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**Getting over the junta:**  
Greek civil-military relations for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century  
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# Getting over the junta: Greek civil-military relations for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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## Summary

This policy paper will argue that, after the collapse of the junta in 1974, civil-military relations in Greece primarily involved the consolidation of democratic rule. In that respect, Greece resembled many other countries which failed in their post-authoritarian phase to engage in second-generation reforms that would focus on improving the efficiency of their Armed Forces and their ability to fulfil the missions mandated by democratic rule. In the case of Greece, partisanship in officer promotions, the lack of a sophisticated civilian technocracy in the Ministry of National Defence, and insufficient oversight by Parliament and civil society, among other factors, have resulted in timid reforms of the nation's Armed Forces. While the post-fiscal-crisis policy environment has catalysed positive changes in Greece's civil-military relations, much still remains to be done before civil-military relations can be relied upon to meet the country's significant national security challenges.

## Introduction

This year, Greece celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the collapse of the military junta and the restoration of democracy. Yet the voluminous reflections and analyses generated by the anniversary have paid scant attention to the junta's failure in the one domain in which the military was supposedly superior to civilian leadership: the efficiency of the Greek Armed Forces. Significantly, this is also the domain that catalysed the junta's fall via the military defeat inflicted on it in Cyprus by the invading Turkish Armed Forces<sup>1</sup>. In addition, no commentary has been offered on the state of civil-military relations over the following fifty years from the point of view of creating and sustaining effective Armed Forces.

Whether Greece's fifty-year post-junta democratic regime has actually done a better job at preparing and evolving the nation's Armed Forces for defending the country's territorial integrity and sovereign rights is not a question that has been asked or answered by Greece's academic community. Press reports on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the restoration of democratic rule have instead limited themselves by and large to the first months of democratic transition, and in particular to the deft way in which the first post-junta Prime Minister, Konstantinos Karamanlis, defanged the military so it would not threaten Greek democracy again. This lack of curiosity is even more remarkable considering that, over the last four years, Greece has been confronted by an increasingly assertive Turkey, which most knowledgeable international observers consider a card-carrying member of the aggressively revisionist powers seeking to overturn the western law-based international order. Likewise, past crises that have brought Greece to the brink of war with Turkey, revealing serious deficiencies in the preparation of the Greek Armed Forces, and most prominently the Imia islets crisis of 1996, have failed to elicit sustained scholarly scrutiny or to lead to a fundamental reordering of civil-military relations based on sound and sophisticated policy analysis.

This scholarly failure to examine Greece's civil-military relations, and the outcomes it produces in terms of the common good of national defence, should be contextualised with reference both to the conditions preceding the Greek fiscal crisis and the post-crisis economic policy regime. Why Greece has topped the table within NATO and the EU in defence spending relative to its GDP, but failed to use that spending to catalyse a robust defence technological industrial base (DTIB), should have generated an informed public and policy discourse. This is so for two critically important reasons: first, a weak DTIB has undermined the efficiency of the Greek Armed Forces in terms of the cost-efficient maintenance of its weapon systems; and second, a weak DTIB has contributed to the Greek economy's lack of international competitiveness, as it has neither created positive spillovers into the civilian economy or generated a noteworthy export performance.

Instead, the only subject that has been systematically written about and reflected on within Greece's policy and intellectual elites is the now historical post-1974 consolidation of civilian supremacy over the

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<sup>1</sup>Indeed, the only reference the author could find to the performance of the Armed Forces under the junta was a review of a book written by a defence correspondent on the Greek Armed Forces' single engagement with the invading Turkish Army, Καβαλλιεράκης, Στέφανος, ΕΛΔΥΚ: Η Τελευταία Μάχη - Έλληνες στρατιώτες χωρίς ταυτότητες αναγνώρισης, Τα Νέα, 20-21 Ιουλίου, 2024 [Kavallierakis Stefanos, ELDKYK: The last battle: Greek soldiers without dog tags, *Ta Nea*, 20-21 July 2024]. A recent edited volume on the junta does not address the way it managed the Armed Forces, see Anastasakis, Othon, and Katerina Lagos, eds. *The Greek Military Dictatorship: Revisiting a Troubled Past, 1967–1974*. Berghahn Books, 2021.

country's Armed Forces<sup>2</sup>. While this was clearly a momentous event, the literature on civil-military relations has long since established that while it is a necessary condition of healthy civil-military relations, the sufficient condition are those second-generation reforms that can best ensure that a democratic polity's Armed Forces can execute their mission, as this is defined by its civilian masters, given the inevitable resource constraints. It is even more illuminating of this state of affairs that the only significant exception to this rule, the magisterial treatment of civil-military relations from the perspective of the Greek constitution by Greece's leading constitutional scholar, Nikos Alivizatos, has been all but ignored by Greece's civilian expert community on defence, such as it is<sup>3</sup>. And this, despite the analysis in this publication remaining highly relevant to many issues that are vital to the efficacy of the Greek Armed Forces, as we will note below.

Considering the above, this policy paper will seek to answer, albeit in a preliminary fashion, the question of what kind of civil-military relations Greece needs to enable its Armed Forces to fulfil their mission in the foreseeable future, in a new century that has already witnessed the return of a major interstate war of territorial conquest on the European continent, as well as the emergence of the European Union as a collective security provider.

In order to achieve this aim, the policy paper will proceed as follows:

The first section will provide a discussion, in summary form, of the international literature on second-generation reforms in civil-military relations—that is, reforms that seek to improve the effectiveness of the Armed Forces.

The second section will highlight constraints that have been identified in the implementation of second-generation reforms, as well as such other obstacles to effective civil-military relations as are pertinent to our investigation.

The third section will explore the junta's legacy in post-junta democratic civil-military relations in Greece. It will do so by examining certain features of civil-military relations in the post-junta period and putting these features into a comparative context. As such, it will look at how civil-military relations in Greece have circumscribed jointness in the Greek Armed Forces, inhibited participation in the high-risk component of peacekeeping or stabilisation operations, and failed to render conscription effective.

The fourth section will utilise comparative lenses to illuminate the defining characteristics of civil-military relations that make the Greek case similar to, or distinct from, other comparator cases.

The fifth section will assess the ways in which Greece's fiscal crisis catalysed certain changes in civil-military relations, *inter alia* invigorating civil society engagement in defence policy and increasing the need for technocratic management in all public policy domains including national defence.

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<sup>2</sup> The most recent contribution to Greek civil-military relations that the author could locate does not address the issue of second-generation reforms, see Tsarouhas, Dimitris. "Greece: From Overt Military Activism to Democratic Normality." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Αλιβιζάτος, Νίκος "Η συνταγματική θέση των Ενόπλων Δυνάμεων: Η αρχή του πολιτικού ελέγχου." (1987). ΕΚΔΟΣΕΙΣ ΑΝΤ. Ν. ΣΑΚΚΟΥΛΑ, 1987 [Alivizatos, Nikos, The constitutional position of the Armed Forces: The principle of civilian control, ANT. N. SAKOULAS EDITIONS, 1987]

The sixth section will examine the present government's 'Agenda 2030' reforms and argue they represent a significant evolution in Greek civil-military relations, while also exploring how 'Agenda 2030's declared objectives can be served by further progress in Greek civil-military relations.

The policy paper will conclude with three recommendations that emerge from the analysis.

## Second-Generation Reforms: Ministries, Parliaments, Civil Societies

One pertinent strand in the literature on civil-military relations, for the Greek case, focuses on states that have transitioned from authoritarian rule, backed up or initiated by military force, to democratic rule<sup>4</sup>. This is so for two reasons. First, because a democratic transition entails a time lag between the need to impose civilian supremacy over the Armed Forces and the need to ensure that civil-military relations are such that they can produce effective Armed Forces capable of fulfilling their democratically determined mission, whatever this may be. Second, because there are features that characterise this transition from authoritarian to democratic rule that go on to shape and/or hinder the effort to configure civil-military relations optimally, given the resource constraints in place, to produce the Armed Forces the democratic polity determines that it needs. Arguing for the need for a more expansive treatment of civil-military relations as a means of evaluating the degree of democratic control over an Armed Forces, it has been noted that: "Most of the literature before the third wave of democratisation implicitly defined civilian control as the absence of military coups and military rule...Yet such a view is flawed as it reduces the complexity of civil-military relations to a single partial aspect, establishing the most extreme form of military intervention as a bench mark for whether civilian control exists or not"<sup>5</sup>.

Taxonomically, the comparator peer group of Greek civil-military relations includes the democratising polities of Southern Europe in the 1970s (Portugal and Spain), Latin American states (such as Argentina, Brazil and Chile) in the 1980s and 1990s, East Asian states (such as Korea and Taiwan) in the 1990s and 2000s, and Central Eastern European states in the 1990s. Importantly, the South and Central Eastern European democratic transitions have democratic lock-in in common with Greece, due to their joint EU and NATO membership and receding fears that authoritarianism led or supported by military force may yet return. This lock-in warrants deeper reflection on why second-generation reforms in these countries has stalled decades after their democratic transition had been securely anchored.

Another discussion in the literature on civil-military relations which is relevant to Greece focuses on the growing involvement of parliaments in the articulation and execution of defence policy, primarily in Europe, due to the rise of expeditionary peacekeeping operations after the collapse of the Berlin Wall<sup>6</sup>. This development, enabled by US supremacy and US allies' need to maintain a measure of influence with the sole remaining superpower, resulted in an expansion of the notion of defence and security beyond national territorial defence to engaging in casualty-inducing wars of choice, thus engendering the need

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<sup>4</sup> Cottey, Andrew, Timothy Edmunds, and Anthony Forster. "The second generation problematic: Rethinking democracy and civil-military relations" *Armed Forces & Society* 29.1 (2002): 31-56.

<sup>5</sup> Croissant, Aurel, et al. "Theorizing civilian control of the military in emerging democracies: Agency, structure and institutional change." *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Politikwissenschaft* 5.1 (2011), p. 77.

<sup>6</sup> See the introduction to a special volume on this issue, Mello, Patrick A., and Dirk Peters. "Parliaments in security policy: Involvement, politicisation, and influence." *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 20.1 (2018): 3-18.

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for parliamentary debate and approval. While this discussion mostly involves the parliaments of countries which have been historically consolidated democracies since at least the end of World War II (e.g. Germany), and in many cases long before it (e.g. the UK), the analytical perspectives it has generated pose illuminating questions for the cohort of more recently democratised countries such as Greece.

As we seek to shift the debate from the supremacy of civilian rule over the Armed Forces of a democratic polity to whether such a polity can attain the Armed Forces it needs, our starting point is the assumption that defence is a public good for whose effectiveness the civilian leadership, and the democratic polity at large, is ultimately responsible. Given this assumption, there are three key interacting domains in which civil-military relations need to be regrounded if the democratic polity is to attain the Armed Forces it needs: Ministries of Defence, Parliaments, which we mentioned above, and civil societies.

Ministries of Defence are meant to institutionalise civilian leadership of the Armed Forces<sup>7</sup>. Specifically: "The Purpose of the defence ministry is to prepare the Armed Forces to serve the policy goals of government and act as a buffer zone between [the civilian executive] and the service branches. Should active or retired military officers occupy too many top positions within the defence sector, they may exhibit divided loyalties, exert undue influence, dominate defence and security policy-making, and crowd out alternative viewpoints"<sup>8</sup>. For a Ministry of Defence (MoD) to fulfil this role, it needs to secure a critical mass of civilian personnel with the requisite expertise, domain responsibility and authority. Only thus can the civilian leadership of a MoD meaningfully curtail if not totally eliminate the information asymmetry, which the leadership of the Armed Forces enjoys due to its military expertise, and thus make informed decisions with regard to the full range of MoD responsibilities, from weapons procurement to training and from operations to jointness and so forth.

As to why the civilian leadership of the MoD cannot simply rely on the advice of the military leadership it selects and supervises, there are a variety of critical reasons, including:

a) The Armed Forces themselves are not monolithic, with each of the main service branches (Army, Air Force, Navy) having its own strong views and preferences. Thus, a civilian leadership kept suitably informed by a civilian technocracy which is not vested in any one Service Branch is indispensable for adjudicating between contesting Service Branch priorities and representing the overarching interest in establishing effective joint operations that straddle all three branches. For adjudication of this sort is core to the mission of an adequately civilianised MoD<sup>9</sup>. Just to be clear, the literature on civilian technocracies' role does not suggest that civilian technocrats will lay down the law to Armed Forces leaderships, but rather that they will confer on the future directions to be taken with an Armed Forces' leadership, or even support the more reform-minded leaders of an officer corps when no consensus exists on the way forward within that corps.

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<sup>7</sup> See, Mukherjee, Anit, and David Pion-Berlin. "The fulcrum of democratic civilian control: re-imagining the role of defence ministries." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 45.6-7 (2022): 783-797.

<sup>8</sup> Pion-Berlin, David, and Danijela Dudley. "Civil-military relations: What is the state of the field." *Handbook of military sciences* (2020), p. 13.

<sup>9</sup> Mukherjee, Anit. "Fighting separately: Jointness and civil-military relations in India." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 40.1-2 (2017): 6-34.

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b) The Armed Forces, representing as it does a sizeable chunk of the state's payroll, is a powerful interest group<sup>10</sup>. Consequently, the civilian leadership of the MoD needs the technocratic support of civilian experts to take the decisions that serve the cause of creating effective Armed Forces, even if these decisions hurt the corporate interests of the Officer Corps.

c) Armed Forces operations are profoundly political, so the civilian leadership needs to rely on expert civilian advice and support to ensure that operations can serve the political ends they are meant to. This is not to say, however, that high-ranking officers should have no awareness of, or provide input to, the civilian leadership on the political implications of the military operations they are charged with designing and executing.

On the basis of this brief outline, MoDs which are effectively civilianised demonstrate certain features: First and foremost, civilian staff are not restricted to such supporting functions as legal affairs, financial management and personnel affairs. Rather they occupy leadership positions, backed up by formal authority, in such front-line domains as defence planning and defence strategy, officer education and weapons procurement. Civilian staff in civilianised MoDs possess expertise in defence matters, and even when they do not enjoy knowledge parity with the military officers they interact with, they are sufficiently knowledgeable to support the civilian leadership's ability to set and implement defence policy<sup>11</sup>. Again, nobody suggests that a dysfunctional and ultimately unsustainable 'us versus them' relationship is being established. Rather, a diversity of perspectives is institutionalised through such civilian staff, in addition to which an MoD's civilian leadership can access expertise that will allow them to agree or disagree with the military leadership with a good understanding of the available policy choices.

As with any other executive function, the quality of the parliamentary accountability to which an MoD is subject is an important issue<sup>12</sup>. First and foremost, parliaments can debate defence policy and Armed Forces operations<sup>13</sup>. Parliaments pass the budget that determines the resources allocated for a country's Armed Forces. Specialised parliamentary committees (dealing with defence matters and/or international affairs) can request additional information relating to national defence on the public's behalf, they can conduct official inquiries into Armed Forces operations, inviting official testimony and the opinion of non-government experts. Importantly, in the case of defence, parliamentary committees are uniquely placed to negotiate what belongs in the classified and non-classified domains, and under what conditions Parliament can access the latter category. Deliberations of this sort create the evidence base on the basis of which democratic scrutiny and deliberation can take place.

The three key components that are required for a parliament to exercise meaningful oversight are "the ability to oversee, the willingness to exercise those abilities to actually gather the information in question, and the power to use that information in a way that impacts the military, the executive or both. Oversight over operations, procurement and personnel issues arguably are the most important issues to focus on

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<sup>10</sup> Brooks, Risa A. "Integrating the civil-military relations subfield." *Annual Review of Political Science* 22.1 (2019): 379-398.

<sup>11</sup> Pion-Berlin, David, Igor Acácio, and Andrew Ivey. "Democratically consolidated, externally threatened, and NATO aligned: finding unexpected deficiencies in civilian control." *Democratization* 26.6 (2019): 1070-1087.

<sup>12</sup> For a succinct backgrounder see, DCAF - Geneva Center for Security Sector Governance, *Parliaments-Roles and Responsibilities in good security sector governance*, SSR Backgrounder Series. Geneva, 2019.

<sup>13</sup> Strong, James. "Democracy and Security in the UK: Why parliament matters." (2021).



because they represent the riskiest endeavours, the greatest expenses, and the values embodied by the military"<sup>14</sup>.

The question of authorities and resources is critical to this parliamentary role<sup>15</sup>. Does a parliamentary Defence Committee have the power to call on uniformed and non-uniformed personnel to give testimony under oath? Can a Parliament request and receive information it deems necessary for its oversight role over the MoD or other ministries relevant to defence, such as the Ministry of Finance? Does Parliament enjoy the power to veto the authorisation of the nation's Armed Forces to participate in military operations abroad? Is the MoD obliged to submit a National Defence Doctrine and Force Structure Plan to Parliament at regular—usually four-yearly—intervals? Is the parliamentary Committee on Defence supported by permanent staff who possess the expertise required for its oversight role?

The Parliament's role in national defence is integral to the issue of military effectiveness. Parliamentary scrutiny can act as a deterrent to corruption in weapons procurement, which can result in the waste of scarce resources as well as suboptimal choices in military equipment<sup>16</sup>. Parliamentary debates and votes can confer legitimacy on changes in national defence policy, both at the elite and mass public levels, making such changes both politically feasible and long-lasting, to the benefit of national defence<sup>17</sup>. Informed deliberations on national defence with the participation of non-government experts can interrogate national defence doctrine and thinking, and thus help to expand and redefine the agenda for armed services reform. Critically, a Parliament that is informed about and able to act effectively on matters of national defence provides an alternative source of information and analysis on national defence. This makes the media commensurably less dependent on the MoD, and thus freer to perform its own function of critically scrutinising national defence policy.

Both MoDs and parliaments exist in a wider societal context, which can contribute or not to successful civil-military relations. Does this societal context produce saliency or indifference with regard to defence policy? Is there a vibrant civil society, supported by a generally affluent populace, capable of supporting programmatic interest in defence policy through the funding of think tanks specialising in defence? Or does the dominance of patronage politics, in overall conditions of material deprivation, render defence policy of interest only to insiders with vested interests?

A vibrant civil society can have a symbiotic relationship with Parliament, political parties and/or the press<sup>18</sup>. Indicatively, it can advocate for improved conditions pertaining to the welfare of military personnel, from the quality of army barracks to the effectiveness of equipment necessary for survival on

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<sup>14</sup> Auerswald, David, Philippe Lagassé, and Stephen M. Saideman. "Some assembly required: explaining variations in legislative oversight over the armed forces." *Foreign Policy Analysis* 19.1 (2023): p.4.

<sup>15</sup> For a discussion on how parliaments exercise their oversight functions across a diverse range of cases see, Auerswald, David, Philippe Lagassé, and Stephen M. Saideman. "Some assembly required: explaining variations in legislative oversight over the armed forces." *Foreign Policy Analysis* 19.1 (2023)

<sup>16</sup> For an analysis of the Greek Parliament's shortcomings in this domain (produced, not incidentally, by an international organization) see, Government Defence Integrity Index, Country Brief: Greece, Transparency International – Defence and Security, 2020.

<sup>17</sup> Strong, James. "Democracy and Security in the UK: Why parliament matters." (2021).

<sup>18</sup> For a discussion of societal engagement with second generation reforms see, Douglas, Nadja. "The Role of Society in the Control of Armed Forces—Implications for Democracy." *Sicherheit und Frieden (S+ F)/Security and Peace* (2015): 19-25.

the battlefield; it can fight legal battles in pursuit of Armed Forces modernisation, as in the inclusion of women in an ever broader range of combat positions, or it can deter corruption in weapons procurement. Wider societal trends facilitative of civic engagement, such as the social media explosion, can enhance the critical scrutiny of national defence by accelerating information sharing on national defence and promoting interaction between the expert community and engaged members of the public<sup>19</sup>.

## Opportunities and Constraints pertinent to effective civil-military relations

Transitions to democratic rule often entail considerable political attention being paid to the challenge of establishing civilian supremacy and, relatedly, of eliminating a tradition of abusing military authority whose primary victims were conscripts : i.e. citizen-soldiers.

The former effort entails governments legitimated by the popular vote employing their mandate to dominate the military and keep it within the bounds of its professional tasks and constitutionally enshrined mission.

The latter effort may extend to non-governmental political mobilisation, civil society and the press combined questioning the military's authority and competence to convert citizens into soldiers. In this case, due the political dynamics of the democratic transition, efforts to eliminate abusive behaviour may ultimately strip the Armed Forces of the professional authority needed to convert civilians into an effective conscript force.

What is often missing in such transitions is the development of civilian expertise in military affairs, most prominently in universities, so that the democratically elected executive can utilise this civilian expertise to close the information asymmetry gap with the officer corps and put itself in a position to develop and implement defence policy. Across a number of countries as far afield as Latin America, the European South and East Asia, past abuses of military-led authoritarianism contaminate the legitimacy of defence studies as an academic discipline after the democratic transition has taken place<sup>20</sup>. Consequently, defence and the Armed Forces tend to be the public policy domain that is least studied, with only a miniscule expert community vested in it. This is the case, regardless of the importance Armed Forces may still have in the democratisation period—either due to their role in internal security and civilian emergencies and/or due to their role in territorial defence and the defence of sovereign rights—and the substantial fiscal commitments such roles may engender.

Notwithstanding the transition to democratic rule, this absence of civilian expertise actually leads to excessive militarisation within a democratic polity. It results in civilians, up to and including democratically elected civilian leaderships, being perceived as incapable of exercising judgement on matters of Armed Forces organisation, major weapon procurement selection and so forth. This, coupled with shortcomings

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<sup>19</sup> As has been the case with Israel in recent years see, Cohen, Amichai, and Stuart Alan Cohen. "Beyond the Conventional civil-military "gap": Cleavages and convergences in Israel." *Armed Forces & Society* 48.1 (2022): 164-184.

<sup>20</sup> For an analysis of neglect of the defence sector in -post authoritarian periods and the decidedly gradual development of defence studies as a discipline in academia see, Lima, Raphael C., Peterson F. Silva, and Gunther Rudzit. "No power vacuum: national security neglect and the defence sector in Brazil." *Defence Studies* 21.1 (2021): 84-106.

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in the overall performance of democratic governance, sees Armed Forces claw back their prestige with the public, in the light of their hierarchical structure and discipline, and coming to enjoy a high degree of trust in opinion polls. This high level of trust can undermine the ability of their civilian masters to design and implement reforms that may still be necessary for the effectiveness and democratically-mandated mission requirements of the Armed Forces, but which harm parochial Armed Forces interests<sup>21</sup>.

That being said, undue civilian deference to the Armed Forces has also been observed in consolidated democracies which employ an ample pool of highly expert civilian technocrats at their MoDs to support the supreme civilian leadership in a national security council staff capacity and in the legislature. The most prominent is the US<sup>22</sup>. There are a variety of reasons why this may be the case: Civilian leaders may want to 'pass the buck' to the Armed Forces in the case of military operations entailing casualties. They may also want to appropriate the superior status of the officer corps and credibility of the Armed Forces leadership for their own policy choices in national defence. Alternatively, they may want to avoid being on the losing side in a policy disagreement with an Armed Forces leadership which, through press leaks or in testimony to the legislature, may reveal policy preferences different from those of their civilian masters. Finally, civilian leaders may want to defer to their Armed Forces leadership in one policy domain of national defence in order to buy their acquiescence in another policy domain. The case of the US demonstrates, in a nutshell, that while the availability of civilian expertise may be a necessary condition for healthy civil-military relations, it is not a sufficient one.

As we move on to the issue of the parliamentary oversight of national defence, we note that debate on the roles of such oversight, but also the constraints upon it, has been generated primarily, albeit not exclusively, by case studies of mature and wealthy democracies demonstrating a high degree of civil liberties consolidation. As mentioned above, following the collapse of the Berlin Wall and a rise in their participation in expeditionary operations – essentially wars of choice entailing the prospect and actuality of casualties – such countries, primarily in Western Europe, have seen parliaments play a growing role debating and deciding on national defence under conditions of growing transparency<sup>23</sup>. Additionally, the expansion of the notion of security to involve terrorism and various civil emergencies ranging from natural disasters to pandemics, has further diluted the historically distinct area of national defence as a domain in which the executive enjoyed prerogatives of secrecy and discretion in decision-making<sup>24</sup>.

The extent to which a parliament is willing to exercise control over the executive in the case of authorising military missions is multivariable, as is the willingness of executive civilian leaderships to impose their will

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<sup>21</sup> For a treatment of this issue in the militaries of key Latin American countries see, Solar, Carlos. "Trust in the military in post-authoritarian societies." *Current Sociology* 70.3 (2022): 317-337.

<sup>22</sup> See, Beliakova, Polina. "Erosion by deference: Civilian control and the military in policymaking (Summer 2021)." *Texas National Security Review*, 4.3 (2021) and Friend, Alice Hunt, and Sharon K. Weiner. "Principals with Agency: Assessing Civilian Deference to the Military." *Texas National Security Review* 5.4 (2022).

<sup>23</sup> See the introductory essay in the special volume, Mello, Patrick A., and Stephen M. Saideman. "The politics of multinational military operations." *Contemporary Security Policy* 40.1 (2019): 30-37.

<sup>24</sup> Neal, Andrew W. "Parliamentary security politics as politicisation by volume." *European Review of International Studies* 5.3 (2018): 70-93.

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on their Armed Forces' leadership; it therefore does not hinge purely on whether a Parliament has the nominal authority to do so<sup>25</sup>.

Executives, leaders of governments and/or their MoDs have asked Parliaments to authorise expeditionary operations, even when this was not required by law. They have done this so that responsibility will be shared with the Opposition, in the light either of lukewarm public support for a military expedition or the prospect of casualties<sup>26</sup>. Political pressures and imperatives can impair parliamentary scrutiny even under near ideal circumstances. A strong tradition of parliamentary scrutiny in Germany, which is the most prominent example for historical reasons, means that the German executive and German Armed Forces, the Bundeswehr, are habituated to formulating decisions in such a way that they can pass muster in the German Parliament. Nonetheless, tight parliamentary schedules coupled with partisan considerations may mean that wider considerations and critical non-government expertise in the operational area in which the Bundeswehr has been called upon to operate, are inadequately solicited. Instead, Parliament's focus is restricted to the terms and conditions of the German participation, rather than on the wisdom and efficacy of the wider mission; this was the case of Mali<sup>27</sup>. On the other hand, even in countries with a robust post-WWII tradition of expeditionary warfare and no constitutional requirement to consult Parliament—the UK, for example—the seeking of parliamentary consent and its denial on occasions by Parliament, as in the case of intervention in Syria, has created a strong precedent for seeking parliamentary authorisation.

Parliaments have also been involved in debating national security strategy documents, or drafting them themselves, generally on a four-yearly basis in response to a need that arose out of the shift in national defence doctrines and practices. Such as shift may have entailed the professionalisation of Armed Forces via the abolition of conscription, their participation in missions other than territorial defence, and the assumption of alliance commitments. This latter shift has included, most prominently, the dilution of strong traditions of neutrality, as in the case of the Partnership for Peace connecting Sweden and Finland with NATO along with the Common Security and Defence Policy which connects these two countries to the EU's collectively determined foreign policy and defence priorities<sup>28</sup>. In the case of multiparty coalition governments, such documents may receive only perfunctory scrutiny, as they are the outcome of coalition deliberations and Parliament is simply rubberstamping them. In other cases, they can generate robust parliamentary debate in which the Opposition invokes a long tradition of non-alignment to argue against

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<sup>25</sup> Auerswald, David, Philippe Lagassé, and Stephen M. Saideman. "Some assembly required: explaining variations in legislative oversight over the armed forces." *Foreign Policy Analysis* 19.1 (2023): orac034.

<sup>26</sup> See, Wagner, Wolfgang. "Is there a parliamentary peace? Parliamentary veto power and military interventions from Kosovo to Daesh." *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 20.1 (2018): 121-134, Lagassé, Philippe, and Patrick A. Mello. "The unintended consequences of parliamentary involvement: Elite collusion and Afghanistan deployments in Canada and Germany." *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 20.1 (2018): 135-157 and Lagassé, Philippe, and Justin Massie. "Parliamentarizing war: explaining legislative votes on Canadian military deployments." *International Relations* (2023)

<sup>27</sup> See, Distler, Werner, and Miriam Tekath. "Knowledge and the governing of the interventionary object: Mali in the German parliament." *European Journal of International Security* 8.3 (2023): 319-336.

<sup>28</sup> See, Bailes, Alyson JK. "Parliaments and National Strategy Documents: A comparative case-study from the Nordic region." Geneva Center for Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), *Policy Paper* 36 (2015), Raunio, Tapio. "Parliament as an arena for politicisation: The Finnish Eduskunta and crisis management operations." *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 20.1 (2018): 158-174 and Jungwallius, Johanna. "Pushes and pokes: Towards understanding Swedish 'mid-range' security policy-making." (2023).

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this sort of formalised shift in national defence doctrine and the changes it entails for manpower systems and operations.

Parliaments have also scrutinised the procurement of major weapon systems. Here, unsurprisingly, the lack of expert staff support in their defence committees or supporting audit bodies, either within or outside Parliament, as in the case of national audit offices, has led to such scrutiny falling well short of requirements. This was the case with the Belgian government's decision to acquire F35 fifth-generation aircraft, when the members of the relevant committees in Belgium's Federal Parliament had to resort to seeking information from the media or a purported whistleblower report which subsequently proved to be fake<sup>29</sup>.

Turning to civil society, we would argue that a combination of legitimacy and resources is a necessary condition for civil society actors to meaningfully contribute to healthy civil-military relations. Does the political culture allow for voices other than those of electorally legitimated partisanship in an issue as vital as national defence? Is a society affluent enough, the rule of law strong enough, the fiscal treatment of donations to non-profit organisations supportive enough for non-governmental, non-partisan initiatives which can exercise critical scrutiny on matters relating to national defence, and invest in expertise to do so, to be established and grow? And to do so without fear of attracting the ire of an arbitrary government, or punishment at the level of the individual or corporate donor entity, be it philanthropic or commercial?

At a more general level, the point has been made that the accountability structure is inevitably weak in democratic polities where patronage politics dominate, since public goods, and the programmatic commitments that shape their delivery, have less value to the electorate<sup>30</sup>. Citizens align themselves on the basis of the benefits to be derived according to their party affiliation, while their political representatives pursue strategies of polarisation and grandstanding which are designed to secure power and access to its spoils. Inevitably, an accountability structure of this sort restricts the interaction between civil society and parliamentary oversight. In effect, under such conditions, there is no politically meaningful constituency for objective expertise and the reforms that such expertise may recommend for the Armed Forces.

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<sup>29</sup> Reykers, Yf. "Strengthening parliamentary oversight of defence procurement: lessons from Belgium." *European security* 30.4 (2021): 505-525.

<sup>30</sup> Narang, Vipin, and Paul Staniland. "Democratic accountability and foreign security policy: Theory and evidence from India." *Security Studies* 27.3 (2018): 410-447.

## The Junta's legacy for Greek civil-military relations

Both the defeat of Greek arms in Cyprus in 1974, resulting in a major loss of territory by the Republic of Cyprus to Turkey, and the shambolic mobilisation that followed discredited any demands the Armed Forces could make about running their own affairs free of civilian interference in the post-junta period. Nonetheless, the seven years of military dictatorship cast a long shadow, compromising the quest of civil-military relations that would enable Greece's restored democratic rule to consistently produce the best Armed Forces its resource constraints could provide.

One of the main casualties of the junta's legacy would be the establishment, in what would soon be a member country of the European Economic Community, of a depoliticised and meritocratically selected corps of state officials in the Armed Forces as much as elsewhere in the machinery of state. As the premier scholar of upper-level state functionaries, Dimitris Sotiropoulos has established, particularly following the coming to power of the leftist-populist PASOK party in 1983, the bureaucracy was considered a major obstacle to democratic emancipation due to its conflation with the post WW II authoritarian state, up to and including the junta's seven-year suspension of democracy. As a result, upper-level state functionaries were replaced by political appointees and demands that competence be employed as a criterion for promotion were dismissed as elitist and anti-democratic<sup>31</sup>. In the Armed Forces, this translated into partisan affiliation being used as a criterion for promotion to the upper ranks, especially under PASOK, given its politicians' suspicion that the officer corps would lean historically to the right.

We stress that this did not entail a process of the 'throwing the baby out with the bathwater' type, as the junta's own failures illuminated its own form of patronage in officer selection, up to and including the selection of officers at ELDYK, the Greek military units stationed on Cyprus during the 1974 invasion<sup>32</sup>. Rather, in the name of the sovereignty of the democratic mandate, the restored democratic polity failed to take its cues from its Western European peers and modernise the state machinery on the dual basis of professional competence and non-partisanship and meritocratic selection. This failure, as Sotiropoulos notes, had the unintended consequence of undermining the legitimacy of democratic rule, given that a state machinery of this sort inevitably and recurrently fails to adequately serve the public good. While technocratic management has gradually been reinforced through the public sector as a whole in the decades that followed, it would seem the legacy of the absolute dominance over the selection of high-level state functionaries left behind by the democratic transition is still operative in the Armed Forces, giving political space to the civilian leadership to ride roughshod over the Armed Forces' selection and promotion processes. This seems to have been especially true during the years of fiscal crisis, which witnessed high as much as arbitrary turnover in the upper levels of the country's military leadership, at the behest of every government during that period<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> See Σωτηρόπουλος, Δημήτρης, *Η κορυφή του πελατειακού κράτους: οργάνωση, στελέχωση και πολιτικοποίηση των ανώτερων βαθμίδων της κεντρικής διοίκησης στην Ελλάδα, 1974-2000*, Ποταμός, 2001, [Sotiropoulos, Dimitris, *The summit of the clientelistic state: organisation, manning and politicisation of the higher ranks of the central government in Greece 1974-2000*, Potamos, 2001

<sup>32</sup> For example, favouritism played a significant role in appointments at ELDYK, the Greek Army contingent in Cyprus, up to the Turkish invasion of 1974, due to the higher compensation of officer corps postings in the island, see Βλάσσης, Σάββας, *ΕΛΔΥΚ – Η τελευταία μάχη*, ΔΟΥΡΕΙΟΣ ΙΠΠΟΣ, 2021 [Vlassis, Savas, *ELDYK- The last battle*, DOUREIOS IPPOS, 2021]

<sup>33</sup> See the following analysis by an ex-Chief of the Hellenic Army, Γκίνης, Κωνσταντίνος, *Πολιτικο-στρατιωτικές σχέσεις στην Ελλάδα της κρίσεως (2008-2015) και το Δίλλημα της Κηδεμονίας*, Στρατηγείν, 2019, Τεύχος 1, σελ. 1-32 (Ginis, Konstantinos, *Civil-Military relations in crisis Greece (2008-2015) and the dilemma of Guardianship*, 2019, *Stratigein*, Volume 1, pp. 1-32).

Reinforcing this structural element of underperformance has been the lack of evidence-based policy and public scrutiny. The deeply entrenched perception in Greek Universities of the Armed Forces as illegitimate – the junta used enforced conscription as a tool to discipline university students rebelling against its rule, Military Police personnel actually tortured such students, and Greek armour units bloodily suppressed the 1973 rebellion at the Athens Polytechnic<sup>34</sup> – meant that defence studies have never established themselves as an academic discipline in Greek higher education. And this despite the fact that, over the entirety of what is now 50 years of democratic rule, the Greek-Turkish strategic rivalry has been considered a prime example of such rivalry in the international literature,<sup>35</sup> and Greece has consistently been a top spender on defence in relation to its GDP within NATO. Consequently, neither the media nor the Opposition—or, indeed, ruling party policy-makers—could rely on a steady stream of policy-relevant academic research to arrive at an informed judgement on the state of the Armed Forces. Arguably, with the exception of the last several years (more on which later), Greek media throughout this period was reduced to the ‘groundhog day’-like periodical reproduction of comparisons of the main weapon platforms (aircraft, main battle tanks, surface ships, submarines etc.) of the Greek and Turkish Armed Forces. As we will see immediately below, the only topic that attracted the interest of investigative journalism were the conditions pertaining to conscription service.

This lack of commitment on the part of the academic community also explains why there has been no take up of the need to redress the information asymmetry between the officer corps and the civilian leadership of the Greek Ministry of National Defence (MND). Nikos Alivizatos, in his analysis of this issue<sup>36</sup>, points out that the Government Council of Foreign Affairs and Defence (Κυβερνητικό Συμβούλιο Εξωτερικών και Άμυνας – ΚΥΣΕΑ), the main interministerial body charged with managing defence issues on which the Chief of the Hellenic National Defence General Staff (HNDGS) also sat, could not mitigate this asymmetry, as the Minister of National Defence did not possess access to civilian expertise that would allow him to evaluate the advice of the military leadership.

Furthermore, he highlights that legislation on Armed Forces passed as early as 1977, three years after the collapse of the junta, recognised this need by enabling the Minister of National Defence to form expert committees on issues of defence policy with the participation of civilian experts. Parliamentarians from both the ruling party at the time, New Democracy (ND), and the Opposition, PASOK, also raised this issue, with an ND MP advocating the creation of a defence think tank that would institutionalise the generation of civilian expertise. Other MPs fell back on the idea that each Service Branch should have its own civilian Deputy Minister of National Defence – reviving the pre-WWII institutional arrangement of one Ministry for the Land Army and one for the Navy – in order to ensure informed civilian control. This was an understandable response, considering the underdeveloped awareness of the 1970s and the lack of clear templates internationally for employing civilian experts highly proficient in defence matters as permanent staff at a MoD.

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<sup>34</sup> Kornetis, Kostis. *Children of the dictatorship: student resistance, cultural politics and the 'long 1960s' in Greece*. Berghahn Books, 2022.

<sup>35</sup> See the following publication, in which Greek-Turkish strategic rivalry is selected as one of four highly illustrative rivalries worldwide, Colaresi, Michael P., Karen Rasler, and William R. Thompson. *Strategic rivalries in world politics: Position, space and conflict escalation*. Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 4-14.

<sup>36</sup> Αλιβιζάτος, Νίκος. "Η συνταγματική θέση των Ενόπλων Δυνάμεων: Η αρχή του πολιτικού ελέγχου." (1987). ΕΚΔΟΣΕΙΣ ΑΝΤ. Ν. ΣΑΚΚΟΥΛΑ, 1987 [Alivizatos, Nikos, The constitutional position of the Armed Forces: The principle of civilian control, ANT. N. SAKOULAS EDITIONS, 1987]

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Greek universities, by failing to establish defence studies departments or research institutes, have de facto refused to satisfy this need articulated by politicians nearly fifty years ago. This inaction on their part has also, we would argue, ensured there is no pressure within the system to seek out civilian expertise, or acceptance for such a policy, either through the convening of expert committees as provided for by the 1977 legislation or by staffing key MND divisions with both civilian and military experts, as is standard practice today in MoDs worldwide. It is no coincidence that this author has failed to identify an analysis produced by Greek defence experts on the information asymmetry obtaining between the civilian and military leadership that is anything like as lucid, comprehensive and penetrating as the treatment of the issue by Nikos Alivizatos—who is, we underline, a constitutional scholar and not a defence expert—in his seminal study from 1987, a work that is now 37 years old!

The junta's legacy has also meant that Greece's national defence has a tendency to become either overly civilianised or, ironically, excessively militarised, with both acting to the detriment of the Armed Forces' ability to fulfil their mission of defending Greece's territorial integrity and sovereign rights.

The prime example of excessive civilianisation is conscript service, a pillar of Greece's defence doctrine, whose main mission is to defend the country's territorial integrity. This is a labour-intensive mission for any Armed Forces, but still more so for Greece, given both its land border with its primary threat, Turkey, and the extensive Greek island complex adjacent to Turkey's Aegean coastline. Essentially, due to the way the junta treated Greek youth both within and outside conscription service, the democratic transition period found the Armed Forces bereft of the trust it needed to convert civilian youth into effective conscript soldiers through rigorous training. The de facto arbiter of conscript training became extra-military, composed of the Opposition of the day and media keen to conflate rigorous training with a return 'to the bad old days'<sup>37</sup>. A typical example of this state of affairs was the column in the now defunct leftist-populist *Eleftherotypia* newspaper entitled 'Conscript, where are you heading?' ('Φαντάρε που πας' in Greek), which relied on a steady stream of conscript allegations about conditions pertaining to their service in terms of living conditions, demands placed on them by training, and so on. It is illuminating of the tenor of the times that this newspaper never promoted an informed agenda in favour of the effectiveness of the Greek Armed Forces, despite the bellicose, even jingoistic, stance it took in its analysis of Greek-Turkish relations.

On the other hand, the MND has provided a prime example of excessive militarisation in Greece, with no high-level civilian staff employed there to deal with issues of defence policy, Armed Forces modernisation and weapons procurement policy, even though civilian representation of this sort is considered a best practice in democratic states with strong and effective militaries.

As we pointed out above, the Greek academic community's lack of interest in defence studies<sup>38</sup> has resulted in a state of affairs in which the civilian leadership of the MND can neither draw high-level civilian functionaries from a deep pool of expertise inhering in the academic community or emanating from it, nor indeed justify such an infusion of civilian expertise, given the impression this excessive militarisation has formed with both the public and elites that only uniformed personnel are fit to formulate and execute

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<sup>37</sup> See, Kamaras, Antonis, Beating the authoritarian legacy: upgrading conscription in Greece and Taiwan, *War on the Rocks*, September 7 2022.

<sup>38</sup> See, Kamaras, Antonis, Establishing defence Studies in Greece? It's high time, ELIAMEP Policy Paper 41, October 2020



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policy relating to the country's Armed Forces<sup>39</sup>. A specific domain in which this excessive militarisation is felt most keenly is in the lack of development of joint operations in the Greek Armed Forces, where there is no separation between the HNDGS and the theatre command in the eastern part of the country. Thus, in essence, a nominally all-powerful HNDGS Chief is supposed both to oversee the totality of the Armed Forces and to execute jointness in the event of a military conflict with Turkey. The Minister of National Defence cannot rely on a sophisticated civilian staff working in alignment with reform-minded officers to drive and implement, through operational arrangements and procurement choices, a jointness agenda that is bound to be resisted by parochial interests, or at any rate interests unique to each Branch of the Armed Forces<sup>40</sup>. This centralisation and personalisation of authority has been criticised by retired high-ranking officers for failing to integrate the point of views of the individual service branches, never mind for its inability to institutionalise sophisticated joint operations<sup>41</sup>.

An event which crystallised some of the main shortcomings identified here was the 1996 Imia islet crisis, which demonstrated variable officer quality as well as poor inter-Branch coordination. The crisis eventually led the Greek government, which was, of course, ultimately responsible for this state of affairs, to request US adjudication, so Turkish troops would leave the Imia islet they had landed on and a broader crisis could be averted. Such adjudication, being imposed by a third party, emboldened Turkish challenges of Greek sovereignty over the Imia islets and other islets like it. We would argue that Imia provided a real-life example of the process Sotiropoulos has previously identified: namely, that of a democratic mandate—translated into an absence of meritocracy as much as a lack of systemic state reform—ultimately delegitimising democratic rule. It is no coincidence that this style of post-junta democratic rule bequeathed an Armed Forces that necessitated US intervention. In effect, the very event which PASOK defined itself against was engendered by PASOK's management of the country's Armed Forces. Which is to say that the dynamics of the civil-military relations identified above rendered any resolution of the crisis—or its deterrence—through the judicious use of a well-run Armed Forces by the sovereign democratic polity (which is surely the supreme manifestation of national will), impossible. We must stress that, as we see it, the Imia incident does not call into question the professionalism, competence and valour of individual members of the Armed Forces who participated in it, from the Chief of the HNDGS down to the lowest-ranking sailor; rather, it reveals the impossibility of such individual professionalism, competence and valour making up for the systemic failings produced by a decisively subpar civil-military relationship, which by 1996 had already been two decades in the making.

We must add here that the Imia crisis did not lead to an ambitious reform effort on the part of the Armed Forces<sup>42</sup>. Specifically, other than the strengthening of Special Forces units in training and equipment, so they could intervene more effectively in another Imia-like situation, and the drafting of rules of engagement for the Armed Forces in various conflict scenarios, no steps were taken to advance joint operations, which was surely one of the major lessons learned from Imia and highly applicable to a future crisis of a different nature or larger scale than Imia. Parliament did not conduct an official inquiry on Imia,

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<sup>39</sup> The author of this policy paper was taken aback by the venomous contempt articulated by an ex-General of the Hellenic Army in relation to the value of advice offered by civilian advisors to the Minister of National Defence.

<sup>40</sup> See, Kamaras, Antonis, Joint Operations in the Greek Armed Forces: Much to be desired, much to be achieved, ELIAMEP Policy Paper 151, January 2024.

<sup>41</sup> See, Γκίνης, Κωνσταντίνος, Εθνική Ασφάλεια: Υπάρχει επαρκής χώρος για αποτελεσματική στρατιωτική εισήγηση; Στρατηγείν, 2020, Τεύχος 2, σελ. 1-18 (Ginis, Constantinos, National Security: is there sufficient space for effective military advice? Stratigein, 2020, Volume 2, pp. 1-18).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

though this would have been customary in many democratic polities so that lessons would be learned, codified and serve as the basis for wide-ranging Armed Forces reform. The government of the day did, in the light of Imia, allocate significant resources to upgrading key weapon systems in all branches, with the procurement choices made by and large involving reliable, highly advanced weapon systems manufactured by Greece's key allies: the US, France and Germany. However, the reformist PM, Costas Simitis, did not engage directly or indirectly with Armed Forces reform, not least due to an ideological alienation originating in the post WW II authoritarianism that culminated in the junta regime<sup>43</sup>, with Simitis himself being active in opposition to the junta. Instead, Simitis gave the MND portfolio to his key antagonist, Akis Tsohatzopoulos, the leader of PASOK's traditionalist faction and a typical patronage politician who was subsequently indicted and jailed on the basis of corruption charges involving the post-Imia weapons procurement programme.

## An international perspective on Greek civil-military relations

When we compare the state of Greek civil-military relations in the post-junta period with those of other democratic polities, we cannot but highlight some very strong similarities.

Democratic polities, whether due to features of the transition process from authoritarian to democratic rule or to other factors, often neglect to develop expertise and/or utilise civilian expertise in defence. In Brazil, authoritarian rule led to national security becoming a dirty word expunged from official documents. Despite the military subsequently being invited by the country's civilian rulers to participate in issues of domestic security, in particular, the MoD has remained militarised and efforts to develop jointness have failed, with each Branch retaining its fiefdom and determining its own procurement priorities<sup>44</sup>. The growing maturity of defence studies scholarship has been encouraging but has yet to translate into an impact on Armed Forces policy-making in Brazil. EU democracies with an authoritarian past, which include states as wide-ranging as Poland and Spain, also demonstrate minimal civilian participation in defence policy-making and thus a correspondingly circumscribed ability on the part of the civilian Ministers of Defence to define and execute defence policy<sup>45</sup>. In the Ministry of Defence of India, civilian staff seconded from other ministries focus on managing the finances of the Ministry, without however being experts in defence. Shortcomings revealed, as in the case of Greece, in several conflict instances, most prominently during operations against Pakistan at Kargill and the peacekeeping operation in Sri Lanka, exposed the limitations of the Indian Armed Forces when, in the absence of a robust jointness framework, the service branches operate on an ad hoc coordination model in a conflict situation<sup>46</sup>. It seems that India's civilian masters have abrogated responsibility, at least in part, to the Armed Forces and the constituent service branches in how to run their affairs—not least so that, if things go awry, they can shift the blame onto the military side.

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<sup>43</sup> For an analysis of the awkward relationship between PASOK's modernisers and the Armed Forces see, Καμάρας, Αντώνης, Εκσυγχρονιστές και Εθνική Άμυνα, GR Diplomatic Review, Μάιος 2021 [Kamaras, Antonis, Modernisers and National Defence, GR Diplomatic Review, May 2021]

<sup>44</sup> Ferreira da Silva, Peterson, and Augusto WM Teixeira Júnior. "The relationship between defence policy, the defence budget, and force structure in contemporary Brazil." *BRASILIANA: Journal for Brazilian Studies* 10.2 (2021).

<sup>45</sup> Pion-Berlin, David, Igor Acácio, and Andrew Ivey. "Democratically consolidated, externally threatened, and NATO aligned: finding unexpected deficiencies in civilian control." *Democratization* 26.6 (2019): 1070-1087.

<sup>46</sup> Mukherjee, Anit. "Fighting separately: Jointness and civil-military relations in India." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 40.1-2 (2017): 6-34.

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Greece exhibits some similarities with the Indian case in this respect, in that a persisting information asymmetry between civilian masters and military officers, shortcomings in the efficiency of the Armed Forces, and the inherent high-risk nature of any conflict situation have resulted in the Chief of the HNDGS emerging as an all-powerful micromanager of the Armed Forces<sup>47</sup>. We would describe this state of affairs as 'deferment to the military because of civilian incompetence', in contrast with the US situation of 'deferment to the military despite civilian competence'. In such cases, aware that their own accumulated reform shortcomings mean they do not have the Armed Forces at their disposal that they and the country need, the country's civilian rulers confer excessive authority and status on the Chief of the HNDGS, who can therefore be used as a scapegoat if and when these shortcomings come to light. The all-encompassing authority of the Chief of the HNDGS, particularly in wartime, originates in Greece's authoritarian past, in the 1940s and even earlier when the King assumed command of the nation's Armed Forces in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In addition, as has rightly been pointed out, it reflects the insecurities of Greece's civilian leadership with regard to their ability to bear the ultimate responsibility for wartime leadership<sup>48</sup>. As we have argued, this insecurity stems at least in part from the lack of civilian expert advice on national defence. It is worth noting in this regard that contemporary scholarship has challenged the premise that war is best prosecuted by the military high command alone, with no decisive input from the civilian leadership, on the basis of the historical evidence<sup>49</sup>.

Excessive civilianisation, as in the case of conscription, is prominent during democratic transitions in several countries. Nothing analogous has been noted in post-WWII democratic polities which have not experienced authoritarian rule and which have utilised conscription as a pillar of their territorial defence. Examples of the latter range from Finland, which has not engaged in military conflict during this period, to Israel, whose mixed Armed Forces of professionals, conscripts and reserves have been recurrently engaged in multiple conflicts.

In Taiwan, conscription was also instrumentalised by the country's authoritarian regime for domestic purposes, as a result of which the military lost the benefit of the doubt, as it did in Greece, in terms of its ability to convert citizens into soldiers<sup>50</sup>. The death of a conscript following the democratic transition led to the wholesale transfer of the military justice system to civilian courts. Conscription service was progressively cut to 4 months, with training becoming perfunctory despite the country facing an existential challenge in the form of the determination of the People's Republic of China to achieve unification by hook or by crook (conscription service has now been restored to 12 months, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which validated the case for conscription as core to territorial defence while highlighting the real risks Taiwan faces in terms of maintaining its independence).

Argentina also mirrors Greece in this respect: as the country shifted to democratic rule, an apparatus of antimilitarism involving civil society organisations, political parties and the media shaped the 'political

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<sup>47</sup> The author analyses this state of affairs in Kamaras, Antonis, *Joint Operations in the Greek Armed Forces: Much to be desired, much to be achieved*, ELIAMEP Policy Paper 151, January 2024.

<sup>48</sup> Αλιβιζάτος, Νίκος. "Η συνταγματική θέση των Ενόπλων Δυνάμεων: Η αρχή του πολιτικού ελέγχου." (1987). ΕΚΔΟΣΕΙΣ ΑΝΤ. Ν. ΣΑΚΚΟΥΛΑ, 1987 [Alivizatos, Nikos, *The constitutional position of the Armed Forces: The principle of civilian control*, ANT.N.SAKOULAS EDITIONS, 1987]

<sup>49</sup> See, Cohen, Eliot A. *Supreme command: Soldiers, statesmen and leadership in wartime*. Simon and Schuster, 2012.

<sup>50</sup> Ben-Ari, Eyal. "Taiwan's changing military covenant and the armed forces' institutional autonomy." *Center for Chinese Studies*. [http://ccs.ncl.edu.tw/ccs2/ENGLISH/research\\_info.aspx](http://ccs.ncl.edu.tw/ccs2/ENGLISH/research_info.aspx) (2019).

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weather' regarding perceptions of maltreatment by the Armed Forces of conscripted soldiers<sup>51</sup>. As in Taiwan, the death of a conscript as a result of mistreatment was enough to catalyse radical change, which in this case led to the abolition of conscription service altogether, with no informed policy debate whatsoever on whether conscription served the country's national security needs or not.

In sum, the common civil society thread running through these three cases of countries transitioning to democracy is setting the conditions of conscript service over the professional judgement of the Armed Forces<sup>52</sup>. It is structurally incurious about, or even hostile to, issues relating to the effectiveness of the Armed Forces, not least because such an interest is at conflict with efforts to civilianise the experience of conscription.

Where Greece represents a distinct case within its NATO and more largely European peer cohort, is that it has operated under the strictest of caveats, to avoid suffering any casualties at all in post-Cold War out-of-area missions. Not only did Greece not send troops during the occupation phase in Iraq, it also suffered no casualties – unlike any only NATO member country with substantial Armed Forces – during its participation in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, due to its Kabul-only caveat. Although there has been no systematic study of this feature of Greek defence policy, we speculate that it is integrally connected to the fact that Greece is the only NATO member country not covered by Article 5, due to Turkey's NATO membership; of course, this factor was starkly illuminated in 1974, during the invasion of Cyprus, where Greek units actually engaged Turkish invading forces, and in subsequent Greece-Turkey crises in which NATO adopted a neutral stance with the US playing the role of umpire.

This limited (albeit not insignificant) role played by NATO and the US, coupled with the nearly catastrophic lack of legitimacy engendered by the invasion of Cyprus (which led to Greece exiting the military wing of NATO only to reenter it a few years later), has meant that Greek civilian leaders would pay a formidable political cost in the event of Greek units suffering casualties during their participation in a US- or NATO-led mission. By contrast, in other peer countries, governments have invoked allied commitments to politically enable decisions to put troops in harm's way<sup>53</sup>. The corollary of such risk avoidance is that defence policy in Greece, unlike in many other European NATO or EU member countries, was not parliamentarised in the post-Cold War period. In such countries, participating in wars of choice in far-off lands, as opposed to wars of national defence, resulted in extensive parliamentary debates, multiple parliamentary votes, and parliamentary inquiries conducted by the relevant parliamentary committees, making parliaments a factor in civil-military relations. This has most definitely not been the case in Greece<sup>54</sup>.

Importantly, the Greek Parliament has exercised limited or no oversight of either defence spending or defence procurement through the Permanent Committee on National Defence and External Affairs—a

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<sup>51</sup> Boeka, Ryan Layman. *The Politics of Reform: How Elite and Domestic Preferences Shape Military Manpower Systems*. Georgetown University, 2018 (unpublished Ph.D. Thesis).

<sup>52</sup> Kamaras, Antonis, Beating the Authoritarian legacy: upgrading conscription in Greece and Taiwan, War on the Rocks, 7 September 2022.

<sup>53</sup> Wagner, Wolfgang. "Is there a parliamentary peace? Parliamentary veto power and military interventions from Kosovo to Daesh." *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 20.1 (2018): 121-134.

<sup>54</sup> For a forceful critique of the limited engagement of the Greek Armed Forces in multinational military operations, see Γκαρτζονίκας, Παναγιώτης, Με το ένα πόδι η Ελλάδα σε συμμαχίες και στρατιωτικές αποστολές..., SLPress, 24.4.2023 [Gartzonikas, Panagiotis, Greece with one foot in alliances and military missions ..., SLPress, 24.4.2023]

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state of affairs that persists to this day<sup>55</sup>. Parliamentary Committees have generally toed the party line, either faithfully supporting government policy, warts and all, or indiscriminately opposing it, depending on the party affiliation of their members. Committees lack expert staff to support the deliberations of the participating MPs, with MPs being supported, if at all, by their own personal staff, who are not defence experts. The Permanent Committee on National Defence and External Affairs has not launched a single inquiry or issued a single report relating to defence policy or serious operational mishaps, nor has it demanded that the government do so<sup>56</sup>. Major weapon systems acquisitions are either supported by the Opposition parties, lest they be accused of not wanting to support national defence, or opposed as extravagantly costly, with hints that they may involve corruption on the part of government officials. However, no informed debate takes place on the pluses and minuses of these major acquisitions costing billions of euros, or on the pros and cons of possible alternatives.

This stagnation is widely perceived as being characteristic of Parliament as a whole, with commissions of inquiry coming in for the most severe criticism over time due to, on the one hand, the government's use of its majority to paper over policy failure and, on the other hand, the Opposition minority exploiting such commissions to grandstand and score points against the government, negating any policy significance they may have<sup>57</sup>.

That being said, as Nikos Alivizatos has pointed out, post-junta democratic governments of both the Right and Left have essentially left unchallenged the junta's own norm, enshrined in legislation passed in 1973, of shielding defence from normal scrutiny, the premise being that it should be protected from the rough and tumble of competitive politics<sup>58</sup>. This junta-era legislation has its own antecedents in the pre-WWII Metaxas dictatorship (1936-1940), which reversed the robust, decades-long tradition of parliamentary control of defence matters that preceded it, as well as in the post-WWII period, when the goal was to shield from public scrutiny the deep involvement of the US in Greece's running of its national security apparatus, including its Armed Forces.

Considering that legacy, it is no coincidence that leftist PASOK and its leader Andreas Papandreou argued, in Opposition, in favour of Parliamentary Committees of Defence and Foreign Affairs being able to conduct robust investigations of aspects of defence policy, with the appropriate classified safeguards in place, not least due to past abuses of secrecy by an all-powerful military. The template proposed was that of the Bundestag, reflecting the historically informed unwillingness to ever again leave a powerful military unaccountable. Illuminatingly, once in power, one of PASOK's main enforcers, Menios Koutsogiorgas, who

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<sup>55</sup> For an analysis of the shortcomings of parliamentary oversight of defence in Greece, see Government Defence Integrity Index, Country Brief: Greece, Transparency International Defence and Security 2020.

<sup>56</sup> See relatedly Καμάρας, Αντώνης, Πρέπει να μιλήσουμε για το στρατιωτικό απόρρητο, ΤΑ ΝΕΑ, 27 Σεπτεμβρίου 2023 [Kamaras, Antonis We need to talk about military classified information, ΤΑ ΝΕΑ, 27 September 2023]

<sup>57</sup> Indicatively, none of the 24 parliamentary commissions of inquiry staged over the entire fifty years of post-junta democratic rule have issued a report that would culminate in findings endorsed by all their members, see Σταυρόπουλος Λάμπρος, Ο μεταπολιτευτικός κανόνας των εξεταστικών, ΤΟ ΒΗΜΑ, 17 Μαρτίου 2024 [Stavropoulos Lambros, The democratic transition rule of commissions of inquiry, ΤΟ ΒΗΜΑ, 17 March 2024]. For an astute analysis of how hyper-partisanship has undermined the role of the Greek Parliament in establishing the causal reasons of policy failure, and thus setting the foundations for mitigation via policy reforms, see Τσούκας Χαρίδημος, Κ, Τέμπη: κομματική πόλωση, παραταξιακή σκέψη, Καθημερινή, 31 Μαρτίου 2024 [Tsoukas, Haridimos, K., Tempi: partisan polarization, factional thought, Kathimerini, 31 March 2024].

<sup>58</sup> Αλιβιζάτος, Νίκος. "Η συνταγματική θέση των Ενόπλων Δυνάμεων: Η αρχή του πολιτικού ελέγχου." (1987). ΕΚΔΟΣΕΙΣ ΑΝΤ. Ν. ΣΑΚΚΟΥΛΑ, 1987 [Alivizatos, Nikos, The constitutional position of the Armed Forces: The principle of civilian control, ΑΝΤ. Ν. ΣΑΚΟΥΛΑΣ EDITIONS, 1987]

was Minister of the Interior at the time, argued that if Parliamentary Committees of Inquiry could be set up with the consent of only two fifths of Parliament, which is to say without the consent of the ruling party, that would be tantamount to the suspension of democratic government<sup>59</sup>. It is both fascinating and promising that in recent years increasingly reform-minded, albeit retired, high-ranking officers, frustrated by the unwillingness or inability of the country's executive leadership to upgrade the fighting efficiency of the nation's Armed Forces, have supported greater scrutiny of national defence by the Greek Parliament and the Permanent Committee on National Defence and External Affairs in particular – the assumption being that such scrutiny will advance and not retard the cause of Armed Forces reform<sup>60</sup>.

The Greek Parliament (if not Greek civil society, as we will note below) seems to have mirrored India in recent years in presenting a case of a low accountability structure<sup>61</sup>; as an issue, this is not limited to defence and the Armed Forces. Since neither individual MPs nor the ruling and Opposition parties represented in Parliament are incentivised to gain influence and power through policy scrutiny and debate, they do not seek the resources and authority necessary to do so. Rather, the dominant incentive is to protect or contest power via policy-free, as opposed to policy-informed, personal advancement and partisanship. Expertise and the authority to use it would hinder, not facilitate, the utilisation of this dominant incentive. It is indicative of this state of affairs that when the civilian leadership of Greece's MND decided on two occasions to publish a White Book on Greece's defence policy, Parliament failed to ensure that this becomes a standard practice, with future White Books on defence published at regular intervals and discussed at both the Committee and plenary levels.

## Evolving Civil-Military Relations during the fiscal crisis and after it

The country's fiscal crisis, we will argue, boosted critical elements of Greece's civil-military relations, while also accelerating pertinent trends already present in Greece.

First, by humbling the Greek state and the majoritarian parties that mediated between the state machinery and popular will, the fiscal crisis boosted pluralism and civil society in Greece<sup>62</sup>, opening up space for a variety of critical discourses, including frank discussion on the effectiveness of the Armed Forces.

The fiscal cutbacks arguably brought the Armed Forces very close to, or even past, the point at which they could no longer perform their essential mission of safeguarding the country's territorial integrity in case

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<sup>59</sup> While the 2/5 rule was subsequently instituted in the constitutional revision of 2019, defence and foreign affairs were excluded, see Χρήστου, Βασιλική, Εξεταστικές Επιτροπές: Η αναθέωρηση που έμεινε μετέωρη, 18 Απριλίου 2024 [Hristou Vasiliki, Committees of Inquiry: the revision that was left incomplete, 18 April 2024]

<sup>60</sup> See, Γκαρτζονίκας, Παναγιώτης, Κλειδί η διακλαδικότητα για την άμυνα στο Αιγαίο, SLPRESS, 3 Δεκεμβρίου 2022 [Gartzonikas, Panagiotis, Jointness is key to the defence of the Aegean, SLPRESS, 3 December 2022] and Λυμπέρης, Παναγιώτης, Για μια νέα οικονομία της άμυνας-Τι πρέπει να συζητήσουμε προεκλογικά για τις ανάγκες των Ενόπλων Δυνάμεων, Καθημερινή, 2 Απριλίου 2024 [Liberis, Panagiotis, For a new economy of defence – What do we need to discuss pre-election for the needs of the Armed Forces, Kathimerini, 2 April 2024]

<sup>61</sup> Narang, Vipin, and Paul Staniland. "Democratic accountability and foreign security policy: Theory and evidence from India." *Security Studies* 27.3 (2018): 410-447.

<sup>62</sup> For this aspect of the crisis's impact on the evolution of Greek civil society, see Clarke, Jennifer, Huliaras, Asteris, and Sotiropoulos, Dimitris. *Austerity and the third sector in Greece: Civil society at the European frontline*. Routledge, 2016.

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of war with Turkey. Upgrades of key platforms were cancelled, accelerating the de facto obsolescence of key weapon systems in all three service branches. A lack of component parts compelled cannibalisation, limiting the availability of fighter aircraft and warships. Acquisitions of new weapon systems became an impossibility, confronting Greece with the reality of its being, militarily, at both a quantitative and qualitative disadvantage vis a vis Turkey. Even such staples as fuel for the Hellenic Navy (HN) Fleet could no longer be taken for granted, rendering operations close to unfeasible. As the country regressed to a 19<sup>th</sup>-to-early-20<sup>th</sup>-century model of private munificence becoming necessary for elementary state provisions, philanthropy originating from the shipping community in particular became a critical element, most prominently in the case of the HN, which maintains close links with the country's shipowners. One of the most prominent of these philanthropists offered an unprecedentedly blunt as well as detailed critique of the HN's state of preparedness in a series of remarkably frank articles in Greece's quality press<sup>63</sup>. Along the same lines, recently retired high-ranking HN officers also shared their alarm with the public in an investigative piece on Greek TV<sup>64</sup>. The then Director of ELIAMEP, which is funded by Greek philanthropy and CSR and EU sources, also co-authored an analysis which pointed out that the still high ratio of defence expenditure to GDP meant little, considering the close to 30 % fall in the output of the Greek economy<sup>65</sup>.

In tandem, amidst this fiscal-crisis-induced permissive environment for public discourse on defence, we witness the rise of a virtual community of specialist defence correspondents and scholarly retired officers who provide a steady stream of open access reports, analysis, and even peer-reviewed standard articles on the Greek Armed Forces and national defence in general. The audience for these defence specialists, who also provide feedback loops mainly on Facebook and LinkedIn, and can in individual cases partner with the providers of this output through such social media network activation, is comprised of active and retired members of the Armed Forces as well as members of the Armed Forces reserves who have served as conscripts<sup>66</sup>.

We stress that, with driving forces such as these, informed and open debate on the state of the Armed Forces became the rule and not the exception during the fiscal crisis, with critical voices emerging in all public policy domains. This change was engendered by major, policy-informed philanthropic giving, as in the case of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, which funded social welfare provision and youth employability schemes, or the funding of the dissemination of policy-relevant academic research by diaNEOsis, an organisation established by the Greek business magnate, Dimitris Daskalopoulos<sup>67</sup>. This crisis-generated precedent outlived the crisis as, after all, it had done nothing more than align Greece with the norms in its affluent, democratic peer states worldwide: namely, informed debate on national defence

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<sup>63</sup> See indicatively, Λασκαρίδης, Πάνος, *Οι σχέσεις μας με την Τουρκία και η εθνική άμυνα: είμαστε σοβαροί*, Καθημερινή, 30 Σεπτεμβρίου 2019 [Laskaridis, Panos. Our relations with Turkey and national defence: are we serious?, 30th of September, 2019], Λασκαρίδης, Πάνος *Αυταπόδεικτες αλήθειες*, Καθημερινή, 12 Ιουλίου, 2020 [Laskaridis, Panos, Self-evident truths, *Kathimerini*, 12 July 2020].

<sup>64</sup> See, the investigative report by 'Neoi Fakelloi' on how the fiscal crisis had impacted the Hellenic Navy, in which recently retired high-ranking HN officers are remarkably frank, 21 May 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1eA5h3x4ZLU>

<sup>65</sup> Dokos, Thanos and Kollias, Christos, *Greek defence spending in times of crisis: the urgent need for defence reforms*, ELIAMEP Thesis, 26 April 2013.

<sup>66</sup> For an example of a specialist defence correspondent of this sort, see the defence news and analysis site [doureios.com](http://doureios.com); for a scholarly journal run by retired officers, see [strategiein.gr](http://strategiein.gr).

<sup>67</sup> The author examines the interaction between philanthropy and pluralistic discourse during and beyond the fiscal crisis in Greece, in Kamaras, Antonis. "Diaspora and transnational philanthropy during the crisis and the shifting boundaries of state and civil society." *Diaspora Engagement in Times of Severe Economic Crisis: Greece and Beyond*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022. 71-93.

involving both retired officers and defence experts, either under the aegis of privately funded think tanks or solely on the basis of their prestige with no institutional affiliation attached<sup>68</sup>. Nor should we be surprised by the alacrity with which quality print and TV media responded and enhanced this trend, considering the organic links such media have with their international peers. Illuminatingly, Greece's two major quality media groups (*Kathimerini* and *Ta Nea – To Vima*) publish investigative pieces by the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*, including articles on defence-related themes, in either the original English or in translation.

Second, the fiscal crisis diffused technocracy throughout every aspect of public policy in Greece, and ultimately strengthened the technocratic element in the centre right party, ND, which also enjoys organic links with the Armed Forces due to its greater ideological affinity. With Kyriakos Mitsotakis, a very policy-oriented and technocratic Prime Minister at the helm, the ND government of 2019 was ready to apply its reform-mindedness to the domain of national defence<sup>69</sup>. This synthesis was not as pronounced during the first term of the Mitsotakis government, when major weapons procurements from abroad were privileged, being led by the PM himself and his Office, and when the MND was led by an ND politician with no prior background in foreign and defence policy. By the time the present incumbent, Nikos Dendias, a leading ND politician and former Minister of Foreign Affairs, took office, it became fully articulated under the 'Agenda 2030' Armed Forces reform programme.

## Civil-Military relations and the implementation of the 'Agenda 2030'

The 'Agenda 2030'<sup>70</sup> aligns itself with the ND government's overall reform orientation as much as with the predominant Armed Forces reform features worldwide. As such, it matches politics with policies to the extent that the MND has been transformed from a politically prestigious *cul de sac* for its Minister, and a risk not a benefit to the government of the day, to a stepping stone for its occupant and a feather in the hat of the government. A brief overview of the main elements of the 'Agenda 2030' – which includes the creation of a robust defence technological industrial base (DTIB), the selective adoption of the lessons learned from modern conflicts, most prominently from the war in Ukraine, the upgrading of conscription and the reform of professional military education – will make that clear.

The creation of a robust DTIB involves both the restructuring of ailing state-owned defence firms and the forging of a partnership between the Armed Forces and Greece's growing start-up scene. It thus makes

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<sup>68</sup> On the increasing willingness of high-ranking retired officers to analyse the specific challenges facing the Greek Armed Forces, see the following op-ed by the retired Chief of the Fleet of the HN, Λυμπέρης, Παναγιώτης Για μια νέα οικονομία της άμυνας-Τι πρέπει να συζητήσουμε προεκλογικά για τις ανάγκες των Ενόπλων Δυνάμεων, Καθημερινή, 2 Απριλίου 2024 [Liberis, Panagiotis, For a new economy of defence: What do we need to discuss pre-election for the needs of the Armed Forces, *Kathimerini*, 2 April 2024]

<sup>69</sup> For a typical demonstration of the Prime Minister's command and ownership of national defence, see Ομιλία του Πρωθυπουργού Κυριάκου Μητσοτάκη στην Βουλή στη συζήτηση του Νομοσχεδίου του Υπουργείου Εθνικής Άμυνας «Μέριμνα υπέρ του προσωπικού των Ενόπλων Δυνάμεων, εξορθολογισμός της νομοθεσίας Ενόπλων Δυνάμεων, οργάνωση της Εθνοφυλακής και άλλες διατάξεις» [Speech by the Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis in Parliament in the debate on the Ministry of National Defence draft law on "Caring for the Armed Forces personnel, rationalizing the Armed Forces legislation, organizing the National Guard and other ordinances"], <https://www.primeminister.gr/2023/02/07/31227>

<sup>70</sup> Δένδιας, Νίκος, Ένοπλες Δυνάμεις 2030 Νέα Εποχή στην Εθνική άμυνα [Dendias, Nikos: Armed Forces 2030: New Era in National Defence], <https://dendias.gr/kyvernitiko-ergo/ypourgeio-ethnikis-amynas/>



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the MND and its Minister a catalyst for Greece's manufacturing innovation and a participant to the wider efforts to make the Greek economy internationally competitive. It is also a highly resonant public policy effort to emulate rivals and friends alike. Namely, Turkey's strong DTIB is recognised as a pillar of the threat that country poses to Greece's territorial integrity and sovereign rights, while Israel provides the template for a country which has, through its defence-related innovation, both managed to build Armed Forces that are superior to all its rivals and a highly competitive economy. By contrast, Greece's past record of acquiring imported weapon systems with zero impact on its innovation capacity, while mismanaging its state-owned defence firms at a substantial cost both to the military effectiveness of its Armed Forces and to its public finances, is seen as a contributor to the Greek fiscal crisis<sup>71</sup>.

This policy orientation is also an important first step in the civilianisation of the MND, as for the first time ever an outfit jointly led and staffed by civilian and military personnel, the Hellenic Centre for Defence Innovation (HCDI), will be primarily responsible for procuring innovative products and services on behalf of Greece's Armed Forces. The HCDI's civilian element here is particularly pronounced: in addition to its President, who is the ex-Chief of the Fleet of the HN, its first managing director is a doyen of innovation who has sprung from Greece's research community (an ex-professor, former leader of a public research organisation, and founder of one of Greece's first and most successful tech start-ups<sup>72</sup>), while the HCDI's modus operandi is compatible with the way start-ups are funded internationally, be they civilian or defence-oriented. The creation of a robust DTBI is also additionally strengthened, as established private-sector defence firms can and do communicate their criticisms to the media regarding the perceived shortfalls of this policy. The highly prestigious start-up community is also keen to highlight in public what it will take for its members to engage with the MND, while both the business press and the academic community are well able to pass informed judgement on the successes and failures of the policy<sup>73</sup>.

The other key priority—adapting to lessons learned—is also an articulation of best-practice, evidence-based technocracy, which is how the government presents itself to the Greek electorate. In particular, the war in Ukraine has transformed key aspects of warfare and established clear benchmarks, in terms of the adoption of key technologies and emerging operational practices, which are relevant to Armed Forces worldwide. Importantly, the 'lessons learned' enterprise has a symbiotic, albeit non-exclusive, relationship with the cause of creating a robust DTIB, as Greek defence firms would in due course be called upon to create and manufacture a meaningful proportion of the technologies which feature prominently in these lessons learned.

Importantly, there has also been a break with the past in the domain of multinational military operations, whereby Greece has taken an active role in the creation and execution of the EU's EUNAVFOR ASPIDES mission, involving the protection of merchant shipping from Houthi attacks in the Red Sea. This mission has involved the HN engaging in military operations, shooting and bringing down Houthi drones with its guns and electronic warfare (EW) instruments, and thus placed its crews and ships in harm's way for the

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<sup>71</sup> For this wider context, see Kamaras, Antonis, *The Greek Defence Sector: Turning the page?*, ELIAMEP Policy Paper 126, February 2023 and Kamaras, Antonis, *Innovation and the Greek Armed Forces*, ELIAMEP Policy Paper 163, May 2024

<sup>72</sup> See this link for a brief CV of the head of HCDI, <https://www.athexgroup.gr/el/pantelis-tzortzakis>

<sup>73</sup> Indicatively, the MND almost immediately reversed course on the issue of the intellectual property rights of its funded projects, once the start-up community and defence sector firms pointed out that the original draft law was out of line with standard international practice and would be a non-starter for innovative firms. See, Γαβριήλ, Ελένη, *Κρίσιμη αλλαγή από το υπουργείο Άμυνας στο νομοσχέδιο για την καινοτομία*, Business Daily, 16 Μαΐου 2024 [Gavriil, Eleni, *Critical change by the Ministry of Defence in the draft law for innovation*, Business Daily, May 2024].

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first time since WW II. The ASPIDES mission has been defended on collective defence grounds: thus, due to its support of the Ukrainian war effort, the EU has become an increasingly credible collective security provider—unlike NATO, which has Turkey as a fellow member country. This development demonstrates that, once the policy conditions are in place, Greece’s civilian leadership follows the rule in terms of the decision to engage the country’s Armed Forces in multinational military operations. HN’s use of ‘Centaur’, an EW device developed and manufactured by EAV, the Greek aerospace firm, as well as the fact that Houthi attacks have also been launched against Greek merchant marine vessels and negatively impacted the role of Piraeus as a major transshipment port, have further enhanced Greek ‘ownership’ of the ASPIDES mission, as per the public advocacy of the current Minister of National Defence.

That being said, we must also point to the absence of creating a civilian component in the MND’s defence planning function. Essentially, the Minister’s measure of influence on the selection and adaptation of the lessons learned from the war in Ukraine, and other wars, will be limited to the selection of those officers entrusted with that particular mission. The Minister of the MND will not be supported, in his final determination of which lessons from the war in Ukraine are most relevant to the Greek Armed Forces, by a group of permanent, civilian experts detached from single-Branch interests and perspectives<sup>74</sup>. By contrast, the government has often opted, vis-à-vis other policy challenges it has faced, to commission independent experts, often diaspora technocrats or scholars who are leaders in their field, to deliver policy recommendations in publicly available reports which generate additional debate and analysis by experts unattached to a particular agency of the government or bureaucratic group<sup>75</sup>.

How does the academic and more general expert community connect with this executive intent, articulated in ‘Agenda 2030’, and the dynamics that drive it? There is a critical divide that mirrors the progress or lack thereof of the MND’s civilianisation efforts. University departments and schools focused on areas that do not fall within the humanities and social sciences have for years now been accessing European Research Council funds with dual use applications, civil and military, in such domains as IT and, increasingly, Artificial Intelligence, engineering and aerospace. As both EU and NATO funding in core defence have increased by leaps and bounds, these university departments and schools have built on their track record in dual use applications and many of them are aggressively pursuing opportunities in defence R&D. Nor have they shied away from signing MoUs with one of the main Greek defence firms’ associations, SEKPY – albeit, according to information relayed to the author, with the significant exception of the Athens Polytechnic, Greece’s most prestigious engineering school and the site of the junta’s bloody suppression of the students’ revolt in 1973. Most recently, the discipline of finance has joined the fray<sup>76</sup>. Political Science, on the other hand, remains absent both in terms of wide-ranging scholarly output and

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<sup>74</sup> For a discussion of the lessons to be learned from the war by the Greek Armed Forces, and some of the challenges they face in being able to do so, see Kamaras, Antonis, Lessons learned from a year of war in Ukraine: A Greek Reading, ELIAMEP Policy Paper 137, June 2023

<sup>75</sup> The most recent example is the issuing of a 400-page report by a Dutch consultancy, led by a Greek, on how the plain of Thessaly, Greece’s most fertile agricultural area, should recover from a catastrophic 2023 flood, see, Γεωργοπούλου, Τάνια, Το σχέδιο να μη γίνει έρημος η Θεσσαλία, Καθημερινή, 13 Μάρτιος 2023 [Georgopoulou, Tania, The plan to prevent Thessaly becoming a desert, Kathimerini, 13 March 2023].

<sup>76</sup> See the announcement of the partnership between SEKPY and universities and research institutes in Northern Greece, Newsroom, DefencEduNet: ΑΕΙ και επιχειρήσεις συμμαχούν για την άμυνα, The Power Game, 18 Δεκεμβρίου 2023 [Newsroom, DefencEduNet: Universities and businesses join forces for defence, The Power Game, 18 December 2023] and the conference jointly organized by the University of Piraeus Finance Lab and the Army Officer Cadet School on the funding of defence innovation and industry, at the following link: <https://bankfin.unipi.gr/fql/defencefin2024/>.

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policy-relevant research. There is still no department of defence studies in any Greek state universities, and core defence courses are not taught in their international affairs departments.

This absence of quality defence studies literature, and of a high-profile internationally prestigious national defence scholarship cohort resident in Greece, represents a twin as much as mutually reinforcing obstacle to the efforts of any Minister of National Defence, the current incumbent included, to civilianise the MND. First, the absence of a deep pool of resident civilian defence technocrats, as most of the Greek technocrats, men and women, have not only studied defence abroad, they have also been employed abroad, either by government or in research institutes, universities or the private sector. Second, the impression entrenched in both the civilian world and within the Greek officer corps, that only the officer corps can have the necessary expertise on matters of national defence, and that such expertise neither could nor should be synthesised, let alone challenged, by civilian experts.

The institution of an effective conscription system, replacing what the Minister himself has described on several occasions as the completely ineffective present conscription system<sup>77</sup> for both the Armed Forces themselves and the conscript, is an issue at the very core of civil-military relations, as it entails converting citizens into soldiers. Here, we will be dealing with a declining but still strong civilianisation tradition that we analysed above, which originated in the early democratisation period which will be contested by the segment of civil society that will want to judge conscription from the point of its military efficacy.

To the older civilianisation tradition, implementing a modern conscription system with both the physical rigour and calculated physical risk attendant on the upgrading of conscript training will be tantamount to an attempt to revive historical authoritarianism and the manhandling of conscripts by the officer corps. By contrast, the civil society segment in favour of strengthening the effectiveness of the Armed Forces, which we also analysed, and which emerged during the fiscal crisis, will be providing political support to the MND's efforts to upgrade conscription. At the same time, these civil society advocates of an effective Armed Forces, will also be ready to highlight any regression to standard patronage practices that would bring disrepute to the reform of conscription as much as rendering it ineffective, such as widespread conscript unit selection, usually far away from the Greek-Turkish border, on the basis of patronage relations.

An important factor in how this reform of conscription unfolds is the international dimension as it is shaped by the Russo-Ukrainian war. The war has singlehandedly reaffirmed the indispensability of effective conscript armies for territorial defence; it has turned Finland and Israel into global paragons, due to their tradition of creating effective conscript systems under diverging national security environments; it has led to the revival of conscription in nearly all European countries adjacent to the Russian Federation; it has compelled Taiwan to revive its own moribund conscription system; last but not least, it has even raised questions in the US as to whether, in the era of Sino-US competition and the return of Big War, the All-Volunteer Force model adopted after the end of the Vietnam War is still fit for purpose. Implementing an effective conscription system is, of all the policy elements in the 'Agenda 2030', the most visible to the country's civilian population; consequently, the fact that this policy has achieved global norm status is of vital significance to its effective public advocacy and, by extension, to its political viability.

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<sup>77</sup> See most recently, Συνέντευξη στον Βασίλη Νέδο, Νίκος Δένδιας Υπουργός Εθνικής Άμυνας – Οι δεσμεύσεις των ΗΠΑ δεν έχουν εκπληρωθεί, Καθημερινή, 13 Οκτωβρίου 2024 [Interview with Vasilis Nedos, Nikos Dendias Minister of National Defence – the Commitments of the USA have not been fulfilled, Kathimerini, 13 October 2024]

Finally, one domain in which civil-military relations have demonstrated stagnancy in this otherwise dynamic phase in Greek civil-military relations is undoubtedly that of parliamentary oversight and debate. Indicatively, there has been no comprehensive debate on the rationale of the Greek Armed Forces participating in risky multinational military operations, at the plenary level; this constitutes a missed opportunity to establish a new consensus on the participation of the Greek Armed Forces in multilateral military operations so that, in the event of future personnel fatalities and injuries, the country does not revert to the 'free ridership' which is so damaging to the national interest.

## Concluding Thoughts and Recommendations

Both the way in which the post-authoritarian democratic transition has shaped civil-military relations in Greece, and the impact such civil-military relations have had on the country's ability to produce effective Armed Forces, closely match the experience of other countries which experienced a similar historical trajectory.

A disinterested academic community which, bar individual exceptions, has not recognised national defence as a legitimate and significant field of inquiry as a public policy domain; weak or no parliamentary oversight of national defence; and an excessively militarised MND are not exceptional in a country, like Greece, which has experienced a transition to democracy after the collapse of a military junta. Nor are the policy consequences of this state of affairs unique to Greece: namely, corruption in military procurement and organisational reform efforts which remain timid even after significant operational failures negatively impacting vital national interests.

Yet, as we have noted and argued, Greece is not exceptional, either, in the significant progress it has made to escape the long shadow cast by its authoritarian past and to meaningfully upgrade its civil-military relations and thus the effectiveness of its Armed Forces. The return of 'Big War' to Europe as part of the same trend that has fuelled Turkish revisionism vis a vis Greece, together with the need to make defence at least partly 'pay its way' through an innovation-inclined DTIB, have resulted in Greece, and other countries like Greece, adopting ambitious defence reforms which have been initiated by the country's civilian leadership and jointly conceived and implemented with the Armed Forces leadership. Suffice it to mention Taiwan here, which recently extended conscription from a derisory four months to a year, injected realism into its Armed Forces training exercises, raised its defence expenditure, and sought to engage its manufacturing in the production of innovative military technologies.

Importantly, the comparative perspective enables us not only to assess and identify the progress that has been made, but also those domains where this has not been the case. In that context, this policy paper will conclude with three recommendations:

1. To the leadership of the Greek Parliament: Create a specialised Committee on National Defence by dividing the present Permanent Committee on National Defence and External Affairs into two. Support this new Committee with staff specialised in defence and adopt best practices, in terms of the mandate of this Committee, with regard to its oversight function, its classified and non-classified hearings, reports and so on.

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2. To the leadership of the MND: first, further strengthen the civilianisation of the MND by creating a strategic planning division staffed by civilian defence experts and military officers, but led by civilians. And second, staff the MND's procurement division with permanent civilian staff. In the former case, personnel will need to be attracted from the cohort of defence experts from the Greek diaspora, as defence studies does not exist as a discipline in Greek universities. In the latter case, a combination of resident and Greek technocrats who have graduated from prestigious Greek and international polytechnic schools should be favoured. We underline that this recommendation entails the hiring of permanent civilian staff through transparent meritocratic selection processes. The Minister of National Defence can retain the right to hire a small staff of special advisers (three to five, say) in a non-executive capacity, whose tenure would coincide with that of the Minister. This paper shares the view established by the literature that meritocratically selected permanent staff perform better than political appointees, and would argue that the Greek civil service in totality, and not just the staff of the MND, would perform better if ministerial general secretaries stopped being political appointees and were selected instead from the permanent civilian staff<sup>78</sup>.
3. To the leadership of Greece's two leading universities, the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki: establish defence studies departments to be led by distinguished diaspora Greek defence studies scholars, so you can produce the research and the human resources that Greece's civil-military relations need—specifically, in the MND, Parliament and civil society actors such as think tanks—to address Greece's 21<sup>st</sup>-century national security challenges.

It is worth noting that the first two of these three recommendations in particular are being advocated explicitly on the basis of observed best practice in civil-military relations internationally, and of the principle of democratically-legitimated civilian supremacy, as early as the late 1980s, a little more than a decade after the collapse of the junta, by one of Greece's leading constitutional scholars: Nikos Alivizatos. We would also argue that the third recommendation, too, is implicitly present in Alivizatos' seminal work referenced above. After all, his emphasis on the need to narrow the asymmetry in expertise between the civilian and military leaderships points to the indispensable role Greece's academic community should be playing as the prime generator of human pools of such expertise, thus providing the intellectual and techno-scientific personnel and analytical output the civilian leadership needs to exercise its democratic mandate in national defence. In effect, what this paper argues is that, half a century after the transition to democracy, in the era of the return of 'Big War', of a transformation in the conduct of warfare, and of a highly revisionist Turkey, Greece's democratic polity has even less of an excuse for ignoring the clarion call, first sounded in 1987 by Nikos Alivizatos, for the wholesale modernisation of civil-military relations.

Finally, we are convinced that—*inter alia* safeguarding meritocratic selection in the Armed Forces; containing corruption in weapons procurement; establishing a regular publication cycle for defence doctrine and force structure documents to distill military knowledge and ensure continuity in the evolution of the Armed Forces; defending the competence and authority of the officer corps to convert citizens into soldiers primarily in Greece's Land Army; pushing for joint operations which, by removing obstacles presented by either single-Service-Branch parochialism and/or of the present

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<sup>78</sup> For a discussion of this issue in the case of the US, see Lewis, David, E. *The Number of Political Appointees: A practical Research Guide*, Center for Effective Government-Harris School of Public Policy, The University of Chicago, 2024.

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anachronistic system of an all-powerful Chief of HNDGS, is a positive sum game for all services branches as well as for the country's ability to defend itself; and developing and disseminating the strategic foresight that can mitigate, if not eliminate, the boom and bust cycle that so often bedevils fiscal commitment in the defence of democratic polities, Greece's included—such a modernisation of civil-military relations cannot but be the greatest ally of the most competent and driven members of Greece's officer corps.