

GREECE'S MILITARY IMPORTANCE FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION

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Abstract: Having won the legislative elections in Greece on January 25, 2015, the leader of the radical party SYRIZA now aims for reducing austerity in his country, even though this might result in the exit of Greece from the Eurozone. A Greek exit will definitely have major economic consequences, which will also affect the country's defence budget and its European military stance. Taking into account such a turn of events, in this paper we analyse the military importance of Greece for the European Union. The analysis is conducted using, as main methodological instrument, the European Index of Military Integration.

Keywords: Greece, European Union, European Index of Military Integration, Greek military power

1. Introduction

Few have taken seriously a Greek exit from the Eurozone. But this possibility has suddenly become extremely plausible, through the winning of the legislative elections by the far-left party SYRIZA. The party leader, appointed Prime-minister of the country, has promised to reduce austerity measures at any cost, even if the price would be a Greek exit from the Eurozone.

Obviously, a political move of such magnitude would also have consequences on the defence policy of Greece. Its military role in the European Union (EU) could be affected. In this context, it is important to know Greece's contribution to the European defence and how important is the Greek state, in military terms, for the European Union.

2. Landmarks of Greece's involvement in European defence

After the Second World War, Greece has been one of the two first countries (along with Turkey) to receive substantial American funding under the auspices of the

Marshall Plan. The funding helped restore and modernize the Greek army, and thus Greece could join, as early as 1952, the North-Atlantic Alliance.

The irreversible European path hence started allowed Greece to join the EU in 1981; since then the Greek state has been a constant advocate and even a promoter of European military integration.

Today, Greece is a member of the Balkan Battlegroup (along with Romania, Bulgaria, Cyprus and Ukraine) and also of the Hispanio-Italian Battlegroup (along with Spain, Portugal and Italy).

Moreover, Greece is one of the Union's member states hosting on its territory an EU Operational Headquarters, located near the city of Larissa. The other four countries hosting such headquarters are: France (Paris), Germany (Ulm), United Kingdom (Northwood) and Italy (Rome) [1]. Thanks to them, the EU benefits from the possibility of planning and conducting autonomous military operations with a fully multinational staff.

3. Greece in the European Index of Military Integration

A new perspective on the military importance of Greece for the EU can be obtained with the help of a scientific instrument that I developed as part of my doctoral studies: the *European Index of Military Integration*.

The Index represents a ranking of EU member states, according to their level of military integration. In this Index states appear in descending order, the first positions being held by the most militarily integrated countries in the EU, while the last places belong to the least thus integrated states.

The Index is compiled based on the values obtained for 6 different coefficients, grouped in 2 general dimensions:

1) *Openness to the European Defence Space*, with the following coefficients:

- $c_{1,1}$ – Military expenditures as % of Gross Domestic Product;
- $c_{1,2}$ – Flow of conventional weapons;
- $c_{1,3}$ – Military facilities shared for common training.

2) *Participation to EU military operations*, with the following coefficients:

- $c_{2,1}$ – Deployable (land) forces as % of total military personnel;
- $c_{2,2}$ – Troops involved in on-going EU military operations;
- $c_{2,3}$ – Contribution to EU Battlegroups [2].

And in the Index Greece holds the 6th position, in front of countries like the United Kingdom, Portugal or Poland. A more detailed analysis of this performance will certainly prove useful in understanding Greece's military importance for the EU.

To get into details, the data for the coefficients of the first dimension are the following:

Table 1: Data for the first dimension – „Openness to the European Defence Space”

Coefficient	Value	Score	Rank
$c_{1,1}$ Military expenditures as % of Gross Domestic Product	2,5	5	1-2
$c_{1,2}$ Flow of conventional weapons	2	4	4-5
$c_{1,3}$ Military facilities shared for common training	1	2	13-18

One can thus observe that Greece allocates no less than 2,5% of its Gross Domestic Product to military expenditures, one of the two highest percentages in the EU (the second belonging to the United Kingdom) [3]. At the same time, Greece has a good score of 4 for the coefficient „Flow of conventional weapons” [4]. As for the third coefficient taken into account, „Military

facilities shared for common training”, as can be seen in Table 1 Greece shares with the EU member states only 1 training facility [5] – an obviously low contribution if it were to relate it to its military expenditures ($c_{1,1}$).

Staying with the details, the data for the coefficients of the second dimension are the following:

Table 2: Data for the second dimension – “Participation to EU military operations”

Coefficient	Value	Score	Rank
$c_{2,1}$ Deployable (land) forces as % of total military personnel	19	3	16
$c_{2,2}$ Troops involved in on-going EU military operations	25	3	11
$c_{2,3}$ Contribution to EU Battlegroups	4	4	7

According to Table 2, of the Greek total military personnel only 19% represent deployable (land) forces [6] ($c_{2.1}$), placing Greece on the 16th position in this matter among EU member states. Greek troops are currently located in countries such as Lebanon, Cyprus, Serbia or Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Next, Greece contributes to the EU military operations ($c_{2.2}$) with 25 soldiers [7], again a rather medium effort, in comparison with the general performance of the member states. All the 25 troops are deployed within operation EUFOR Althea (Bosnia-Herzegovina). A sequel of the North-Atlantic Alliance's SFOR mission, EUFOR Althea seeks to oversee the military implementation of the peace agreement that ended the Bosnian War.

Finally, between the years 2009-2013 Greece has subscribed troops for 3 EU Battlegroups [8] ($c_{2.3}$) – a performance that places it in the first quarter among member states. The subscriptions were made in the following semesters: January – June 2009 (along with Italy, Spain and Portugal); January – June 2009 again (this time along with Romania, Bulgaria and Cyprus); and July – December 2011 (along with Romania, Bulgaria, Cyprus and Ukraine). Perhaps a more clear picture of Greece's military importance for the EU becomes possible thanks to Figure 1, which represents a comparison between a hypothetical perfect score for all the 6 coefficients and the real score obtained by Greece for the same coefficients:

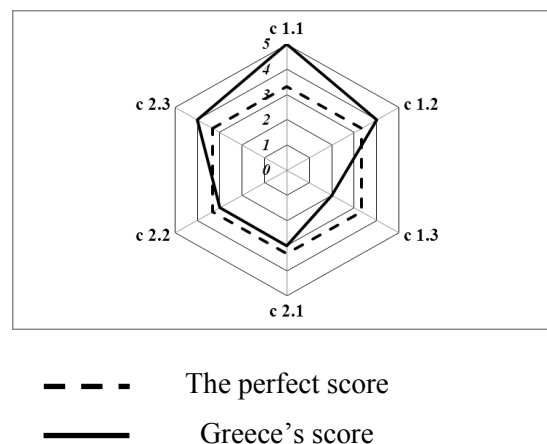


Figure 1: Comparison between a hypothetical perfect score and Greece's score

This figure clearly portrays *the rather unbalanced performance of Greece*, especially for the first dimension („Openness to the European Defence Space”) of the Index. Thus, for $c_{1.2}$ („Flow of conventional weapons”) the score is a medium one (4); but for $c_{1.1}$ („Military expenditures as % of Gross Domestic Product”) Greece has the highest score (5), whereas for $c_{1.3}$ („Military facilities shared for common training”) the same country records its lowest score (2).

The numbers for the first dimension are, however, evened by the numbers for the second dimension („Participation to EU

military operations”), where Greece has 2 scores of 3 ($c_{2.1}$ – „Deployable (land) forces as % of total military personnel” and $c_{2.2}$ – „Troops involved in on-going EU military operations”) and 1 score of 4 ($c_{2.3}$ – „Contribution to EU Battlegroups”).

And, associating all these different values, it becomes quite obvious why Greece holds the 6th position in the European Index of Military Integration.

4. Conclusions

In the long process of European military integration Greece has been a stable and predictable partner for the member states of the European Union.

Looking at the data from this current paper, we can conclude that the recent economic difficulties of the Greek state have not significantly affected the military power of Greece. Thus, the Greek state continues to allocate no less than 2,5% of its Gross Domestic Product to military expenditures – a very high percentage, even compared with the one allocated by countries less affected by the economic crisis. Also, Greece contributes with troops both to military operations of the European Union and its Battlegroups.

Following its sustained performance, Greece holds in the European Index of

Military Integration the sixth position, ahead of countries like the United Kingdom, Portugal or Poland.

But this predictability of the Greek defence policy could be disturbed by the possibility that the new Prime-minister of the country – the leader of the party SYRIZA – might provoke a Greek exit from the Eurozone. The consequences of such a move would be significant not only for the Greek economy: the economic losses would certainly reflect in the military expenditures also, and along with reducing these expenditures few are the areas of the Greek defence policy that would not have to suffer.

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