



# **GREECE'S UNLIKELY COMPELLENCE**

## **AIR FORCE MODERNIZATION & DIPLOMATIC ASSERTIVENESS**

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**SETA**

SIYASET, EKONOMİ VE TOPLUM ARAŞTIRMALARI VAKFI  
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مركز الدراسات السياسية والاقتصادية والاجتماعية



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# ABSTRACT

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Greece has recently undertaken a massive military modernization program and begun forging closer ties with regional countries. Similarly, it has launched an assertive diplomatic campaign aimed at enhancing its own standing and undermining Turkey's position. In this concerted effort, Greece aims to implement a compellence strategy against Turkey, one that is designed to force Turkey to back down from its vital interests in the region. However, given the limits of Greek achievements, and structural factors, it is unlikely that Greece will achieve a credible compellence.



# INTRODUCTION

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After a decade-long financial crisis, Greece initiated a comprehensive military modernization in recent years. The country is undertaking a significant upgrade of its air force inventory and purchasing new fighter jets. Beside arms build-up, Greece is trying hard to expand its alliance network in the Middle East while increasing its anti-Turkish pressure campaign across Europe and the United States. Although this policy has peaked recently, it is not a new phenomenon in the Greek security mindset. Originating from the so-called “Turkish threat”, this twofold effort has become the foundational element of Greek foreign and security strategies since Turkey’s Cyprus Peace Operation in 1974.

Recent Greek military modernization and diplomatic activism is a clear demonstration of its decades-old compellence strategy, rather than a deterrence which its official discourse claims. If it were a policy of deterrence, it is consistently failing because Greece also claims that the regional status-quo is always changing against its national interests, in favor of Turkey. Its strong emphasis on deterrence, in fact, belies its real strategy, one that is designed not to deter Turkey by dissuading it from taking a specific action but rather force it to renounce something that is already in process. In contemporary geopolitics, contrary to Greek demands, Turkey has been conducting seismic research in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean Seas, under the protection of its navy and air force.

Against this backdrop, Greece wants to boost its offensive capabilities, expand the number of its allies, and ensure an international embargo on Turkey to

force it to back down from its vital interests in the region.<sup>1</sup> Greek decision-makers expect that they would enhance their resolve and credibility by investing in air power, building an anti-Turkish regional bloc, and an antagonistic West towards Turkey. By doing so, Greece wants to manipulate Turkey's perception of costs and benefits, to decrease its resolve and commitment, and ultimately to win without a fight.

Due to the currently uncertain trajectory of Greek military modernization, this paper discusses the strategic logic that guides its armament and diplomatic activism rather than a measurement of the emerging balance of power. In line with its compellence strategy, Greece wants to command the Aegean and to deny the Eastern Mediterranean to Turkey. However, due to the structural restraints over its military modernization, and the limits on its diplomatic influence, it is unlikely to achieve the credible compellence to meet its excessive political objectives.

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| warmly thank Fatmanur Erkeç for her contribution in collecting data for this paper.

<sup>1</sup> Turkey's regional strategy is based on a much wider landscape at political, economic, and security levels and it extends well beyond narrow considerations such as an arms race with Greece. See, Ferhat Pirinççi, "Turkey's Eastern Mediterranean Policy: A Geopolitical Assessment," *SETA*, May 25, 2021.

# DEFENSE SPENDING AND ARMAMENT PROGRAM

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In September 2020, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis announced that his country will undertake a “robust” armament program in order to comprehensively modernize the Greek armed forces. Mitsotakis said that “the time has come to reinforce the armed forces... these initiatives constitute a robust program that will become a national shield” and argued that Greece will acquire aircraft, frigates, ASW helicopters, anti-tank weapons, navy torpedoes, and air force missiles, along with investment plans for cyber defense, national defense industry, and a recruitment pool.<sup>2</sup> In January, the Greek parliament approved a five-year military modernization program worth 14 billion \$U.S. to modernize its land, naval, and air capabilities along with expanding its military personnel.<sup>3</sup>

Greece’s plan to overhaul its military requires a significant increase in its defense spending. In parliamentary discussion on the 2021 budget, Prime Minister Mitsotakis said that the government wants to increase military expenditures by 57 percent compared to that of 2019 and advocated the program by arguing that “never before has such a complex and important military program been carried out so quickly and efficiently.”<sup>4</sup> In April, during

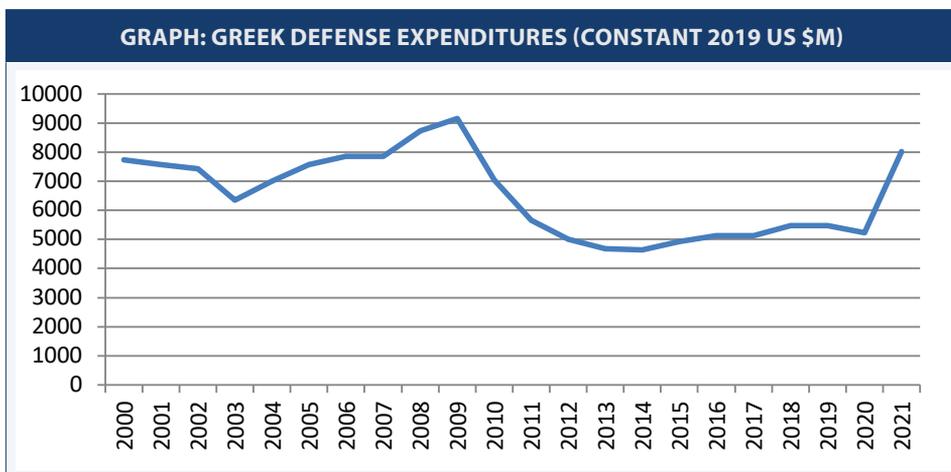
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<sup>2</sup> “Greece announces massive arms purchase amid tensions with Turkey,” *Middle East Eye*, September 12, 2020, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/greece-announces-massive-arms-purchase-amid-tensions-turkey>

<sup>3</sup> “Greek parliament approves plan to buy French Rafale fighters,” *Associated Press*, January 14, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/turkey-greece-3fa8892feca5161c342e8cbb21b6496b>

<sup>4</sup> Magda Panoutsopoulou, “Greece to increase defense spending by 57%,” *Anadolu Agency*, December 16, 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/greece-to-increase-defense-spending-by-57-/2078202>

a military exercise, Mitsotakis argued that “our world is extremely complex and our neighborhood is, unfortunately, becoming more unstable. Greece will continue to strengthen its defense capabilities and upgrade its armed forces.”<sup>5</sup> According to NATO estimates, the country’s defense expenditures will rise to 8 billion dollars, from 5 billion dollars in 2020. In terms of 2019 constant \$ US prices, this amount indicates a return to the record levels of military spending between 2008 and 2009.<sup>6</sup> Given the modernization program’s five-year period, it is expected that Greek defense spending will reach its peak and stay at that level for the coming years.



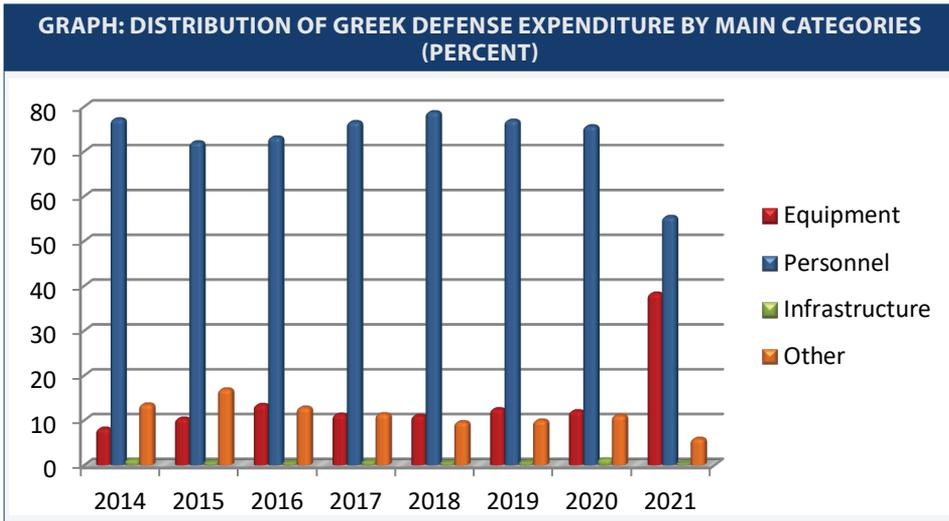
Source: SIPRI Military Expenditures Database 2021; NATO Defense Expenditure of NATO Countries (2014-2021). Figure for 2021 is a NATO estimate and based on current prices and exchange rates.

Greece’s defense expenditures mostly cover personnel costs which include military and civilian expenditures and pensions. However, NATO estimates that equipment costs will significantly increase from 12 percent in 2020 to 38 percent in 2021. Equipment expenditures mainly consist of the purchase of new weapon platforms as well as research and development costs devoted to major platforms.<sup>7</sup>

5 Derek Gatopoulos, “In race to rearm, Greece seeks partnerships, more hardware,” *ABC News*, April 20, 2021, <https://abcnews.go.com/Business/wireStory/race-rearm-greece-seeks-partnerships-hardware-77188510>

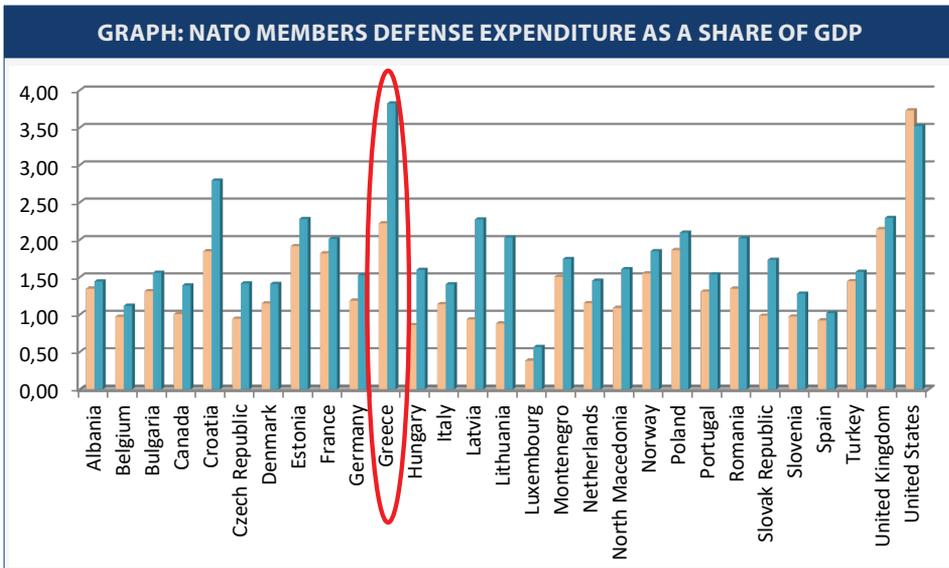
6 SIPRI Military Expenditure Database.

7 “Defense Expenditure of NATO Countries (2014-2021),” *NATO Public Diplomacy Division*, Press Release, June 11, 2021, pp. 13-14.



Source: “Defense Expenditure of NATO Countries (2014-2021),” *NATO Public Diplomacy Division*, Press Release, June 11, 2021, pp. 13-14.

Due to a perceived threat from Turkey, Greece has long been among the countries that have a relatively high level of defense spending, as a share of their GDP. Even after the financial crisis, the share of its defense spending in its overall GDP remains stable, revolving between 2.4 and 2.8 percent.<sup>8</sup> For 2021, NATO estimates that this amount will rise significantly to 3.82 percent. This amount is expected to be the highest within NATO, even outpacing the U.S.



Source: “Defense Expenditure of NATO Countries (2014-2021),” *NATO Public Diplomacy Division*, Press Release, June 11, 2021, p. 8

<sup>8</sup> SIPRI Military Expenditure Database.



# TIMELINE OF GREEK AIR FORCE BUILD-UP

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In its history, the Greek Air Force has operated F-5A/B, F-104G, Mirage F-1, and F-4E fighters. At present, it continues to use F-4Es, and various models of F-16s and Mirage 2000 jets. Under Peace Xenia programs, Greece purchased a total of 170 F-16s from the U.S. and it also procured 40 Mirage jets from France in 1988. Hence, the Greek air force inventory was dominated by American equipment while French products played a supportive role.

The backbone of the contemporary Greek air force consists of F-16 aircraft manufactured by General Dynamics until 1993 and later Lockheed Martin. Greece was a long-standing customer of American arms during the Cold War which later facilitated the modern aircraft deliveries.

TABLE: GREEK COMBAT AIRCRAFTS			
Aircraft	Active	Ordered	Under Modernization
F-4E	33	-	-
F-16C/D	153	-	84
Mirage 2000EG	16	-	-
Mirage 2000-5/Mk II	24	-	-
Rafale B/C	-	18	-
Mirage 2000BG (Training)	2	-	-

Source: "World Air Forces 2021," *Flight International*, p. 19.

For decades, Greece has been one of the largest operators of F-16s in the world. Under the Peace Xenia programs, the country purchased 170 F-16s of var-

ious models between 1988 and 2010. Under Peace Xenia I, the U.S. sold Greece 34 F-16C and 6 F-16D Block 30 between 1988 and 1990 while Peace Xenia II delivered Greece 32 F-16C and 8 F-16D Block 50 jets in 1997.<sup>9</sup> In total, Greece has 69 Block-30 and Block-50 variants in its inventory.<sup>10</sup> The key characteristics of these models are LANTIRN targeting pod and AGM-88 High Speed Anti-Radiation Missiles (HARM) which provides them with night attack and suppression/destruction of enemy air defense (SEAD/DEAD) missions.<sup>11</sup> These F-16s are located in the Larissa Air Base (110 Combat Wing, 346 Squadron “Iason”) and New Anchialos Air Base (111 Combat Wing 330 “Thunder”, 341 “Arrow” and 347 “Perseas” Squadrons).<sup>12</sup>

TABLE: GREEK F-16 PROCUREMENT			
Program	Aircraft	Variant	Entered Service
Peace Xenia I	34 F-16C 6 F-16D	Block 30	1989
Peace Xenia II	32 F-16C 8 F-16D	Block 50	1997
Peace Xenia III	40 F-16C 20 F-16D	Block 52+	2003
Peace Xenia IV	20 F-16C 10 F-16D	Block 52+ Adv.	2009

Source: Compiled from various sources.

Between 2003 and 2004, with Peace Xenia III, the Greek Air Force were equipped with 40 F-16C and 20 F-16 D Block 52+ aircrafts which made Greece the first country to operate these upgraded F-16 models.<sup>13</sup> The improved versions of Block-50s, in terms of engine and electronics, are equipped with conformal fuel tanks which extend the operational range.<sup>14</sup> Block 52+ variants of the Greek air force inventory belong to the 340 and 343 Squadrons which are both based in Souda Air Force Base (115<sup>th</sup> Combat Wing).<sup>15</sup> Lastly, under the

9 “F-16C/D Block 30, 50 Fighting Falcon,” *Hellenic Air Force*, <https://www.haf.gr/en/equipment/f16cd-blk30-50/>; Thomas Newdick, “Face-Off Over The Aegean: How Greek And Turkish Air Forces Stack Up,” *The Drive*, September 3, 2020, <https://www.thedrive.com/the-war-zone/36088/face-off-in-the-aegean-how-greek-and-turkish-air-forces-stack-up>

10 “Chapter Four: Europe,” *The Military Balance*, 121 (1) (2021), p. 112.

11 Thomas Newdick, “Face-Off Over The Aegean: How Greek And Turkish Air Forces Stack Up,” *The Drive*, September 3, 2020, <https://www.thedrive.com/the-war-zone/36088/face-off-in-the-aegean-how-greek-and-turkish-air-forces-stack-up>

12 “F-16C/D Block 30, 50 Fighting Falcon,” *Hellenic Air Force*, <https://www.haf.gr/en/equipment/f16cd-blk30-50/>

13 “F-16C/D Block 52+ Fighting Falcon,” *Hellenic Air Force*, <https://www.haf.gr/en/equipment/f-16cd-block-52/>

14 “Greece to upgrade its US F-16 military jets amid tensions with Turkey,” *Deutsche Welle*, 29 April 2018, <https://www.dw.com/en/greece-to-upgrade-its-us-f-16-military-jets-amid-tensions-with-turkey/a-43582335>

15 “F-16C/D Block 52+ Fighting Falcon,” *Hellenic Air Force*, <https://www.haf.gr/en/equipment/f-16cd-block-52/>

Peace Xenia IV program in 2005, the U.S. and Greece agreed on the delivery of 20 F-16C and 10 F-16D Block 52+ Advanced types of aircraft. These variants belong to 335 Squadron which is located in Araxos Air Force Base (116<sup>th</sup> Combat Wing).<sup>16</sup> The first aircraft of the arms deal under the Peace Xenia IV was delivered in March 2009 while all deliveries were completed by the end of 2010.<sup>17</sup> It is estimated that 150 of these jets are still operational both for air superiority and ground attack missions.<sup>18</sup>

While American aircraft constitute the backbone of the Greek air force inventory, Greece has also procured several fighters from France. In 1988, Dassault Mirage 2000 entered into the Greek inventory with France delivering 40 aircraft. In Greek defense strategy, these Mirage aircrafts have mostly been used in interception missions against adversary vessels due to their capability to carry Exocet anti-ship missiles. These aircraft belong to the 331 and 332 Squadrons in 114 Combat Wing and operate from Tanagra Air Base.<sup>19</sup> In 2004, Greece began modernizing its Mirage fleet, upgrading Mirage 2000s to Mirage 200-5 Mk II models which equipped the fleet with better radar, countermeasure systems and weapons, along with other electronics improvements.<sup>20</sup>

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16 "F-16C/D Block 52+adv Fighting Falcon," *Hellenic Air Force*, <https://www.haf.gr/en/equipment/f-16cd-blk-52adv/>

17 "F-16 Fighting Falcon Multirole Fighter," *Air Force Technology*, <https://www.airforce-technology.com/projects/f-16-fighting-falcon-multirole-fighter/>

18 Thomas Newdick, "Face-Off Over The Aegean: How Greek And Turkish Air Forces Stack Up," *The Drive*, September 3, 2020, <https://www.thedrive.com/the-war-zone/36088/face-off-in-the-aegean-how-greek-and-turkish-air-forces-stack-up>

19 "Mirage 2000 EGM/BGM," *Hellenic Air Force*, <https://www.haf.gr/en/equipment/mirage-2000/>

20 "Mirage 2000-5," *Hellenic Air Force*, <https://www.haf.gr/en/equipment/mirage-2000-5/>



# MODERNIZATION PROGRAM

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## F-16 UPGRADE

A Comprehensive F-16 modernization program is one major aspect of recent Greek military build-up. According to Lockheed Martin, with the modernization program, the Greek Air Force will have “the most advanced F-16s in Europe.”<sup>21</sup> The modernization is designed to extend the lifespan and capabilities of the Greek F-16 fleet and is expected to be completed by 2027. The modernization plan was announced in October 2017. In April 2018, the Greek Council on Foreign Policy and Defense approved the upgrade of 84 of its 150 F-16s for a price tag of \$ 1.45 billion. Under the program 54 Block 52+ and 30 Block 52+ Advanced F-16s will be upgraded to F-16 Block 72 Viper level.<sup>22</sup>

Among the new equipment, the key upgrade is the Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) radar called APG-83. This radar provides the aircraft with greater detection and tracking ranges, multiple target track, high resolution maps for precision strikes, air-to-air and air-to-surface mode of operations for improved situational awareness, operational effectiveness, and survivability, and

21 Lockheed Martin, “F-16 Greece,” <https://www.lockheedmartin.com/en-us/products/f-16/f-16-greece.html>; “Made in Greece F-16 Vipers and drones,” *Greek City Times*, April 29, 2021, <https://greekcitytimes.com/2021/04/29/made-in-greece-f-16-vipers-drones/>

22 “Greece to upgrade its US F-16 military jets amid tensions with Turkey,” *Deutsche Welle*, 29 April 2018, <https://www.dw.com/en/greece-to-upgrade-its-us-f-16-military-jets-amid-tensions-with-turkey/a-43582335>

robust electronic protection. It is said that with APG-83 radars, F-16Vs would achieve an excellent capability to detect and engage air, surface, and sea targets in the most challenging electronic warfare zones, and can track at least 20 air-to-air high and low flying targets within the scan volume of 60 -+ 60 Degree Cone.<sup>23</sup> Hence, the F-16V is expected to perform significantly better than its predecessors due to its enhanced target detection and tracking, resistance to electronic warfare, and greater ability to strike air, surface, and sea targets. The expected strategic goal is to achieve a greater and more reliable deterrent, particularly in gaining and maintaining air dominance over the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean Seas.

## RAFALE FIGHTER PROCUREMENT

Another significant aspect of Greek air force modernization is to purchase the French Rafale fighter jets. On January 25, 2020, Greek and French Defense Ministers signed a deal worth 3.04 billion \$US for the delivery of 18 Rafale fighter aircrafts to Greece along with the weapons of the aircraft. Under another contract, France will also provide Greece logistical support over four and a half years to maintain “the availability of equipment and systems at the highest level.”<sup>24</sup> The deal covers the delivery of 12 secondhand fighters from the French Air Force inventory and six new ones. According to the agreement, France will provide six secondhand aircraft within a six-month period starting in July, six new ones in spring 2022, and a further six secondhand aircraft in early 2023.<sup>25</sup> Just a few months after the original deal was signed, it was reported that Greece was considering buying another six Rafale jets from France which would make a total of 24 aircraft.<sup>26</sup>

The Rafale jets will be operated by Greek 332<sup>nd</sup> “Falcon” Squadron which is located in Tanagra, the home base of the 114th Combat Wing of the Greek Air Force. This squadron has a decades-old history with French aircraft as the primary operator in the Greek Air Force. Previously, Dassault Aviation supplied Greece

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23 Lockheed Martin, F-16V: The Most Advanced Multirole Fighter for Greece,” 2016.

24 “Greece equips itself with the RAFALE in the continuity of a partnership with DASSAULT AVIATION of more than 45 years,” *Dassault Aviation*, January 25, 2021, <https://www.dassault-aviation.com/en/group/press/press-kits/greece-equips-itself-with-the-rafale-in-the-continuity-of-a-partnership-with-dassault-aviation-of-more-than-45-years/>

25 Christina Mackenzie, “Greece and France ink \$3 billion contract for Rafale fighter jets,” *Defense News*, January 25, 2021, <https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2021/01/25/greece-and-france-ink-3-billion-contract-for-rafale-fighter-jets/>

26 “Greece is considering to purchase six more French-made Rafale fighters: report,” *Greek City Times*, April 20, 2021, <https://greekcitytimes.com/2021/04/20/greece-french-made-rafale/>

with Mirage F-1s in 1974, Mirage 2000s in 1985, and Mirage 2000-5s in 2000.<sup>27</sup> The 114<sup>th</sup> combat Wing used Mirage F1s from 1975 to 2003, and are currently equipped with Mirage 2000-5s. The Rafales will replace these aircraft. In early April, four Greek pilots started their training in France.<sup>28</sup>



**Photo:** On July 21, the first Rafale was delivered to Greece. **Image source:** <https://twitter.com/HAFspokesman/status/1417843599669084160>

Greece's new Rafales will have the F3R standard along with Exocet anti-ship missiles, and SCALP cruise missiles. The F3R standard became fully operational very recently in March 2021 and includes the RBE2 AESA radar system, the METEOR long-range air-to-air missile, the TALIOS designation pod, and an update of the SPECTRA electronic warfare suite. The French Air Force conducted its first operational flight with the F3R standard Rafale in March 2020 and described the Meteor missile as a "game-changer."<sup>29</sup> Meteor is a beyond visual range air-to-air missile (BVRAAM) that is developed by European countries led by the MBDA Missile Systems.<sup>30</sup> Currently, the missile can be integrated into Eurofighter Typhoon, Rafale, Gripen, and will be available on the F-35 Lightning II. Open sources suggest that the missile has a standard range of 100 km and a maximum range of around 400 km. Its escape zone is around 60-80 km, and it has a speed exceed-

27 "Greece equips itself with the RAFALE in the continuity of a partnership with DASSAULT AVIATION of more than 45 years," *Dassault Aviation*, January 25, 2021, <https://www.dassault-aviation.com/en/group/press/press-kits/greece-equips-itself-with-the-rafale-in-the-continuity-of-a-partnership-with-dassault-aviation-of-more-than-45-years/>

28 Clement Charpentreau, "Four Greek pilots begin training to become Rafale instructors," *Aerotime Hub*, April 8, 2021, <https://www.aerotime.aero/27630-four-greek-pilots-train-to-become-rafale-instructors>

29 Clement Charpentreau, "French Rafale F3R fighter reaches full operational capability," *Aerotime Hub*, March 18, 2021, <https://www.aerotime.aero/27485-rafale-f3r-fighter-jet-full-operational-capability>

30 The MBDA Missile Systems was created in 2001 with the merger of the leading missile systems companies in the France, Italy, and the United Kingdom.

ing 4 mach. The missile has an active radar seeker and can engage jet fighters and unmanned aerial vehicles as well as cruise missiles.<sup>31</sup>



Photo: Meteor on Rafale. Image Source: <https://www.mbda-systems.com/product/meteor/>

According to the MBDA Missile Systems, among the distinguishing characteristics of the missile is a world beating air dominance, large no-escape zone, network-centric capabilities, maximum lethality, and effective operation in dense electronic warfare environments.<sup>32</sup> The missile's enhanced combat performance is mostly due to its ramjet propulsion system which provides it with thrust to keep the high speed consistent while approaching fast moving flexible targets, thus increasing the ability to hit in a larger combat area. In other words, it provides a larger no-escape zone.<sup>33</sup> Hence, the ramjet engine intends to provide the missile greater ability to track and engage targets, in a one way neutralizing the maneuver of fast-moving agile aircrafts and increasing the survivability of friendly ones.

Exocet is an anti-ship cruise missile that has been in service since 1975 and has various models for launching from air, sea, or land. Greece is already one of the users of the missile along with its sea and land launch variants. Turkey has the MM40 model which can be fired either by sea or land.<sup>34</sup> Under the deal,

31 MBDA Missile Systems, "Meteor," <https://www.mbda-systems.com/product/meteor/>

32 MBDA Missile Systems, "Meteor," <https://www.mbda-systems.com/product/meteor/>

33 "Meteor – Beyond Visual Range Air-to-Air Missile (BVRAAM)," *Air Force Technology*, <https://www.airforce-technology.com/projects/meteor-beyond-visual-range-air-air-missile/>; MBDA Missile Systems, "Meteor," <https://www.mbda-systems.com/product/meteor/>

34 Missile Defense Project, "Exocet," *Missile Threat*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, November 30, 2016, last modified June 15, 2018, <https://missilethreat.csis.org/missile/exocet/>.

France will deliver Greece AM-39 air launch model that has a range of 50-70 km<sup>35</sup> and have a sea skimming feature.<sup>36</sup> This model is currently operational in the French Navy and other 11 foreign countries. It has fire and forget feature and can be launched not just by Rafale but also from other jets, maritime patrol aircrafts or helicopters.<sup>37</sup>

It is argued that to date over 700 Exocet missiles have been fired in combat. The most notable examples were realized during the Falklands War in 1982.<sup>38</sup> Just before the war, in 1981, Argentina purchased 14 Super Étendards carrier-based fighter/bombers from France in response to the American embargo. Several missiles were fired from Argentinian aircraft against British ships in a sea denial effort to prevent the British troops from landing on the Falklands islands. In May 1982, one of the missiles struck the center of British destroyer HMS Sheffield, sinking the vessel and causing 32 British casualties. It is argued that the ship's radars failed to detect incoming missiles until the last ten seconds due to the then capability of the aircraft and the sea-skimming and inertial guidance system technologies of the missile.<sup>39</sup> British container ship Atlantic Conveyor was also hit by the missiles, killing 12 people, and causing the loss of several Chinook heavy-lift helicopters which delayed British paratrooper movement on the islands. In June, another missile struck and damaged HMS Glamorgan, although the ship survived, it caused 14 British casualties. During the Iran-Iraq War, an Iraqi fighter jet fired two AM39 missiles against the U.S. frigate USS Stark, causing the death of 37 American naval personnel.<sup>40</sup> The countermeasures came in a devoted effort to invest in and deploy Close-In Weapon Systems (CIWS) which aimed to increase the ship's survivability by providing it with the ability to detect and destroy missiles at very close ranges.<sup>41</sup>

35 Depending on the altitude and speed of the launch platform.

36 Sea skimming is the missile's ability to fly at very low altitude over the sea surface so as to avoid target radar coverage area.

37 MBDA, "Exocet AM39," <https://www.mbda-systems.com/product/exocet-am-39/>

38 Missile Defense Project, "Exocet," *Missile Threat*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, November 30, 2016, last modified June 15, 2018, <https://missilethreat.csis.org/missile/exocet/>.

39 Sebastian Roblin, "The Fighter Plane That Terrorized Great Britain During the Falklands War Is Back," *National Interest*, May 20, 2017, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/the-fighter-plane-terrorized-great-britain-during-the-20762>

40 Ian Cobain, "Exocet missile: how the sinking of HMS Sheffield made it famous," *Guardian*, October 15, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/oct/15/exocet-missile-how-sinking-hms-sheffield-made-famous>; Erik Mustermann, "How France Helped Argentina During The UK's Falklands War," *War History Online*, December 31, 2019, <https://www.warhistoryonline.com/war-articles/falklands-war.html>; Mike Thomson, "How France helped both sides in the Falklands War," *BBC*, March 6, 2012, <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-17256975>;

41 Sebastian Roblin, "The Fighter Plane That Terrorized Great Britain During the Falklands War Is Back," *National Interest*, May 20, 2017, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/the-fighter-plane-terrorized-great-britain-during-the-20762>



**Photo:** HMS Sheffield after being hit by an Argentine Exocet missile in 1982. **Image Source:** <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/oct/15/revealed-full-story-behind-sinking-of-falklands-warship-hms-sheffield>

Storm Shadow or SCALP cruise missiles are air-launched long-range, all weather, highly survivable deep strike weapons to attack against high value fixed or stationary targets. The missile has a speed of Mach 0.8 and a range between 250 and 560 km. It can be integrated to Tornado, Rafale, Mirage 2000, and Eurofighter Typhoon aircrafts. The missile belongs to the air dominance family of MBDA Missile Systems.<sup>42</sup> The missile's long range, low altitude, and subsonic speed contribute to its stealth features and its three-dimensional navigation system (inertial navigation system (INS), global positioning system (GPS), and terrain reference navigation) is believed to provide enhanced control of the trajectory and pinpoint strike.<sup>43</sup> The missile has been in service since 2003 in British and French air force inventories and was used in air operations in Iraq, Libya, and Syria. Italy, Greece, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar also possess this weapon. Greece first ordered SCALP missiles in 2000 and they entered the inventory around 2004.<sup>44</sup>

42 MBDA Missile Systems, "Storm Shadow/SCALP," <https://www.mbda-systems.com/product/storm-shadow-scalp/>

43 "Storm Shadow / SCALP Long-Range, Air-Launched, Stand-Off Attack Missile," *Air Force Technology*, <https://www.airforce-technology.com/projects/storm-shadow-missile/>

44 Missile Defense Project, "APACHE AP/ SCALP EG/ Storm Shadow/ SCALP Naval/ Black Shaheen," *Missile Threat*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, December 2, 2016, last modified June 15, 2018, <https://missilethreat.csis.org/missile/apache-ap/>

The main objective of the Storm Shadow is to attack and penetrate through high value or strongly protected targets such as air bases, ports, air defense batteries, command and control centers, early warning systems, or fortifications. In 2011, France fired over 15 and the UK 60 SCALP missiles within the NATO campaign in Libya.<sup>45</sup> In December 2015, 10 French fighters took off from bases in United Arab Emirates and Jordan, firing SCALP missiles at ISIS headquarters, training center and a logistics deposit at the border zone between Iraq and Syria.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, in April 2018, as a response to the Assad regime's use of chemical weapons, British and French aircraft fired 8 and 2 SCALP missiles respectively, targeting and destroying parts of the regime's chemical arsenal.<sup>47</sup> The missile, mostly due to its tandem warhead, was particularly useful in the air operations against ISIS, targeting caves or protected facilities to eliminate concealed militants or to destroy headquarters.<sup>48</sup>

Another weapon of the Rafale is the MICA multi-mission air-to-air missile system which can be launched from Rafale and the latest versions of Mirage-2000. Entering into the French Armed Force inventory in the late 90s, the missile has a dual role which consists of beyond visual range (BVR) and short range (SR) combat environments and has two variants which differ in their guidance systems of Radio Frequency (RF) and Infrared (IF).<sup>49</sup> Compounded by high speed (Mach 4) and good maneuverability, it is believed that the missile is capable both for dogfights and longer-range attacks between the range of 0.5 and 60 km.<sup>50</sup> France previously exported the weapon to Taiwan, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Greece. Greece first made a contract with France in 2004 for the delivery of 100 missiles.<sup>51</sup>

45 Missile Defense Project, "APACHE AP/ SCALP EG/ Storm Shadow/ SCALP Naval/ Black Shaheen," *Missile Threat*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, December 2, 2016, last modified June 15, 2018, <https://missilethreat.csis.org/missile/apache-ap/>

46 David Cenciotti, "The French Air Force has used the Scalp missile against Daesh for the very first time," *The Aviatorist*, December 16, 2015, <https://theaviationist.com/2015/12/16/scalp-eg-against-isis/>

47 Tyler Rogoway and Joseph Trevithick, "Here Are All The Details The Pentagon Just Released Regarding Its Missile Attack On Syria (Updated)," *The Drive*, April 14, 2018, <https://www.thedrive.com/the-war-zone/20120/heres-all-the-details-the-pentagon-just-released-regarding-its-missile-attack-on-syria>

48 Thomas Newdick, "British Typhoons Have Used Storm Shadow Cruise Missiles For The First Time In Combat," *The Drive*, March 15, 2021, <https://www.thedrive.com/the-war-zone/39792/british-typhoons-have-used-storm-shadow-cruise-missiles-for-the-first-time-in-combat>

49 MBDA Missile Systems, "MICA," <https://www.mbda-systems.com/product/mica/>

50 "MBDA MICA," *Weapon Systems*, <https://weaponsystems.net/system/216-MBDA+MICA>

51 "MICA Air-to-Air Missile System," *Air Force Technology*, <https://www.airforce-technology.com/projects/mica-air-to-air-missile-system/>



# THE STRATEGIC LOGIC OF GREEK AIR FORCE MODERNIZATION

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While Greece has historically prioritized the building and developing of a robust air force,<sup>52</sup> its recent air force modernization and diplomatic activism reflect a part of its larger defense strategy. This strategy revolves around three general themes. First, it is predicated upon the country's obsession with Turkey, and its defense doctrine which identifies Turkey as the foremost threat to its national security. Second, it aims to overcome restraining numerical inferiorities (i.e. manpower scarcity, chronic economic problems). Third, it aims to overcome geographical vulnerabilities (i.e. dissipated islands, lack of territorial depth). By achieving these objectives, Greece ultimately expects to compel Turkey to renounce its vital interests in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean Seas.

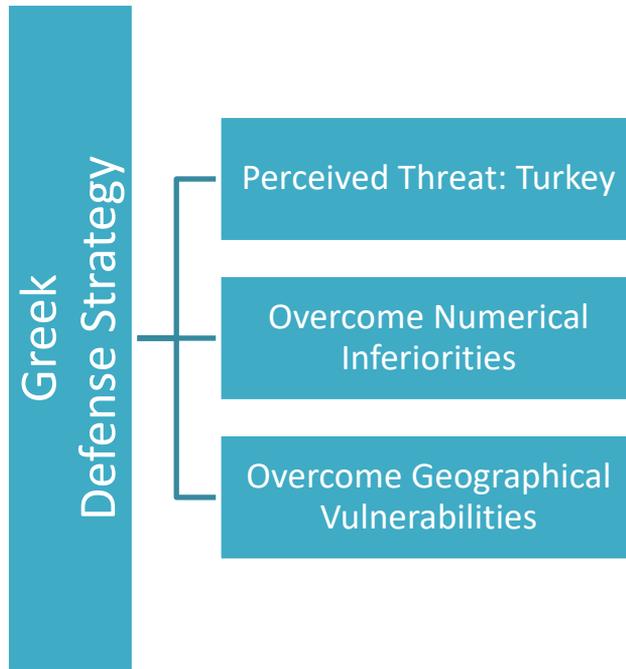
After the recent modernization attempt, the emerging Greek air capabilities led to some discussions regarding the current and future of Turkey's air superiority in the region.<sup>53</sup> In contrast, on July 27, Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar stated that "a few secondhand jets cannot change the balance of power",

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52 For an exhaustive analysis of the Greek Air Force and its role in the country's defense strategy, see Sitki Egeli, *Greek Air Power as a National Security Instrument*, (PhD Dissertation, Bilkent University: Ankara, 1998).

53 For instance, see Cem Dogut, "Two Sides Of The Aegean Military Balance Of Turkish & Greek Air Forces in The Region," *Defence Turkey*, Vol. 101, <https://www.defenceturkey.com/en/content/two-sides-of-the-aegean-military-balance-of-turkish-greek-air-forces-in-the-region-4236>; Muhammed Ayyıldız and Abdullah Bekci, "Yunan Hava Kuvvetleri Analizi," *Savunma Sanayist*, January 3, 2021, <https://www.savunmasanayist.com/yunan-hava-kuvvetleri-analizi/>; Ali Kemal Erdem, Uzmanların iddiası: 'Yunanistan, aldığı Meteor füzeleri ile olası bir gerginlikte Türkiye'ye karşı hava üstünlüğünde avantaj sağlayabilir," *Independent Türkçe*, January 29, 2021, <https://www.indyrturk.com/node/307916/uzmanlar%C4%B1n-iddias%C4%B1-yunanistan-ald%C4%B1%C4%9F%C4%B1-meteor-f%C3%BCzeleri-ile-olas%C4%B1-bir-gerginlikte-t%C3%BCrkiyeye>

underscoring that Greek arms procurement unnecessarily creates an arms race that has historically become obsolete.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, estimating a future balance of power between the two countries over limited weapon procurements would be illusory because too many other factors play a role in setting the Greek-Turkish power balance.



The Greek Air Force functioned for decades as the primary instrument in maintaining a meaningful balance of power with Turkey. Although its official discourse states that Greece's strategy is one of deterrence, the country's regional objectives require one of compellence. Greece's objectives do not only include preserving its national security or defending its territorial integrity but also compel Turkey to back down on its own vital interests by building offensive capabilities. Accordingly, Greece wants Turkey to renounce its rights in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean Seas, which makes its special investments in air power strategic for three reasons.

First, to overcome its peculiar geographical vulnerabilities originating from the dissipated islands and lack of territorial depth, it is of utmost importance for Greece to swiftly realize force concentration to reach equilibrium with and

<sup>54</sup> "Bakan Akar: Üç-beş kullanılmış uçakla güç dengeleri değişmez," *TRT Haber*, July 27, 2021, <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/bakan-akar-uc-bes-kullanilmis-ucakla-guc-dengeleri-degismez-597905.html>

even overwhelm its counterpart.<sup>55</sup> It has been long argued that a possible military escalation between Greece and Turkey would initially be confined to the air/sea domain over the Aegean.<sup>56</sup> The nature of this exclusive operation zone provides Greece with the possibility of reaching a rough parity with Turkish military capabilities by removing the overwhelming Turkish land force capabilities from the equation. Hence, gaining and maintaining air superiority has long been perceived by Greece as a game-changer against Turkey. Due to their operational characteristics, combat aircraft in particular emerge as the leading military instrument in achieving this objective. With the help of a substantial air fleet, the country may conduct denial, dominance, and offensive missions within a very short time span.

Second, air capabilities are perceived as vital by Greece to overcome its numerical inferiority in several other military dimensions. Aircraft significantly differ from surface forces, such as land and naval components, because they can operate at all three levels while the armies and navies belong to their own operational domain, which makes air power a force-multiplier.<sup>57</sup> Due to its manpower scarcity, and chronic economic problems Greece cannot maintain a massive land force. It is also difficult for Greece for the same reasons to develop a blue-water navy that is designed to project power. Because of these reasons, to realize force-multiplier effect by achieving air superiority became the cornerstone of the Greek security mindset to overcome and even invert capability asymmetries in other military domains.

Third, Greece perceives air power as a compellence instrument which aims to cause adversary behavioral change by signaling that it can produce catastrophic costs. Air power functions as a coercion tool because it can produce strategic effects even when applied at a tactical level. Its effects are strategic because it can paralyze both adversary capability and willingness by targeting population, critical infrastructure facilities, military installations or units, and political leadership.<sup>58</sup> Due to the significant offensive capabilities and possible strategic effects provided by air power, Greece has long attempted to counter

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55 "The Military Balance between Greece and Turkey: How It Stands-Where It is Headed-What It Means," Interagency Intelligence Memorandum, CIA, June 1988, p. 1.

56 CIA, "A Contingency Study on a Greek-Turkish Military Confrontation," June 9, 1983.

57 Colonel Philip S. Meilinger, *10 Propositions Regarding Air Power*, (USAF School of Advanced Airpower Studies, 1995).

58 Colonel Philip S. Meilinger, *10 Propositions Regarding Air Power*, (USAF School of Advanced Airpower Studies, 1995).

and confront Turkish military influence in the region by prioritizing the development of air power.<sup>59</sup> By boosting its defense spending and diplomatic assertiveness in recent years, Greece is increasing its escalatory attitude to reach a credible compellence.

Against this backdrop, by developing robust air force capabilities, Greece desires to break Turkish resolve to win without fighting. The expectation is that by demonstrating it will have robust capabilities and committed allies, Greek security planners contemplate that their country will outflank Turkey and force her to back down in future crises over the outstanding disputes between the two countries. Considering the nature of the crises between the two, elements of brinkmanship play a significant role. This makes the balance of resolve as the decisive factor in the outcome of the crises. By its active anti-Turkish diplomacy and armament effort, Greece implements a concerted effort to gain operation initiative and escalation dominance in the region, constraining Turkish freedom of action, and ultimately breaking its resolve to force Turkey to concede to Greek demands. It is most likely that by increasing its air power, Greece will continue to follow this policy more assertively in coming years.

However, the scope of Greek military modernization will probably remain insufficient to reach a credible compellence. First, the sole technological superiority, particularly in limited areas, does not automatically translate into victory. Although Rafales are superior to various blocks of F-16s, their numbers along with weapon systems will be limited under Greek inventory. More importantly, Turkey's recent military activism hints that Turkish operational experience and innovation potential are superior to Greece which may significantly counterbalance the Greek modernization. Second, although Greek F-16s have been superior to their Turkish counterpart due to the advanced modernization implemented, it did not produce a meaningful asymmetry in the past. It's likely that Turkey's own F-16 modernization program will somewhat offset the future technological improvements in Greece's F-16 fleet.<sup>60</sup> Third, Greece's possible technological edge can further be restrained by other factors such as the availability of bases, operational costs, swarming strategies, airlift and aerial refueling capabilities, along with geographical vulnerabilities. Hence, rather than sole quantitative or a rough

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59 Sitki Egeli, *Greek Air Power as a National Security Instrument*, (PhD Dissertation, Bilkent University: Ankara, 1998), p. 236.

60 The most decisive factor behind this conclusion is perhaps Turkey's development of its national AESA Radar for its F-16s.

qualitative superiority, the effective employment and application of air power will be inexorably linked to several factors at strategic, operational, and tactical levels. In sum, these three factors can decisively neutralize a Greek edge in an air war if it emerges. This makes future Greek air superiority in the region a possibility, not a probability.



# DIPLOMATIC ACTIVISM

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Historically, Greek security planners contemplated that the U.S. security umbrella and the country's EU membership function as a security instrument to both counter Turkey's military capabilities as well as to pressure its policies. In recent years, this policy is being expanded as Greece has begun assertively forging new relationships in the Middle East. It particularly involves specific regional countries whose relations with Turkey are strained. Remarkable examples are Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Israel. As a result, what we have seen recently is the increasing number of joint military drills between these countries and Greece.

Greece's new diplomatic activism, like its air force modernization, is a part of its defense doctrine and larger strategic objectives. On this diplomatic front, Greek political discourse incessantly underscores two main themes in order to enhance the country's capabilities, and to undermine Turkey's international standing. First, Greek decision makers consistently claim that Turkey is a revisionist country that seeks to change the status-quo in the region and this challenge is not only against Greece but also against the interests of regional countries, the U.S. and the EU. Second, Greek political leadership fervently underline that their country serves as a bastion of stability in the volatile region and that they are strongly committed to the international law as well as the U.S. and EU

interests.<sup>61</sup> These two interrelated policies are thought by the Greek leadership as the primary diplomatic way to garner international support, to facilitate favorable arms transfers, and to undermine Turkey's international standing.<sup>62</sup> Ultimately, like building air force capabilities, this diplomatic strategy is expected to serve the same objective: compel Turkey to renounce its rights in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean Seas.

Until today, this policy produced mixed results for Greece. While it garnered some show of support from its new allies in the Middle East, it failed to grant a meaningful European or American support, except a strong backing from France. Some Middle Eastern countries, such as the UAE and Saudi Arabia, joined Greek forces in military drills. For instance, In August 2020, the UAE sent four F-16s to Souda Bay Base on Crete for joint military exercises.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, in March 2021, Saudi Arabia sent six F-15Cs to Souda Air Base for joint military exercises. Reports argued that among the aims of joint exercises achieving air superiority, attacking and defending land and sea targets can be included.<sup>64</sup>

The joint military exercises were also supported by joint statements, fervently targeting Turkey. For instance, in a Greece-UAE joint statement in November 2020, it was said that “the two governments condemn Turkey’s violations of the sovereignty and sovereign rights of the Hellenic Republic and the Republic of Cyprus, as well as its overall aggressive conduct in the Middle East, Southeast Mediterranean and South Caucasus in blatant violation of international law and recalls the obligation of all states to abstain from the threat or use of force as reflected in the UN Charter. In this vein, the two governments call upon Turkey to conform with international law and immediately cease all of its illegal and provocative actions.”<sup>65</sup> On the other hand, the Greek Foreign

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61 For instance, see Minister of Greek Foreign Affairs Nikos Dendias’s interview. “Interview of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nikos Dendias, in the Athens daily *Kathimerini*, with journalist Vassilis Nedos (5 January 2020),” *Hellenic Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, January 5, 2020. Dendias argues that “What Greece is contributing to the equation is its position as a pillar of stability, predictability and reliability in the region. I think our allies on the other side of the Atlantic are aware of the importance of safeguarding peace and stability and eliminating illegal or arbitrary actions in a region where the factors for instability are multiplying.” Dendias further contends that Turkey is a problem not only for Greece but “a source of serious concern for the countries of the EU, the Gulf region, the Middle East and North Africa.”

62 For instance, a Greek think-tank report argues that Germany, France, Italy, and Spain should ban arms sales to Turkey while they should provide Greece major weapon platforms as soon as possible. See, Antonis Kamaras, “Greece’s call for an embargo on weapon sales to Turkey: A seminal step for the EU’s collective defence identity?,” *ELLAMEP*, November 2020.

63 “Four Emirati F-16s to arrive in Souda Air Base,” *Kathimerini*, August 21, 2020.

64 “Saudi Air Force arrives in Crete for joint military exercises,” *Greek City Times*, March 2021.

65 “Joint Statement by the Government of the Hellenic Republic and the Government of the United Arab Emirates, on the occasion of the visit of Greece’s Prime Minister to Abu Dhabi,” *Kathimerini*, November 18, 2020.

Ministry announced that the two countries signed a joint statement regarding strategic partnership and joint foreign policy & defense cooperation which envisioned deepening the bilateral relations to a strategic level.<sup>66</sup> Similarly in the same month, Egyptian President Sisi visited Greece, underlining common regional goals and the need for joint cooperation.

Among its new allies, Greece attributes special importance to Israel as the latter could not only function as a critical weapon supplier but also a defense-industrial role model, and a diplomatic channel for further enhancing the country's relations with the U.S. Turkey's well-developed defense industry and its significant achievements in drone technology have become alarming for Greek security elites, particularly after their operational impact was seen in recent conflicts in Syria, Libya, and Nagorno-Karabakh. It is worth noting that several states, including Greece have begun seeking ways to counter Turkey's drone concept of operations while at the same time considering defense-industrial investments and multilateral defense cooperation to imitate Turkish experience.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, in the contemporary security landscape, Greek defense planners are forced to take Turkish drone warfare into consideration, which reflects one of the major drivers of the country's forging closer ties with Israel.

Around these considerations Greece has, for some time, been developing closer relations with Israel. Firstly, Greece believes that Israeli weapon systems could contribute to Greek defense capabilities with a qualitative edge because of the latter's high-technology products. For instance, Israeli counter-drone systems are seen as a viable solution to the Turkish drone challenge.<sup>68</sup> Secondly, due to their operational experience, the Israeli military would provide training to the Greek Army. For instance, in April, the two countries signed a defense agreement worth \$1.65 billion. Under the deal, Israeli Elbit Systems will establish and operate a training center for the Greek Air Force over a 22-year period. Israel will also provide 10 M-346 training aircraft, produced by Italian Leonardo, to be used in the center.<sup>69</sup> The training center is said to be modelled on the Israeli Air Force Academy and is believed to increase operational readiness and cost effectiveness.<sup>70</sup> Thirdly, Israel is also seen as a valuable industrial partner and that Greece could

66 <https://twitter.com/GreeceMFA/status/1329049971178557444>, *Twitter*, November 18, 2020.

67 For instance, see Antonis Kamaras, "Turkish Drones, Greek Challenges," *ELIAMEP*, March 2021.

68 Vassilis Nedos, "Israel pivotal in Greece's defense plans," *Kathimerini*, February 15, 2021.

69 Zain Khalil, "Israel, Greece sign \$1.65B defense deal," *Anadolu Agency*, April 18, 2021.

70 Aleaxandros Fotiadis, "Greece, Israel sign historic \$1.65 billion defense agreement," *Euractiv*, April 19, 2021.

benefit from the defense industrial technological base in Israel by fostering cooperation in this area.<sup>71</sup> Greek Defense Minister Nikos Panagiotopoulos indicated last year that there is an expectation that the two countries coproduce some defense material in Greece which will involve Greek defense companies while then Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz (now Deputy Prime Minister) stated that the defense cooperation would create hundreds of jobs in both countries.<sup>72</sup>

While gaining new allies particularly in the Middle East is perceived as important by Greece, it is obvious that it garners the most concrete support from France which manifests itself in vocal political support, sale of Rafales and possible procurement of French frigates for the Greek Navy. While Dassault's Rafale is seen as an effective aircraft among its competitors, the Greek decision to ink the deal was also considerably motivated by political concerns. France is one of the vocal supporters of Greece in the latter's disagreement with Turkey over the Eastern Mediterranean. On August 26, 2020, France joined Greek forces south of Cyprus for military exercises in a show of support against Turkey where the latter was also conducting military drills at the same time with U.S. ships. During the Rafale deal ceremony, French Defense Minister Florence Parly stated that "the quality of the cooperation between France and Greece is particularly visible in the Mediterranean" indicating joint military exercises between the two in the region.<sup>73</sup>

Furthermore, the signature marked Dassault's first sale of Rafale fighters to a European country after a series of unsuccessful attempts towards previous potential customers. Before Greece, Egypt, India, and Qatar purchased the aircraft while European countries, despite intense French pressure, preferred to procure other aircraft, mainly the F-35. With the deal, Greece contributed to the sustainability of the French defense industry while also ensuring that France's own air force fleet would fly with new models of the aircraft. Immediately after the deal, French Defense Minister Florence Parly announced that France will produce 12 new aircraft by 2025 to replace older jets that were sold to Greece.<sup>74</sup> Thus, increas-

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71 Nicholas Kallis, "A Solution to the Challenges that Greece's Defense Industry Face," *Greek City Times*, January 19, 2021.

72 "Parliament approves defense agreement with Israel," *Kathimerini*, July 7, 2020; "Israel hails defense deal with Greece as 'long-term partnership'" *Kathimerini*, January 5, 2021.

73 Christina Mackenzie, "Greece and France ink \$3 billion contract for Rafale fighter jets," *Defense News*, January 25, 2021, <https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2021/01/25/greece-and-france-ink-3-billion-contract-for-rafale-fighter-jets/>

74 Christina Mackenzie, "France begins backfilling its Rafale fleet after selling some to Greece," *Defense News*, January 29, 2021, <https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2021/01/29/france-begins-backfilling-its-rafale-fleet-after-selling-some-to-greece/>

ing political coherence between Greece and France in recent years facilitated Rafale transfer where Greece is being equipped with modern aircraft in a relatively quick delivery period and France is gaining financial benefits as well as military influence in the region.

In terms of its international anti-Turkey pressure campaign, Greek diplomacy has mostly failed. Greece's excessive diplomatic expectations were not welcomed by several countries. In October 2020 at the EU summit, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis insisted that an arms embargo should be imposed on Turkey but the demand was quickly rejected by Germany, Italy, Spain, and Hungary. Similarly, one week later, Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias sent letters to his counterparts from Germany, Spain, and Italy, asking them to ban arms sales to Turkey.<sup>75</sup> One month later, Dendias stated that "I really fail to understand Germany's reluctance to use the enormous power of its economy to set a clear example to countries that they must obey international law," lamenting that Germany is following a futile appeasement policy towards Turkey and that the U.S. should increase its military presence in the Eastern Mediterranean to compensate the European inertia.<sup>76</sup> This policy is also supported by Greek analysts. For instance, one Greek think-tank paper argues that "...Considering how invested Germany is in its relationship with Turkey, were the German government to freeze the construction and delivery of 214-class submarines to Turkey, it would definitely signal its determination to strengthen Greece's military deterrence. Such a message would be as significant in its implications as France's decision to accelerate the delivery to Greece of 18 Rafale fighter jets."<sup>77</sup> He even accuses Germany that its delivery of class-214 submarines to Turkey is "untenable" and then argues that the German position is a clear embodiment of the NATO's alleged brain-dead status claimed by French President Macron.<sup>78</sup>

However, intensive Greek pressure was not responded to positively by the EU countries. Germany particularly avoided any move that may alienate Turkey. German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas argued that Greece's embargo demand on

75 Sarantis Michalopoulos, "Greece asks Germany, Italy and Spain to impose arms embargo on Turkey," *Euractiv*, October 21, 2020.

76 Nektaria Stamouli, "Greece blasts Berlin for shunning plea for Turkey arms embargo," *Politico*, November 28, 2020.

77 Antonis Kamaras, "Greece's call for an embargo on weapon sales to Turkey: A seminal step for the EU's collective defence identity?," *ELIAMEP*, November 2020, p. 8.

78 Kamaras says that "If this German conundrum does not justify French President Emmanuel Macron's statement that 'NATO is braindead', we do not know what can." See, Kamaras, "Greece's call for an embargo on weapon sales to Turkey," p. 10.

Turkey was “strategically incorrect,” reminding that “Turkey; a NATO member, could easily purchase missiles from Russia when it was unable to obtain them from the United States.”<sup>79</sup>

Thus, what we are seeing is the fact that Greece’s ill-suited diplomacy is bound to fail because it is based on unsubstantiated claims, and irrational expectations. It also overstates Greece’s strategic importance while understating Turkey’s role in international affairs. It is obvious that one cannot call it a peaceful policy based on a strategy of deterrence while it was implementing a comprehensive and -offensive in nature- military modernization program and working to undermine the military and diplomatic power of its neighbor.

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<sup>79</sup> “Germany opposes imposition of arms embargo on Turkey,” *Middle East Monitor*, December 23, 2020, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20201223-germany-opposes-imposition-of-arms-embargo-on-turkey/>

# CONCLUSION

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Greece's air force modernization reflects a historical continuity in that the country attributes greater importance to air power due to its socio-economic, and geographic vulnerabilities along with the character of a possible military escalation with Turkey. Air power is perceived by Greek decision-makers as an instrument to overcome numerical inferiority in several sectors by ensuring a qualitative edge, and to meet its operational necessities by swiftly deploying a substantial concentration of force in limited operation zones. Consistently underscoring the so-called Turkish threat for decades, Greece has developed robust air force capabilities for ensuring its alleged deterrent. However, given Greece's objectives regarding the limits of its territorial waters or questionable claims over the exclusive economic zones of islands, Greek official discourse on deterrence belies its main objective: that is to command the Aegean and to deny the Eastern Mediterranean Seas to Turkey.

Greece's air force modernization can be understood within a larger framework, in line with its compellence strategy which is also backed by an assertive diplomatic activism. In a concerted effort, Greece wants to develop robust air force capabilities and expand its alliance network to undermine Turkish commitment to its vital interests. Greek leadership expects that by signaling to Turkey that it has an army designed to produce catastrophic costs and that it has committed allies that share similar regional designs, it could confront Turkey's military influence and activities in the region. By its anti-Turkish diplomatic campaign, it

also wants to drive a wedge between Turkey and its allies in the West, particularly by its persistent calls for sanctions on Turkey. By doing so, it expects to restrain Turkish freedom of action, and ultimately coerce Turkey to renounce its rights in the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean Seas. Hence, Greece's air force modernization intends to serve to a greater strategy based on compellence which is also backed by an increasingly antagonistic diplomatic effort.

A realistic assessment shows that tensions in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean Seas will continue in the near future. Although several diplomatic attempts were made and exploratory talks were re-launched, emerging optimism from time to time proved to be short-lived. Furthermore, immediate violations just after the confidence building measures mostly result in the exacerbation of the situation, further increasing mistrust and feelings of insecurity. Whether Greece's twofold effort, aiming to counter Turkey's superior military capabilities and to undermine its international standing, would produce success will depend on a multitude of factors. Historical course and the current trajectory seem to demonstrate that Greek military capabilities and diplomatic influence do not match with its excessive political objectives. In the end, it is unlikely that Greece will ensure a credible compellence.

# GREECE'S UNLIKELY COMPELLENCE AIR FORCE MODERNIZATION & DIPLOMATIC ASSERTIVENESS REPORT

RIFAT ÖNCEL

After a decade-long financial crisis, Greece recently initiated a comprehensive military modernization program. The country has undertaken a significant upgrade of its air force inventory and is purchasing new fighter jets. Beside arms build-up, Greece is working hard to expand its alliance network in the Middle East while increasing its anti-Turkish pressure campaign across Europe and the United States. Although this policy has peaked recently, it is not a new phenomenon in the Greek security mindset. Originating from the so-called "Turkish threat", this twofold effort has become the foundational element of Greek foreign and security strategies since Turkey's Cyprus Peace Operation in 1974.

Recent Greek military modernization and diplomatic activism is a clear demonstration of its decades-old compellence strategy, rather than a deterrence which its official discourse claims. If it were a policy of deterrence, it is consistently failing because Greece also claims that the regional status-quo is always changing, against its national interests, in favor of Turkey. Its strong emphasis on deterrence, in fact, belies its real strategy, one that is designed not to deter Turkey by dissuading it from taking a specific action but rather force it to renounce something that is already in process. In contemporary geopolitics, contrary to Greek demands, Turkey has been conducting seismic research, in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean Seas, under the protection of its navy and air force.

Against this backdrop, Greece wants to boost its offensive capabilities, expand the number of its allies, and ensure an international embargo on Turkey to force the latter to back down from its vital interests in the region. Greek decision-makers expect that they would enhance their resolve and credibility by investing in air power, building an anti-Turkish regional bloc, and an antagonistic West towards Turkey. By doing so, Greece wants to manipulate Turkey's perception of costs and benefits, to decrease its resolve and commitment, and ultimately to win without a fight.

Due to the current uncertain trajectory of Greek military modernization, this paper discusses the strategic logic that guides its armament and diplomatic activism rather than a measurement of the emerging balance of power. In line with its compellence strategy, Greece wants to command the Aegean Sea and to deny the Eastern Mediterranean Sea to Turkey. However, due to the structural restraints over its military modernization, and the limits on its diplomatic influence, it is unlikely to achieve the credible compellence to meet its excessive political objectives.

