

**Greek Association  
for Atlantic and European Cooperation**

Member of the ATLANTIC TREATY ASSOCIATION

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Dialogue  
Education  
Advocacy

**25th Annual International Symposium**

*Contemporary Security Challenges  
in Europe, Mediterranean and Greece:  
the Role of NATO & EU*



### Synopsis

On the occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary since it was set up in 1991, the **Greek Association for Atlantic & European Cooperation (G.A.A.E.C.)** organized the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual International Symposium entitled “**Contemporary Security Challenges in Europe, Mediterranean and Greece: the Role of NATO & EU**”.

The event took place on the 9<sup>th</sup> of December 2016 at the Officer’s Club, with participation of Representatives of the Government, Opposition and the Political, Diplomatic, Business, Military and Civil domain, as well as young professionals and university students.

The Greek Government has been represented by Alternate Minister of Defense **Mr. Dimitrios Vitsas**. Also high level personalities from the Greek Military and Diplomatic spectrum attended the Symposium. Such as the Chief of HNDGS, **Admiral Mr. Evangelos Apostolakis**, the Chief of the Hellenic Navy General Staff, **Vice Admiral Mr. Georgios Giakoumakis**, the 1<sup>st</sup> Deputy Chief of HAGS Lieutenant General **Mr. Dimitrios Thomaidis**, along with top Military Officials. Moreover, the Symposium attended the Director of the Military Attache-Office of the President of the Hellenic Republic, Airforce General **Mr. Grigorios Prezarakos**, representing H.E. Mr. Prokopis Pavlopoulos, and also the Director of the Prime Minister’s Diplomatic Office **Mr. Evangellos Kalpadakis** and the Director General of Political and National Defense, Ambassador **Mr. Trifon Paraskevopoulos**. The Ambassadors-Directors in MFA **Mr. Nikolaos Pleksidas (NATO)** , **Mrs. Despoina Loubakou (UN)** and **Mr. Panagiotis Stournaras (OSCE)**, along with many other Greek Ambassadors and Senior

Diplomats. Foreign Ambassadors and Embassy Representatives from countries such as, Jordan, Turkey, Poland, Croatia, Australia, Montenegro, the United States, France, Romania, Estonia, Denmark, Netherlands, Russia, Tunisia, Nigeria, Iran, Iraq, Serbia, Spain and the United Arab Emirates honored us with their presence.

### Opening Session



**Mr. Theodossis Georgiou**, President of G.A.A.E.C, opened the proceedings of the Symposium, by welcoming the participants. Mr. Georgiou highlighted the necessity of a closer strategic cooperation between the EU and NATO in the light of Contemporary Security Challenges, stemming from events like the continuing crisis in Syria, the decision of the British electorate to leave the European Union (Brexit) and the Migration Flows Issue. Moreover, he stressed that the enthusiasm exhibited by many countries following the collapse of both the Berlin Wall and to integrate into the Euro-Atlantic Institutions, lately, gives ground to a rising skepticism. Nevertheless, one thing must be taken as granted: “The European Unity and the Euro-Atlantic Cooperation remain indispensable”. As he, furthermore, mentioned the increased

weight of Civil Society and the important role it plays in the decision making process of every Democratic Society has also an impact in the Alliance, offering valuable democratic legitimacy, enhancing and promoting equal participation, open and

free dialogue constituting a hub of intellectual interaction. This is what G.A.A.E.C. along with the respective Atlantic Associations in the NATO Member-States, as well as partnership countries strives to accomplice.

The contribution of the Civil Society and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in particular among them that of the Atlantic Treaty Association (ATA), underlined the Italian Professor and President of ATA **Dr. Fabrizio Luciulli**. Dr. Luciulli, mentioned the privileged



relationship between ATA and the NATO's Public Diplomacy Division (PDD), which, for over 60 years with its programs, has significantly contributed to the Euro-Atlantic Security and Defense.

In the same spirit, **Ms. Ino Afentouli**, Program Officer of NATO's PDD, underscored the prospects of a closer Cooperation between NATO and the EU in a tense geopolitical environment. "NATO, today, is more important than ever", she stated. Moreover, she said that there are signs of fragility in the peace and stability status of the last 25 years in the Eastern and Southern front of the Alliance. Finally, she focused on the central geostrategic role of Greece in the prevailing atmosphere of uncertainty and instability. On the other hand, although Greek citizens are insufficiently informed about the Euro-Atlantic structure, the Country has fulfilled its commitments towards the Alliance.

### Special Session



**Mr. Andreas Lykourntzos**, former Minister and a Founding Member of GAAEC presented both the legacy and the contribution to the country of former Minister Mr. Ioannis Varvitsiotis. He, also, stressed the necessity of cooperation between NATO and E.U, but paying particular attention to avoiding a probable overlapping between the authorities of the two organizations.

During the Special Session the Greek Minister of National Defense (1990 to 1993), **Mr. Ioannis Varvitsiotis**, who had delivered

the Inaugural Address at the 1<sup>st</sup> Symposium of GAAEC in May 1991, he said that "I had lived as Minister of Defense (1990 to 1993) which was a special period in the course of the NATO alliance. It was the time when the collapse of the Berlin Wall allowed millions of people to breathe the air of freedom. Nevertheless the fear of the Soviet threat prevailed in their hearts which made the request to be covered under the NATO umbrella and seek to join the NATO alliance".

Furthermore, he cited two new forms of conflict: a) the economic war and b) the terrorism, in which NATO must pay close attention. He pointed out the danger of a deep crisis and disintegration of European Union taking stand in the major contradictions that feed rivalries and political upheavals between the States, as well as within international organizations. In addition, he strongly upheld that there is «a lack of leadership», in order to make an assertive step towards the «European integration», but there are also leaders that «bend to nationalism and populism».



Commenting on the remarks of the former Minister of Defense Mr. Varvitsiotis, professor of History, **Mr. Evanthis Hatzivasileiou**, shared his insights. The professor supported the significant role NATO has assumed following the end of the Cold war in an era of a wider security perception and not only the conventional military threat. NATO is an Alliance based on values of its Member-States; values such as democracy, human rights, and the rule of law are tested to the current historic context and in a large extent define the field of their action and decision making.

He also stated that “NATO, in fact, is foremost a military alliance which protected the balance of power and prevented the war during the Cold war. It was one of the key factors that ensured the peace and carried out a twenty five peace and prosperity cycle after 1991. But besides its essential military roles, NATO is something more: it is a value-oriented union of independent states. Based on the consensus of the members to the core values and thus constitutes a principal form of international organization whose importance is not reduced after the end of the Cold War”.

He mentioned that “In the post-industrial era, the activity of state entities is not enough. And NATO is at the forefront of this process – for example on scientific cooperation, which in our country is almost unknown”. He further argued that “These citizens unions involved in the international system became even more active and necessary after the end of the Cold War, when the bonds between the Western states (and NATO) seemed ready to loosen up, due to the fact that there was a lack of immediate threat”. And he concluded by saying “The Greek Association for Atlantic and European Cooperation established then, by the end of the Cold War. It is the Greek segment of a large network that connects communities with the international system. But especially for Greece it is an extroversion and communication lever with the international tendencies - things that we generally lacking and urgently needed more today than ever. There is not a government agency, but a creative response of Greek society to the challenges of the modern world. This, I believe, we honor with today's event”. It is not a state agency, but a creative response of Greek society to the challenges of the modern world. This, I believe, we honor with today's event”.

## American Perspective Session

The session was moderated by **Dr. Alik Mitsakos**, Founding Member of G.A.A.E.C. and Dean of the “International Center for Leading Studies” -TICLS, who presented the new Ambassador of USA Mr. Geoffrey Pyatt. Dr. Mitsakos highlighted his long-term contribution to the US representation in sectors that constitute the forefront of American foreign policy. With a Master degree in International Relations from Yale, and B.A. in Political Science from the University of California, he served at the



National Security Council staff, on the Staff of Deputy Secretary Strobe Talbott and at posts in Honduras and India. He was Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs from 2010-2013, he also was Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Mission to the International Organizations in Vienna, Austria from 2007 to 2010. He served at the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi, India as Deputy Chief of Mission from 2006 to 2007 and as Political Counselor from 2002 to 2006. He has also served as an Ambassador in Ukraine 2013 - 2016, having managed the Ukrainian crisis.

His Excellency, **Mr. Geoffrey Pyatt**, stressed that both countries share a strong and enduring partnership based on mutual commitment to core democratic values, which are the foundation of peace, security and prosperity for Europe. As he mentioned, President Obama’s recent visit to Greece, underscores the importance of the two countries alliance and reflects the significant role that the United States play on Greece – as a pillar of strength and stability in this region, being a NATO ally, and an EU Member State. He, also, stressed the importance of NATO as the cornerstone for regional security and a starting point of facing out key security challenges like ISIL. On the Migration Flows issue he praised Greece on its “humane approach”. Moreover, NATO’s Maritime Activity in the Aegean under the Standing NATO Maritime Group II – or SNMG II – plays a key, stabilizing role to prevent the smuggling of migrants to Greece.

Concerning Russia, he mentioned that “I hope we are very clear on the importance of the legal principle that international borders cannot be changed by force as Russia did when it invaded Crimea”. Furthermore, he assured the audience, that the U.S. will continue to support the cooperation with its NATO allies, “who remain our closest friends and most capable partners”, and he expressed that the 3 billion dollar commitment of the United States in the area will continue through 2017.

He strongly “applauded Greece’s regional leadership, one of the handful of countries that despite the economic challenges it faces, fulfills the commitment of 2% of GDP investment in defense”. In particular, he underlined the potential of the country developing into a key energy

hub. Moreover, he commended the strong bilateral defense relationship of the U.S with countries like Greece, which is illustrated in the strong American Presence in the Souda Bay at the island of Crete.

**Greek Foreign & Defense Policy in a  
Changing International-Regional  
Environment:  
Challenges and Opportunities**

The next session was moderated and commented by the Senior Editor and Columnist of “Kathimerini”, **Mr. Athanasios Ellis**. In this session, the former Minister **Mr. Evangelos Venizelos** stated that “The Greek foreign and security policy had been conducted for forty two (42) years since the political changeover in



1974 around eleven steady points, which constitute, in my opinion, the acquis of the main political forces that exerted power during this period. The two leading personalities, which are, in my opinion, pioneers of the cohesive national strategy are Konstantinos Karamanlis and Andreas Papandreou. All these eleven steady points are disputed or placed under discussion, at this time.

He also raised questions as to the priorities of Trump’s government, such as whether to continue the US to bear 75% of the NATO budget or change stance on issues as confronting the authoritarian regimes and how the Members-States of EU will react. Regarding Erdogan’s rhetoric against Greece, Mr. Venizelos characterized it the outcome of Erdogan’s personal anxiety about the impact of the “geostrategic mapping out” in Syria and Iraq. Additionally on the Cyprus Question, Mr. Venizelos warned about the consequences in case this issue turned into a bilateral one, jeopardizing the legal recognition of the Cyprus Republic.

And he ended up his speech by pointing out that “the fact that there is not sufficient public discourse about what is called foreign and security policy, is a sign of extreme and dangerous decay of public discourse and the civil society must assert and enforce a right and proper agenda, that is perceptive and aware of history”.

In the same session, **Mr. Georgios Koumoutsakos**, Head of Foreign Affairs Department of “Nea Dimokratia”, argued that community solidarity recedes while the antagonism between the Member-states of EU is escalating. In addition, he claimed that there is always the possibility EU shifts to an era of intra-family tensions and conflicts or move towards political nationalism, leading probably to newer withdrawals after that of UK. As far as concerns the Cyprus Issue, he warned that they must not go to a referendum without being well prepared for a good deal. He also urged upon the good preparation before talks with the Turkish leadership.

**European Security – Defense Strategy – non Conventional Threats: *Unstable Economies and Security, Cyberwarfare, European Energy Security, Refugee/Migration Flows in the Mediterranean, Environment and Climate Change***



The next panel chaired **Mrs. Marietta Giannakou**, former Minister of Education and former Member of the European Parliament (MEP). Mrs. Giannakou noted that unfortunately, the European institutional structure is threatened by selfish initiatives of various States.

She also underlined the privileged and strategic position of Greece in the European Union and NATO, a position that should be adequately exploited.

**Mr. Vasilios Leventis**, President of the Political Party ‘Union of Centrists’, interpreted European Security, first and foremost as an issue of Justice and Equality. He concluded, expressing his disappointment along with many other people that had been enthusiastic over EU in the past, but now regard it with skepticism, due to its policy decisions and its long-term shortsighted austerity measures.

**Mr. George Kyrtos**, MEP of the European People's Party from “Nea Dimokratia”, referred to the recent decision of the British people to withdraw from the European Union. At the same time he presented a descriptive analysis of current EU challenges such as Cyberwarfare, European Energy Security and the large Refugee and Migration Flows. As he stated “In my view there can be no effective response to undeclared cyberwarfare without imposing rules on the Internet that will protect the information, citizens' rights and prevent digital US domination on the European economy”.

“Finally, the issue of European Energy Security has huge distance to cover in order to reduce our energy dependence and the competitive disadvantage compared to the extremely low energy costs for businesses operating in the US. Despite ambitious plans there is not going to be in the foreseeable future common European Energy Policy”.

At the same panel, **Mr. Spyros Danellis**, Member of the Political Party “To Potami”, introduced the concept of Human Security and stressed that “... in the near future, human security, namely the “well-being” would be threatened by the looming climate change. The stepwise increase of temperature in conjunction with drought and constantly diminishing water resources may bring conflicts between groups in the same country or in neighboring countries, as is already happening in Africa and South Asia”. Lastly he claimed that the new framework of asymmetric threats such as climate change and cyberwarfare put the security of Europe at stake.



## Can the European Union Achieve an Autonomous Defense Identity? The Role of National Defense Industries



This panel was coordinated by Professor **Mr. Panagiotis Tsakonias** and constituted by **Mr. Dennys Plessas**, Representative of Development Initiatives for Lockheed Martin, the President of Greek Aerospace Industry (EAB) **Mr. Zacharias Gkikas**, accompanied by **Mr. Tasos**

**Rozolis** and **Mr. Georgios Troullinos**, President and CEO of SEKPY and Intracom Defense respectively. The main issue of discussion was if the European Union can achieve an autonomous defense identity. All of the speakers originated from the Defense Industry, highlighted the need of interoperability, compatibility and efficiency in the use of the already scarce resources available for Defense and Security. They also mentioned the existing institutional transparency context (Directive 2011/9). They further proclaimed the need for enhanced competitiveness and efficient utilization of Best Value Practices in order for the Greek and European Defense Industries to remain a reliable choice in a world of rising powers.

### European Union – NATO Partnership



Next to share his perspectives, was the Chairman of the European Union Military Committee, General Mr. Mikhail Kostarakos who started his speech by saying “I am deeply convinced that the public debate on issues so important for societies on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, as the cooperation between two supranational entities of global reach such as the European Union and NATO, must be continuous, vibrant but also open to the stakeholders, who ultimately are the

citizens themselves”.

General Kostarakos outlined the new geostrategic context as shaped following the announced shift of interest of the United States from Europe to the Asia-Pacific region. As he

said “We live in a transitional period, a period of tectonic geopolitical global changes. A period in which the emergence of new regional powers recorded, some of which do not set limits on the range of their expectations. This emergence is followed by the challenging of the existing international order by these forces, an order that has been established since the end of the Cold War. This reality pushes the US to shift its center of interest to Asia and particularly to the South-East Asia, and the Pacific Basin”.

He continued, "I think the year 2016 is a milestone, not only in Europe but even broader. In 2016 we witnessed three important events which, combined, will affect European security in the future. These events pertain to the cooperation between the European Union and NATO.

Event No 1: The presentation of the "EU Global Strategy" by the EU High Representative of Foreign Affairs and Security Policy last June.

Event No 2: The signing of the European Union - NATO Joint Declaration by the leaders of the two organizations.

Event No 3: The outcome of the US elections".

Assessing the EU-NATO cooperation he argued that “Considering that the European Union and NATO share to a great extent the same Member States' base, and as a result, they draw means and capabilities for their missions and operations from the same «single set of forces», it becomes self-evident that any improvement of the available capabilities within the base, it consequently improves the capabilities of both organizations at the same time”. He elaborated on his view that “... The European Union's power in international affairs derives exactly from its multidimensional character”, stressing that “the European Union does not want and cannot become NATO. There is no way to have "duplication of effort", because the Union aspires to play a different role and perform a different job”. The Chairman of the EU Military Committee concluded his speech stating that "a close cooperation between EU- NATO is a fact and will become better and stronger in the near future... The messages from Brussels indicate that the political will exists on both sides of the Atlantic. The opportunity must not be missed”.

The discussion of this panel was coordinated by **Ms. Ino Afentouli** Member of the NATO’s PDD and **Mr. Thanos Dokos**, Director General of ELIAMEP provided his brief comments.

Mr. Dokos, commenting on the speech of General Kostarakos pointed out that: “The current situation is critical for Europe, which seems to realize that the 'soft power' will remain the pivotal foreign policy tool but should be complemented with the necessary 'hard power ', while both types of power should be used in combination in the logic of 'smart power '. Both the EU (taking advantage of the 'Global Security Strategy '), and the NATO needs to move more efficiently in the direction of cooperation and segmentation of work. In this effort, Greece should be an active factor”.

## The French Perspective



The discussion was moderated by **Dr. Alik Mitsakos**, who presented the French Ambassador, Mr. Christophe Chantepy. Dr Mitsakos referred to the great scale of his professional career, from a graduate engineer of the “Ecole Centrale de Paris”, to a graduate of the Institute of Political

Studies, a graduate of the National School of Public Administration and a Member of the State Council etc, and she underlined the importance of interdisciplinary in terms of expanded knowledge and career advancement.

His Excellency, **Mr. Christophe Chantepy**, Ambassador of the French Republic to Greece underlined the importance of a common European Defense and Security Policy, urging for further integration in this area. He emphasizes the great importance of cooperation between European Union and NATO, stressing the need for non-duplication of activities among the two organizations, especially in the current critical economic period. He highlighted also the need for enhanced cooperation on issues of information exchange in the common fight against terrorism, in order to prevent tragedies of the recent past which the country experienced repeatedly.

## Quadranscentennial Session



At the end of the Symposium the President of G.A.A.E.C., Mr. Theodossis Georgiou, presented briefly the activities of the Greek Association for Atlantic and European Cooperation since its establishment in May 1991 and concluded that the Association will display several activities all year around celebrating thus its 25 years of contribution.

The conclusive commemorative session marked the honorary tribute to **Vice Admiral (rtd) Vasilios Mitsakos H.N.**, Founding Member of G.A.A.E.C. and WWII Veteran. During the WWII the young cadet Vasilios Mitsakos tried to escape to Alexandria, Egypt in order to conclude his Studies in the Hellenic Naval Academy, which was relocated there. He got arrested, but managed to escape the Axis' soldiers, however he sentenced to death in absentia. Finally, along with some of his colleagues managed to reach their destination from Aleppo to Alexandria by foot. Vice Admiral Mitsakos, was one of the few Greeks Officers who served in NATO'S Standing Group in Washington before being transferred to Brussels and become the NATO Military Committee.

He also represented the Ministry of National Defense in the negotiations of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in New York and Geneva and he has written a handbook on the subject. He has graduated from many Navy Colleges in Greece and abroad. What is more, he has been many times awarded for his exceptional service.

**Mr. Theodoros Psalidopoulos**, Journalist and Political Scientist with a touching speech praised the virtues of the awardee and numbered three (3) fundamental reasons, why he believes that such a gesture has particular meaning. These reasons are: 1) The Greek Association for Atlantic and European Cooperation (GAAEC) was a democratic dialogue channel for the civil society 25 years ago and still continues to correspond with the need of dialogue and conciliation. Mr. Mitsakos, being a founding member of G.A.A.E.C., contributed critically in this direction. 2) The second reason is to answer the question, what was the reason that motivated first-year students of Naval Academy, the Order of 1940, to seek from the beginning of the Nazi Occupation, to leave the country and the safety of their studies at the Polytechnic University. Mr. Psalidopoulos claimed that they risk their lives to fight for the liberation of our country. 3) The generation of the WWII war to which he belongs Mr. Mitsakos, offered its youth and vitality to defend the fundamental values of our country.

Mr. Psalidopoulos underscored "Honoring a veteran of World War derived from the Hellenic Navy, we celebrate the historic victory of our country against fascism, we honor the liberation of Europe from the threat of Nazism, we honor our glorious Navy".



## Closing Address



The award to Admiral Mr. Mitsakos was delivered by the Alternate Minister of National Defense, **Mr. Dimitrios Vitsas** along with the Founding Members of G.A.A.E.C. in a very sensitive moment.

The Admiral Mr. Vasileios Mitsakos, told with disarming simplicity and authentic naturalness **“Whatever we did my colleagues and I, was our obligation that arised from our love for our Country and the Hellenic Navy and nothing more but to keep the vow we made”**.

On behalf of the Ministry of Defense, **Mr. Dimitrios Vitsas, Deputy Minister of Defense**, concluded with his speech the 25th Annual International Symposium of G.A.A.E.C.

Mr. Vitsas, congratulated the Greek Association for Atlantic and European Cooperation for its 25 years of activity in Greece and abroad. In his speech he highlighted the contrast of high defense requirements that originated from current security challenges and the problem of dealing with them in times of deep economic recession and austerity policies. He also wondered “ if priority now has the Stability Pact for the economy or the Security Pact”. He criticized the European Institutional system, which according to him is lacking the sufficient crisis resolution mechanisms. What is more he noted the active role of the Defense Research and Technology Industry Council, which despite the economic crisis in Greece, is a useful instrument for the formulation of National Defense Industrial Strategy. Finally, Mr. Vitsas, assured the combat effectiveness of the Greek Armed Forces and thanked them for their all-time great contribution, stressing that: “I am optimistic about the future of our Armed Forces trusting the worthiness of leadership, the professionalism and the skills of any single soldier, the executives, and the civilian personnel”.

