finally, we will suggest possible directions for research engendered by the Greek government's call for an EU arms embargo on Turkey, and make various policy recommendations to the Greek government.

Going back to the future: the invasion of Cyprus and weapons sales and transfers to Turkey

The Greek PM's call for a weapons embargo on Turkey establishes a direct link between an EU member state's military deterrence and the suspension of sales of weapons systems by other EU member states to a non-EU member, namely Turkey. This development is even more critical, considering that it relates to Germany's sale and co-production agreement with Turkey to deliver six advanced submarines. These submarines belong to the same 214 class of submarines to which four in-service Hellenic

¹ Excerpt from Prime Minister Mitsotakis' interview in Brussels following the meeting of the European Council. Full text in Greek available at: <https://primeminister.gr/2020/10/16/25042>

Navy submarines belong, which is widely reported as conferring an important advantage on the Greek armed forces due to their superior capabilities.

It would be a mistake to underestimate the gravity of the Greek PM's request, which the Hellenic Minister for Foreign Affairs has since specified in correspondence relates to Turkey's three main weapon suppliers in the EU: Germany, Italy and Spain. As Greece's own past experience suggests, a member state's national security crisis can either destabilize or strengthen an entity such as the EU or NATO, as well as impacting on its inter-alliance dynamics.

In the case of Greece in the wake of the 1974 invasion of Cyprus, this meant the Greek government of the day was compelled by domestic political pressure to withdraw the country from NATO's military wing. Concurrently, NATO's dominant member, the US, instituted a weapons embargo on Turkey which was legislated by Congress. The wave of anti-Westernism that military defeat in Cyprus caused in Greece pushed the EU into increasing its geopolitical responsibilities by privileging Greece's accession to the bloc, something the US strongly encouraged at the time². On the other hand, the dominant perception that Turkey's invasion of Cyprus engendered in Greece—that of Greece being abandoned by its Western allies ('Europe and NATO, the same syndicate', as the slogan of the then-radical populist PASOK party had it)—delegitimized the economic reform agenda that was the corollary of Greece's entry into the EU in 1981³. Thus, a national security crisis demonstrated its potential to undermine an EU member state's capacity and inclination to remain bound to core features of the European enterprise, primarily in the domain of economics.

“...a national security crisis demonstrated its potential to undermine an EU member state's capacity and inclination to remain bound to core features of the European enterprise, primarily in the domain of economics.”

Let us note here that the present Greek government's correspondence with Germany, Italy and Spain, formally asking them to suspend weapons sales to Turkey, has been accompanied by Greek press reports itemizing the main weapons systems these three fellow EU member states supply to Turkey. Thus, Greek public opinion is informed about the particular weapons systems, and most notably about the imminent construction and delivery of the formidable 214-class submarines from Germany to Turkey.

In Greece, the weapons embargo playbook is inscribed in both institutional and popular memory. As mentioned above, the successful lobbying of the US Congress by the Greek-American community led to a suspension of weapons transfers to Turkey by the US after the 1974 Cyprus invasion. This lasted for three years, after which a 7:10 ratio was implemented in military assistance to Greece and Turkey respectively, which was designed to maintain an equilibrium between the military forces of the two countries⁴. This elite and popular memory surely informs expectations of European solidarity in Greece. After all, as an EU member state, Greece should expect to achieve at least as much as it did in 1974, when it was not yet a member state, through the political influence of the Greek-American community, which helped introduce a US arms transfer policy that went some way towards strengthening the country's military deterrence vis-à-vis Turkey in the 1970s.

“In Greece, the weapons embargo playbook is inscribed in both institutional and popular memory.”

² See Karamouzi, E., *Greece the EEC and the Cold War, 1974-1979 – The Second Enlargement*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

³ Pagoulatos, G. (2010) Believing in national exceptionalism: ideas and economic divergence in Southern Europe, *West European Politics*, 27:1, 45-70.

⁴ Kitroeff, A., The limits of political transnationalism: The Greek-American lobby, 1970s -1990's, in Tziouvas, D. ed (2009) *Greek Diaspora and Migration since 1700*, Ashgate.

What past European solidarity tells us: from the Falklands to the Mistrals

The two cases we will examine lie at the two extremes of the continuum in terms of weapon transfers from the EU being suspended or aborted in order to address national security imperatives of one or more member states.

In the case of the Falklands war, the suspension of weapons sales and transfers to Argentina, particularly the delivery of Exocet missiles by France to Argentina, were a critical factor in the outcome of an ongoing military conflict. In the case of the aborted sale of France's two Mistral-class helicopter carriers to the Russian Federation, it was a future hypothesized threat that was neutralized. This threat entailed Russia utilizing the expeditionary capability conferred by the Mistrals to militarily threaten either the Baltics or the Black Sea nations.

It could reasonably be argued that both these cases are relevant and comparable to the Greek government's current call for an embargo on weapons systems to Turkey, as this Greek call lies somewhere in the middle on the Falklands-Mistrals continuum. Greece is not actually at war with Turkey, but neither is it dealing with a hypothetical threat: the activities of the Turkish navy and of Turkey's exploratory vessel *Oruc Reis* in the Eastern Mediterranean make it an actual threat.

"...there were real fears that had the EU suspended its trade sanctions and weapons embargo to Argentina, the UK might have seriously entertained the idea of leaving the EEC."

In the case of the Falklands war, which lasted from April to June 1982, the British government quickly secured a ban on Argentine imports and an embargo on weapons sales and deliveries by the EU's other member countries. Both solidarity with a fellow EU member state and the violation of international law were invoked in the relevant EU decisions and proclamations⁵. Other than the manifest need to be seen to stand by a fellow member state in its hour of need, despite reservations about the British stance of holding on to such an obscure imperial remnant, critical member countries had their own unique reasons to support the UK: France was worried that Argentina might set an example which would threaten its own remaining imperial possessions, while Germany was concerned that the defence of Berlin, and more generally the force of the collective security guarantee of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, might otherwise be weakened.

The import ban and weapons embargo were, additionally, justified at the commencement of the crisis as alternatives--as opposed to adjuncts--to armed conflict. EU member states hoped that Argentina would retreat from the Falklands in the face of the EU's concerted action. Thus, the failure of Argentina to back down, as well as the UK's subsequent sinking of the *General Belgrano* at great loss of life, weakened the achieved consensus, with member states such as Ireland and Italy pushing for the suspension of both the import ban and the weapons embargo. However, the UK's subsequent compromise on its budgetary contributions and on the Common Agricultural Policy reaffirmed the resolve of the EU member states. At the same time, there were real fears that had the EU suspended its trade sanctions and weapons embargo to Argentina, the UK might have seriously entertained the idea of leaving the EEC. So, obscure and distant as the Falklands dispute between the UK and Argentina might have been to EU members as a holdover of a bygone empire, it nonetheless compelled a clear demonstration of EEC solidarity, due to the importance placed on it by the UK government at the time.

⁵ See European Political Cooperation, Statements of the Foreign Ministers and other Documents, 1982, Community solidarity in the Falklands Dispute – various statements.

In this brief summary, we have highlighted France and Germany's ability to see the big picture—namely, the cohesion and integrity of the EU-NATO nexus, of which the UK was such an integral part—, despite any misgivings and doubts they might have had. To serve that cause, France was willing to sacrifice its reputation as a reliable arms exporter, despite the fact that arms exports were indispensable overall to fund its strategic autonomy doctrine. Specifically, France did not send any Exocet missiles to Argentina over and above those it had already delivered prior to the invasion of the Falklands; it did not deliver seven Super Etendard fighter jets ordered prior to the conflict; and it did not provide technical support for the Super Etendards already in Argentina's possession⁶. Importantly, the Exocet missiles and Super Etendard jets were protagonists in the conflict, inflicting heavy losses on the British Royal Navy, and Argentina having more of both at its disposal could have had a material impact on the conflict's outcome. For its part, Germany was willing to set aside commercial considerations, given that an import ban would inevitably lead to a retaliatory ban on EU imports into Argentina⁷.

In the case of the sales of the two Mistral (with an agreement for a further two to be constructed by the Russian Federation), the prospect had aroused a negative reaction from the very beginning, with the US government taking the lead. Resistance to the sale intensified among France's allies, even including Japan, but stemmed in the main from EU member states which were threatened by Russia, such as the Baltic countries and Poland. This chorus of disapproval had the war in Abkhazia and South Ossetia as a backdrop, while statements by Russian army officers to the effect that, had the Mistral been available, they would have expedited Russia's handling of the conflict considerably, had a not inconsiderable impact.

“Ultimately, important as they were, weapons exports could not override the imperative to maintain France's geopolitical credibility.”

The sale of the Mistral was an extreme version of France's agnostic weapons export policy, which was designed in turn to serve its goal of strategic autonomy while also boosting the fortunes of the French locality in which they were to be built. The agreement was concluded by the Sarkozy government in 2011, at a time when relations with the Russian Federation had not yet drastically deteriorated. It fell to the Hollande Presidency to annul the sale in 2014 and reimburse the Russian Federation for the payments it had already made.

It was a difficult decision to take, as renegeing on the obligation to deliver the Mistral was seen as posing a risk to the conclusion of France's sale of Rafale fighter jets to India. The successful export of the Rafales was critical for the financial viability of the fighter jets' production, as the French government would otherwise need to compensate the manufacturer, Dassault, for any lost exports. On the plus side, cancelling the sale of the Mistral made Poland a viable customer for French exports of anti-missile systems. Ultimately, important as they were, weapons exports could not override the imperative to maintain France's geopolitical credibility as a leading Western power and member of both NATO and the EU, and in a context of rapidly deteriorating relations between the West and Russia. Indicative of this imperative were counterproposals made at the time for France to reaffirm its role and identity as a pillar of Western defence by *inter alia* stationing Rafale fighter jets in the Baltics.

It is pertinent to our analysis that, as noted at the time, the EU member states that

⁶ The three pillars of France's strategic autonomy are its nuclear force, its independent defence industry, partially funded by weapons exports, and its ambiguous relationship to NATO.

⁷ This account is based on Martin, L., (1992) Institutions and Cooperation: Sanctions during the Falkland Islands Conflict, *International Security*, 16:4, p.143-178 and Slaughter, R.L., (2007) The politics and nature of the conventional arms transfer process during a military engagement: The Falklands-Malvinas case, *Contemporary Security Policy*, 4:1, 16-30.

opposed the sale of the Mistral did not invoke the Common Position adopted in 2008 during the French Presidency of the EU. The Common Position instructs member states to refrain from weapons exports on a number of grounds, including their potential impact on regional stability and the national security of a member state.⁸ A speculative answer as to why it was not invoked is that other member states-- presumably those with strong defence industries--did not want to create an institutionalized EU precedent that could later be invoked to restrict their own weapons exports. However, the current Greek government has had no such qualms about invoking regional instability and its own national security—specifically, Articles 4 and 5 of the Common Position—as grounds for its fellow member states to suspend weapons sales to Turkey. We note here that Greece does not possess a strong, export-oriented defence sector.

“...countries that are significant importers of German goods tend to figure prominently as recipients of German armaments.”

From the Falklands to Kastellorizo: France and Germany as weapons exporters, defence industrial partners, and indispensable pillars of the EU's collective defence

The critical role which France's weapons exports play in the country's strategic autonomy doctrine has already been noted above, while a recent quantitative survey of Germany's weapons exports found a strong correlation with the country's overall export performance: countries that are significant importers of German goods tend to figure prominently as recipients of German armaments. Hard power and normative constraints do not seem to have a significant impact on the destination of German weapon exports⁹. On the other hand, a qualitative comparison between France and Germany indicates that there is greater parliamentary scrutiny and more intense public debate in Germany than in France. That is particularly the case with weapons exports to zones of conflict and/or countries implicated in significant human rights violations¹⁰. This divergence accords, on the one hand, with Germany's post WWII efforts to atone for its past and, on the other, with the Gaullist, elite and popular, consensus surrounding France's goal of strategic autonomy. That said, convergence has also been noted, as the French public has gradually become sensitized to the use of French armaments in conflicts which entail large-scale loss of civilian life and/or human rights violations. This has been the case with the war in Yemen prosecuted by Saudi Arabia, which has emerged as an important weapons buyer for France.

“...an embargo on EU weapons exports to Turkey would have had a much greater impact on Germany.”

The issue of the harmonization of France and Germany in relation to the regulatory scrutiny and framework governing their respective weapons exports has long exercised the leadership of both countries, with the issue also being covered by their Aachen & Aix-la-Chapelle treaty. Such harmonization is seen as materially significant, not least due to the ability of both countries to export on the same basis weapon systems to which each has contributed critical components through various co-production consortia. In particular, harmonization can facilitate further consolidation and rationalization in the European defence sector. Under commonly agreed criteria for weapons exports, French and German policy makers can be confident that increased co-production will not render them hostages of their respective home biases, in terms of which countries are, or are not, acceptable as purchasers of European armaments.

⁸ This account is based on Isbister, R. and Queau, Y., (2014) *An ill wind: How the sale of Mistral warships to Russia is undermining EU arms transfers control*, SAFERWORLD and GRIP Briefing, and Beraud-Sundreau, L., (2018) *President Hollande: continued backing for arms sales*, *Adelphi Series*, 58:475-476, p.117-136.

⁹ Platte, H. and Leuffen, D. (2016), *German Arms Exports: Between Normative Aspirations and Political Reality*, *German Politics*, 25:4, p.561-580.

¹⁰ Beraud-Sudreau, L., *Building Franco-German Consensus on Arms Exports*, *Survival*, 61:4, p. 79-98.

“...requested weapons embargo is part of a package that constitutes an alternative to conflict rather than an adjunct to it.”

“So antagonistic is the Franco-Turkish relationship that Turkey cannot be a buyer of weapons systems for France, nor France a seller of armaments for Turkey.”

How is the Greek call for an embargo on weapons to Turkey situated in the critical Franco-German interaction on the issue of weapons exports? Clearly, an embargo on EU weapons exports to Turkey would have had a much greater impact on Germany. This is due both to the status of the latter as an exporter of key weapons systems to Turkey and to the overall Turkish-German relationship, which encompasses the significant Turkish population in Germany and total German exports and investments in Turkey. That being said, France also has significant economic stakes in Turkey with, for example, Renault being a significant manufacturer there. Considering how invested Germany is in its relationship with Turkey, were the German government to freeze the construction and delivery of 214-class submarines to Turkey, it would definitely signal its determination to strengthen Greece's military deterrence. Such a message would be as significant in its implications as France's decision to accelerate the delivery to Greece of 18 Rafale fighter jets.

Such a decision by Germany would be in accordance with our two precedents: the EEC weapons embargo to Argentina and the annulment of France's sale of Mistrals to the Russian Federation. We will recall that in the former case both Germany and France, and in the latter case France, let solidarity with one or more fellow EU member states plus their overall geopolitical credibility override commercial considerations (including, in both cases, reputational consequences as reliable weapons exporters). It is worth noting here both the smaller size of the Greek armed forces compared with Turkey's, and Greece's desire to resolve its maritime disputes via international adjudication, which it has amply demonstrated of late through comparable agreements with Italy, Egypt and Albania. Both these factors mean that its requested weapons embargo is part of a package that constitutes an alternative to conflict rather than an adjunct to it. Irrefutably, Greece is not preparing for a war of aggression with Turkey by seeking to weaken the latter's armed forces in advance through an EU weapons embargo.

That being said, Greece's demand for a weapons ban on Turkey does not challenge France's use of weapons exports as a pillar of its strategic autonomy. So antagonistic is the Franco-Turkish relationship that Turkey cannot be a buyer of weapons systems for France, nor France a seller of armaments for Turkey. For its part, prior to the Greek call for a weapons embargo on Turkey, Germany had achieved an uneasy compromise between a mercantile weapons exports drive and a norms-driven political need not to arm repressive regimes which grossly violate human rights and cause civilian loss of life¹¹.

In the next section, we shall further refine our analysis of the impact an embargo on weapons transfers and sales to Turkey would have at the EU level. The analysis will focus on three domains: the EU's ability to unite around a common weapons exports policy, EU-NATO relations, and the EU's defence industry.

¹¹ Since 2019, Germany has curtailed the export to Turkey of weapons that could be used in the Syrian conflict, the rationale being that Turkey's role in the conflict is worsening the humanitarian situation there. See <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-no-total-arms-export-ban-for-turkey-despite-merkels-promise/a-50898701>. On the other hand, Germany has thus far argued that it will not freeze or annul the delivery of class-214 submarines to Turkey, arguing that these submarines are conducive to Turkey's NATO role. See <https://www.dailysabah.com/business/defense/limit-on-arms-export-to-turkey-excludes-maritime-equipment-german-fm-says>.

The Greek call for a weapons embargo: the EU and NATO

Greece called for a weapons embargo on Turkey in terms of solidarity with a fellow EU member-state and of regional stability. These are covered by Articles 4 and 5 of the Common Position invoked by Greece in its correspondence with Turkey's three main EU weapons supplier countries.

Civil society and left-wing parties hostile to weapons exports, particularly in Germany but also in France, may well jump on the Greek bandwagon to strengthen the case for a more restrictive weapons exports policy either on a country and/or on an EU basis.

"...in French eyes, Turkey has completely discredited NATO as a collective defence mechanism."

As we mentioned above, none of the EU states that opposed the Mistral sales to the Russian Federation so vociferously invoked the Common Position, the explanation being that they did not want to inscribe a precedent in the EU's institutional memory that could restrain their own weapons exports in the future. Relatedly, a recent assessment has noted the fears expressed by civil society actors in Europe that, if encapsulated in the evolution of the Common Position, EU convergence around a common weapons exports policy might result in the adoption of lower common denominator--and thus ineffectual--weapons export criteria¹².

In consonance with the above, the main pressure on Germany will stem from the acute threat which a militarily aggressive Turkey presents to Greece's national security. The author of this brief does not know whether France has made representations to Germany in favour of the imposition of a weapons embargo on Turkey. It would be fair to assume that France could do so on the grounds that such an embargo is essential for the credibility of the EU's collective defence identity. After all, in French eyes, Turkey has completely discredited NATO as a collective defence mechanism. Still, France's aggressive weapons exports to the Gulf, and to countries like Saudi Arabia and the UAE which are presently engaged in the highly controversial conflict in Yemen, places limits on what can and cannot be said. Consequently, France will inevitably be reluctant to argue the Greek case on grounds other than Greece's national security and the EU's geopolitical and geo-economic interests in the Mediterranean.

"...even the invocation of Article 4 on regional stability becomes important by virtue of its being linked by Article 5 to the security threat presented to the national security of an EU member state."

In other words, while it is understandable that Greece has used the Common Position to make its case for a weapons embargo, the precedent created by the submission of its request mostly relates to Articles 4 and 5, and not to the overall Common Position. We note here that the Common Position includes eight articles in all, and covers respect for human rights and the internal situation in a country, as well as the behaviour of the buyer country with regard to the international community (Articles/criteria 2, 3 & 6). We would argue that none of these additional articles will be rendered more potent by the precedent created by Greece. Arguably, even the invocation of Article 4 on regional stability becomes important by virtue of its being linked by Article 5 to the security threat presented to the national security of an EU member state.

The domain where the EU's adoption of a weapons embargo on Turkey would be most significant would be in EU-NATO relations and within NATO itself. Taken together, the accelerated delivery of the Rafale fighter jets to Greece by France and a hypothesized halting of the construction of the 214-class submarines by Germany for the Turkish navy recalls the Falklands war situation. In effect, EU member countries would decisively

¹² Cops, D. and Duquet, N., *Reviewing the EU Common Position on exports: Whither EU arms transfer controls?* Policy Brief, Flemish Peace Institute, December 2019.

strengthen Greece military's deterrence by enhancing the potency of its armed forces while simultaneously denying Turkey critical weapons systems.

Essentially, in such a scenario, the EU and NATO would be working at cross purposes. The EU would be strengthening one of its member states militarily, while NATO would be trying to adjudicate a dispute between two of its members, without taking a clear position in favour of one or the other. Yet this scenario has been rendered entirely plausible by Turkey's relentless military assertiveness. To judge how plausible it has become, we need only point to Germany's increasingly untenable defence of its class-214 submarine delivery: namely, that it facilitates Turkey's ability to contribute to NATO's central mission, which is none other than the collective defence of its member states, which include Greece. If this German conundrum does not justify French President Emmanuel Macron's statement that 'NATO is braindead', we do not know what can.

"If this German conundrum does not justify French President Emmanuel Macron's statement that 'NATO is braindead', we do not know what can."

The implications are clear as day: first, the rise of the EU as a collective security mechanism for its member states; second, the corresponding decline of NATO in the same role; and third, NATO's irrelevance for Turkey. Another element that underlines the momentous significance of an EU weapons embargo on Turkey is that it would render the UK's role in European defence via a repurposed NATO moot for the foreseeable future, since it would decisively shift the centre of balance in matters of collective defence to the EU, which the UK has now exited¹³. Consequently, an EU weapons embargo to Turkey, i.e. an act that both demonstrates and realizes the emergence of the EU as the dominant collective security mechanism in Europe, cannot but serve as a catalyst, operationalizing this new-found role which is currently institutionalized by the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)¹⁴.

"...an EU weapons embargo to Turkey, [...] cannot but serve as a catalyst, operationalizing this new-found role which is currently institutionalized by the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)."

The emergence of the EU as a credible geopolitical actor, not least through a weapons transfer and exports policy of this sort, which is so preferential for Greece, can only contribute to the goal of accelerating the rationalization of the EU's defence industry. By that we mean that pan-European consortia which co-develop and co-produce weapons systems could have a credible shot at establishing European weapons manufacturers as the dominant weapons systems supplier in Europe. Such a development would in turn underpin the EU's collective security guarantee with the shared economic interests and weapons system dependencies that arise from increased intra-EU weapons sales.

Just to be clear, we are not suggesting that Greece's call for a weapons embargo will bring this state of affairs about singlehandedly, even if it is ultimately acted upon. What we are suggesting is that, were the conditions to arise that would lead to the enactment of such an embargo, then the EU would have taken an important step--perhaps even a seminal one--towards becoming the dominant collective defence mechanism in Europe.

Why is that so? Because in the context of a partial US withdrawal from Europe's top security challenges, there is increased demand for a European collective defence capacity, driven by both the producers and consumers of such a capacity within the EU.

At the current juncture, and due to the threat faces from Turkey, Greece is clearly the most consequential consumer of such a defence capacity. Greece is actively soliciting a

¹³ To better assess how an EU weapons embargo on Turkey could affect the UK's position re future collective security arrangements, see the positive agenda of the UK's post-Brexit collective defence role fleshed out by Abecassis, A. and Howorth, J., *Breaking the Ice: How France and the UK could reshape a credible European defense and renew the transatlantic partnership*, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School, May 2020.

¹⁴ For a status report on PESCO's stage of development, see Lazarou, E., and Lapici, T. *PESCO: Ahead of the strategic review*, Briefing, The European Parliament, September 2020.

“...were the conditions to arise that would lead to the enactment of such an embargo, then the EU would have taken an important step--perhaps even a seminal one--towards becoming the dominant collective defence mechanism in Europe.”

combination of military support and/or preferential weapons transfer and exports policies from EU defence powerhouses such as France and Germany. Commensurably, by virtue of either their superior armed forces (France) and/or their leading weapon manufacturing firms (France and Germany), France and Germany are the leading EU producers of such a defence capacity.

France's concern that the sale of Mistrals to the Russian Federation in 2014 would undermine its chances of selling weapons to Poland was, in that sense, a portend of things to come in the Eastern Mediterranean in 2020. We saw this come to pass when the Greek government announced its acquisition of 18 Rafale fighter jets—the first European country to acquire them, thus strengthening the Rafale's international marketability—following France's emphatic support of the Greek position in the region. Furthermore, the experience of the UK during the Falklands war tells us that France and Germany will be able to extract side payments, whether they be defence or non-defence related. Those member countries apart from Greece that will be the major beneficiaries of a stronger EU collective defence identity, particularly those situated in the EU's Eastern European periphery, should be particularly amenable to Franco-German concerns (a retreat from authoritarianism, anyone?).

The Greek IR community and policy recommendations stemming from the Greek call for a weapons embargo on Turkey

As this author has suggested, international relations (IR) and European studies in Greece stand to benefit.¹⁵ Not surprisingly, the call by the Greek government for an embargo on weapons exports to Turkey by EU member states has demonstrated that Greek policy makers are actually ahead of the Greek IR and Europeanist community of scholars. That said--and as this brief has hopefully demonstrated, albeit in a very preliminary fashion--there is a rich seam to be mined in the months ahead as the implications and policy recommendations relating to this initial move by the Greek government are fleshed out. In this context, we would suggest the following lines of inquiry to the Greek IR and defence scholarly community:

- Relating Greece's call for an embargo on weapons sales to Turkey to the evolving priorities of the French and German political, military and security establishments in relation to weapons development, manufacturing and exports.
- Relating the debate in Germany on the impact of US disengagement from Europe to the former's future geopolitical role, in terms both of German weapons exports and of the revamping of the German armed forces and their deployment abroad.
- Evaluating the possibilities and constraints of an alignment between Greece and Central & Eastern European (CEE) and Nordic countries on the EU's foreign policy and collective defence identity, considering similarities and differences in national security threat perceptions.

¹⁵ It should be noted that Greece is still in need of a robust defence studies discipline, which is currently absent. See Kamaras, A., *Establishing Defence Studies in Greece? It's high time...*, Policy Paper 41, ELIAMEP, October 2020

“Review relations with CEE and Scandinavian countries, as they stand to benefit the most from a strong EU collective defence identity due to the perceived threat they face from the Russian Federation.”

- Assessing the impact of Greek weapons procurement choices and of a restructured Greek industrial defence sector on the evolution of Greece's defence partnership with key EU member countries.
- Suggesting strategies to the Greek government in terms of Greece's input to the evolution of the Common Position as well as PESCO.
- Examining the issue of side payments from those EU member states that are most in need of a restrictive weapons--or even dual use--export policy to those member states that stand to lose the most, commercially or otherwise, from such a policy.
- Scrutinizing the interaction between the US, NATO and the EU on defence-related issues in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa.

We would also make the following related recommendations to Greek foreign and national security policy makers:

- Review relations with CEE and Scandinavian countries, as they stand to benefit the most from a strong EU collective defence identity due to the perceived threat they face from the Russian Federation.
- Assiduously court those elements in Germany that are in favour of a common EU defence identity and a security-informed weapons exports policy, but be judicious in the selection of the most effective German stakeholders from the point of view of Greece's national security (it may be that, over and above the Greens and Die Linke, Greece's strongest allies are to be found in the country's military & industrial complex and among those CDU and SPD politicians who yearn for Germany to assume a more assertive geopolitical role)¹⁶.
- Ponder how to balance and/or mutually reinforce Greece's defence relationship with key EU member countries and the US in view of future trends in the region, Europe and the US itself.
- Aggressively restructure and recapitalize Greece's defence industry so it can participate in pan-European consortia, which would both strengthen Greece's own military deterrence and afford insights into and influence over trends in weapon exports from EU member countries.

Conclusion

When faced with existential threats, whether they relate to national defence or to other risks, nation states expect, and call upon, their allies to come to their aid. Any response

¹⁶ See, in this regard, the article by Thomas Enders, President of the German Council of External Relations and ex-CEO of AIRBUS and its parent company EADS, which explicitly calls for: (a) sanctions to be imposed on Turkey and endorsed by Germany, and (b) the employment of credible military deterrence, not provided exclusively by Greece but also by France in alignment with Germany, in order to discourage Turkish aggression in the Aegean but also Russian aggression elsewhere in Europe. Enders, M. “The policy of appeasement does not work against Erdogan”, *To Vima*, 13 September 2020.

short of that—let alone a response that is seen as multiplying the potency of the threat faced—is bound to undermine both longstanding interstate relations and the multilateral institutions within which these relations have evolved. This is particularly true of the EU which, as a coordinating mechanism, can be repurposed to generate collective action of formidable effect for the sake of a member-state's national security. This is due not least to the fact that the EU has member states that are home to leading global weapons manufacturers.

The ban on the delivery and sale of weapons to Argentina during the Falklands war of 1982, and the annulment of the sale of Mistral to the Russian Federation in 2014, are the two strongest cases prior to the current call made by the Greek government to the governments of Germany, France, Italy and Spain to embargo weapons sales and deliveries to Turkey. Together, the three cases demonstrate how important the ability and willingness of member states to mitigate a national security threat to a fellow member state can be for the cohesion and evolution of the EU.

“Greece has become the latest potential catalyst for advancing the evolution of the EU as a geopolitical player.”

Greece has become the latest potential catalyst for advancing the evolution of the EU as a geopolitical player. Greece's past experience of instrumentalizing weapons embargoes to strengthen its military deterrence in relation to Turkey, combined with Turkey's current aggressive military posture, has all but guaranteed this role. Both the Falklands and the Mistral case provide grounds for believing that potentiality will be transformed into actuality. Assuming that Turkey continues its aggressive stance in the Eastern Mediterranean and that the US continues to push, even under a Biden Presidency, for the EU to assume a greater share of the burden of its collective defence, we would predict that the pressure on Germany to suspend the transfer and sale of weapons to Turkey will become hard to resist.

Admittedly, Greece has neither the military nor the economic importance that the UK wielded to secure a ban on weapon transfers and sales to Argentina, nor are other member states being threatened by Turkey, as was the case with the CEE and Scandinavian countries in the case of the Mistral. But the ‘trend is its friend’, as the saying goes. The US's gradual disengagement from European security—a process which commenced with the Obama Administration, accelerated under the Trump administration, and is probably set to continue, albeit at a more deliberate pace, under a Biden administration—is creating a countervailing process in the strengthening of the EU's collective defence identity.

Peering into the future, we can say that where the current situation differs from past cases of weapons embargoes involving the national security of an actual or future EU member state—including the US embargo on weapons transfers to Turkey after the latter's invasion of Cyprus—is that it has the potential to prove inimical to NATO. Back in the 1970s, the US could, in tandem with its own weapons embargo on Turkey, advance Greece's European vocation in order to contain the radicalization of Greek polity and society. Both in the case of the Argentine embargo and the annulment of the sale of the Mistral to the Russian Federation, the US and EU member states prioritized the cohesion of the NATO-EU nexus in order to arrive at the same decision. Presently, and despite the difficulties besetting US-Turkey relations which have negatively impacted US weapons transfers (F35s) and upgrades (of F16s) to Turkey, an EU embargo on Turkey implemented on behalf of Greece could not fail to be introduced into the debate on EU strategic autonomy¹⁷.

¹⁷ See, indicatively, the German Defence Minister arguing about the EU's strategic autonomy with the French President, <https://www.politico.eu/article/german-minister-to-macron-eus-dependence-on-us-is-sobering-facts/>

A demonstration of such EU potency in a militarized dispute between an EU/NATO member country, Greece, and a NATO country, Turkey, could not but alter the perceptions of all the parties involved with regard to: the feasibility of EU strategic autonomy within the EU and key member states; the utility of NATO membership within Turkey and the Organization's European vocation; the need for the US to decide whether it really wants an EU that is able and willing to take care of its backyard.

Moving to Greece itself, what actions could the country's policy makers take in order to build upon their call for a weapons embargo on Turkey?

As we suggested above, the Greek government can impress upon its interlocutors that its case for a weapons embargo on Turkey has powerful EU precedents. Furthermore, Greece can relate its case to stakeholders in EU member states, and in particular to German advocates for Germany's inclusion in the geopolitical first division, in the context of its European vocation. And while not easy, considering their nation's socio-religious and historically-grounded affinity with Russia, Greek policy-makers can seek to connect with their CEE and Nordic peers who perceive the Russian Federation as a national security threat.

Greece can also lend its voice and influence to those EU institutions, such as the Commission, the External Service and the European Parliament, that are in favour of a common institutionalized approach to weapons exports to third countries, particularly in the context of Articles 4 and 5 of the Common Position. Last but not least, through the restructuring of its defence sector and its own weapons procurement choices, Greece can become an influential insider in the EU's manufacturing defence sector, as opposed to a marginal player—not least so that it can participate in the EU's policy deliberations on weapon transfers and exports as an all-round interested party.