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“Military Cooperation between Greece and the USA: The Significance of Diplomacy and the Evolution of the Mutual Defense Cooperation Agreement (MDCA) from 1990 to Present”

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"In all things one must become an enemy or a friend, depending on the circumstances..."

"Thucydides", Histories (6.85.1)

Table of Contents

Abstract	10
Chapter 1: Historical Overview of Greece-USA Relations.....	11
1.1 Introduction.....	11
1.2 Greece-USA Relations during the Cold War	11
1.2.1 Post-World War II and the Truman Doctrine.....	11
1.2.2 The Military Junta (1967-1974).....	12
1.3 U.S. Military Presence and Strategic Cooperation (1980s)	13
1.3.1 Strategic Importance of Greece	13
1.3.2 Greece’s Role in NATO	14
1.4 The MDCA in 1990: A Response to Post-Cold War Realities.....	15
1.4.1 The Collapse of the Soviet Union.....	15
1.4.2 The MDCA of 1990: A Cornerstone for Greece-USA Relations.....	16
Chapter 2: The Inception and Initial Impact of the MDCA (1990-2000).....	17
2.1 The Geopolitical Context of the MDCA’s signing in 1990	18
2.2 Strategic Motivations of the United States	19
2.3 Strategic Motivations of Greece	20
2.4 Initial Impact on Bilateral Relations and Regional Security.....	21
Chapter 3: The Evolution of the MDCA in the 21st Century (2001-2010)	22
3.1 Introduction.....	22
3.2 The Global Security Environment Post-9/11	22
3.2.1 The War on Terror.....	22
3.2.2 NATO and Regional Stability.....	23
3.3 The Eastern Mediterranean and Shifting Power Dynamics	24
3.3.1 The Rise of Regional Instability.....	24
3.3.2 Greek Defense Modernization.....	25
3.4 Diplomatic Negotiations and Expansions of the MDCA.....	26
3.4.1 Diplomatic Context	26
3.4.2 Expansions in Military Cooperation	27
3.5 Conclusion	28
Chapter 4: Recent Developments and Strategic Significance (2011-2024)	29

4.1 Introduction.....	29
4.2 Strategic Context and the Need for Renewals	30
4.2.1 Regional Instability and the Eastern Mediterranean	30
4.2.2 U.S. Strategic Shift toward the Mediterranean	31
4.3 Key Extensions - Amendments to the MDCA in 2019, 2020 and 2021	32
4.3.1 The 2019 MDCA Amendment.....	32
4.3.2 The 2020 MDCA Extension	33
4.3.3 The 2021 MDCA New Amendment.....	34
4.4 Strengthening of Diplomatic and Military Relations after the 2021 New Amendment	37
4.4.1 Diplomatic Efforts to Enhance Cooperation	37
4.4.2 Military Cooperation and Joint Exercises	38
4.5 Strategic Implications for Greece and the USA	39
4.5.1 How the 2021 MDCA Strengthened Greece’s Regional Role	39
4.5.2 How the 2021 MDCA Supports U.S. Security and Geopolitical Goals	40
4.6 Conclusion	41
Chapter 5: The Role of Diplomacy in Sustaining and Expanding the MDCA until 2024	42
5.1 Introduction.....	42
5.2 The Diplomatic Framework: Establishing a Strong Foundation	43
5.2.1 Early Diplomatic Foundations	43
5.2.2 The Role of NATO and Collective Security.....	44
5.3 Diplomatic Strategies for Expansion: 2010s-2024	44
5.3.1 Managing Tensions with Turkey	44
5.3.2 U.S.-Greek Strategic Dialogue.....	46
5.4 The Broader Implications for NATO and Regional Stability.....	47
5.4.1 Enhancing NATO’s Southern Flank.....	47
5.4.2 Regional Stability and Energy Security	48
5.5 Conclusion	49
Chapter 6: Conclusion.....	50
6.1 Summary of Key Findings	50
6.2 The Significance of the MDCA in Greece-USA Relations.....	51
6.3 Future Developments and Prospects for Military Cooperation	52
6.4 Areas for Further Research	53

6.5 Conclusion	54
Reference list	55

List of Acronyms

EEC	European Economic Community
EU	European Union
MDCA	Mutual Defense Cooperation Agreement
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
USA	United States of America
WWII	World War II

Key words: Mutual Defense Cooperation Agreement (MDCA), Greece-USA relations, strategic interests, bilateral and multilateral relations, regional diplomacy, security challenges, Eastern Mediterranean security, geopolitical dynamics

Abstract

This thesis analyzes the history and importance of military cooperation between Greece and the United States of America (USA) with a focus on the Mutual Defense Cooperation Agreement (MDCA), covering developments since its inception in 1990 up to 2024. The MDCA has been an important forum for bilateral relations covering mutual interests related to regional stability and security cooperation between both countries as well as strategic developments in the Eastern Mediterranean.

It is true that Athens enjoys pivotal relations with Washington going back to the aftermath of World War II (WWII) and reaching maturity through events such as the formation of the Truman Doctrine in support for Greece or its entrance into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1952. This formed the basis of assistance from the U.S. military during important time periods such as the post-WWII era (Cold War) and then over the years under a repressive military Junta regime, helping Greece foil attempts by communism to advance its influence in Europe through Greece's borders. The paper outlines how U.S. military activity in Greece has supported regional security efforts, highlighting Greek value as a NATO southern flank and American forward operating base location.

In light of the changing realities that have been shifted due to the demise of the Soviet Union, regional events, and the latest threats such as terrorism, this thesis also explores how MDCA have evolved over time. Focusing on US-Greek military cooperation, it maps the effects of a post-9/11 security landscape at: joint exercises, technological upgrades and defense capabilities that support Greece's capacity within NATO.

In addition, the research addresses how diplomacy supports building and broadening of the MDCA, showing that high-level discussions have become essential in allowing for ongoing adaptability, creating space to cover new security threats. An important task is managing complex regional dynamics, especially rising tensions with Turkey and advancing peace and stability through cooperative frameworks.

Also, it discusses the implications of the MDCA for regional stability and energy security in the Eastern Mediterranean, stressing Greece's geostrategic by rising competition among energy interests and matters pertaining to sea-based conflicts. It argues that the MDCA were not solely for military benefits but also to strengthen Greece's diplomatic position in international fora and during summits as being a credible stakeholder within NATO's conciliating collective defense.

This thesis concludes that the MDCA is not just a defense agreement but rather an all-encompassing framework shrouding Greek-American relations, analyzing how interlinked diplomacy and military power are in shaping 21st century security threats. The conclusions underline the need for continued collaboration between Greece and America in replicating a stable and safe Eastern Mediterranean geography, with the MDCA there as one of many vital implements to this overarching objective.

Chapter 1: Historical Overview of Greece-USA Relations

1.1 Introduction

After WWII, Greece was forged as a natural ally of the United States as the Cold War began to set in. The adoption of the Truman Doctrine in 1947 was a defining event that highlighted America's commitment to Greece's recovery and stability. In an effort to combat the spread of communism, the U.S. began providing economic and military aid to both Greece and Turkey, securing its strategic position in the Eastern Mediterranean (Papasotiriou, 2018, p. 35). This doctrine not only marked the beginning of sustained U.S.-Greek cooperation but also established a foundation for their enduring partnership.

Greece's entry into NATO in 1952 further reinforced its firm relationship with the United States. Membership in NATO allowed Greece to align itself with Western powers and counter Soviet influence in the region. As a NATO member, Greece's incorporation into alliance structures highlighted its strategic importance as a southern flank, strengthening its defense capabilities while simultaneously expanding U.S. military presence in critical installations. In particular, it became a vital logistics hub, enabling the United States and NATO to maintain power projection capabilities in the Mediterranean.

Throughout the Cold War era, Greece emerged as a critical geopolitical ally. The presence of U.S. military bases offered strategic benefits to the Mediterranean and provided the United States with the ability to project power far beyond token deployments for regional security (Couloumbis and Iatrides, 1980, p. 22). These bases were indispensable for numerous military operations conducted by both U.S. and NATO forces, particularly in times of heightened tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean.

As the Cold War ended, the relationship between Greece and the United States evolved to address new global challenges. The signing of the MDCA on July, 8th, 1990, reaffirmed and expanded their defense relationship, particularly in light of increasing regional security concerns (Hellenic Republic, 1990). The MDCA underscored Greece's enduring strategic importance to U.S. defense strategy in the Eastern Mediterranean, serving as a cornerstone for mutual security and military cooperation.

This historical review demonstrates the resilience of Greece-U.S. military and diplomatic bonds. This relationship dates back to the Truman Doctrine and even further than that when you consider its critical interventions in regional stability and global security dynamics through contemporary defense agreements (Papasotiriou, 2018, p. 36).

1.2 Greece-USA Relations during the Cold War

1.2.1 Post-World War II and the Truman Doctrine

The post-World War II period was a formative time in Greek-American relations, defined most of all by the implementation of the Truman Doctrine in 1947, which served as a pivotal

shift for Greece on two levels: politically, it drew Greece towards the western camp; strategically, it projected a different path and approach within the western bloc. The policy was formulated with the specific aim of containing the Soviets, who were expanding their sphere of influence by economic and military support to states like Greece and Turkey (McGlinchey, 2009).

The time in Greece was marred by a civil war between government forces and communist rebels. The Truman Doctrine, which implied the growing communist menace in Greece would fracture stability in Western democracy, continued to solidify this was indeed a United States issue at stake (Coulombis and Iatrides, 1980, p. 35). In his March 12th, 1947 address to Congress, President Harry S. Truman sounded the alarm bell for Greece and why Greece-if it indeed did not receive any U.S. aid-would inextricably fall under communist hegemony. (Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum, n.d.) This paved the way for a major American role in Greek domestic politics, emphasizing, obviously enough, the geo-strategic significance of Greece at large in relation to Cold War geopolitics.

Military help, money-related aid, and infrastructural improvements were given under the Truman date. The aid helped the Greek government win in its communist civil war and also provided economic stability to a country that would eventually recover and grow. The policy of containment also triggered a major influx in military aid to Greece, where the US particularly provided advisors and supplies for the Hellenic Armed Forces. Moreover, through the Truman Doctrine the US-Greek collaboration was established based on common practices and objectives at the political and military levels. This enabled Greece to join western political and military clubs that were important for its geo-strategic orientation, ultimately resulting in NATO membership in 1952, where it sought refuge under the protective umbrella of NATO's southern flank against a possible Soviet expansion to the Balkans and Eastern Mediterranean.

In sum, regardless of ideological principles or short- to medium-term threats and opportunities, the inception of the Truman Doctrine is a pivotal date in Greece-US relations, as it marked the beginning of a strategic partnership that would resonate for decades to come. It not only highlighted the US's commitment to support democracies and fight communism around the world but also solidified Greece as an important partner in an era that is reflected today in different aspects (Tziampiris, 2021, p. 29).

1.2.2 The Military Junta (1967-1974)

The period of the military junta in Greece that commenced with a coup in April 1967 and lasted until a return to democracy in 1974 is an intricate passage of Greece-USA relations dominated by conundrums, contradicting strategic necessities, and democratic ideals. The list reminds us of the taking over on April 21st, 1967, by groups of military officers led by Colonel George Papadopoulos, a new regime that led to serious violations of human rights and political persecutions. This surprise coup d'état put the United States in an awkward position of supporting democracy but also being fearful of losing its ally during the Cold War, so they could not achieve anything about it (Koulisis, 2023, pp. 59-63).

U.S. policy towards Greece in the middle of and at the end of its military dictatorship was, pragmatically, to support it (Gerstenzang and Boudreaux, 1999). Therefore, given the fact that Greece was a NATO member and situated next to the Soviet sphere of influence rendered its geo-strategic value was extremely high, and this was yet another reason that US foreign policy objectives were generate a need for constructive relations with an essentially undemocratic successor regime (Iatrides, 1981, p. 14). Greece became an indispensable partner in regional security through its support of U.S. operations and NATO southern defense at Souda Bay and other military installations that allowed the United States to operate effectively in a volatile region of highly complex problem set interactions (Karamouzi, 2021, p. 129).

But U.S. relations with the junta were also contentious. There was widespread criticism within and outside the U.S. about what was perceived to be America's tacit complicity with a military regime that among other things systematically violated human rights and repressed political freedoms (Couloumbis and Iatrides, 1980, p. 22).

The junta had overreached, and the turning point arrived on July 15th, 1974, with the Turkish invasion of Cyprus, which was provoked by the junta's ill-fated scheme to stage a coup against President Makarios of Cyprus. As a result of this event, which acted as the coup de grace on the structure of military rule in Greece since 1967, it gave rise to a Greek-Turkish relations crisis (Gallant, 2015, p. 125). The return to democracy in Greece when Constantine Karamanlis took over office again after the collapse of the military dictatorship pushed the US into a new round of diplomatic efforts to repair bilateral relations, although there were still long-lasting scars resulting from the Cyprus ordeal.

The era of the military junta, in conclusion, emerges as one of the most critical yet highly disputed periods in Greece-USA relations. Although U.S. policy during the junta years was decided mainly on strategic terms, the return to democracy has enabled a convergence of interests that reinforces bilateral relations in accordance with democratic principles (Klapsis et al., 2020, p. 15).

1.3 U.S. Military Presence and Strategic Cooperation (1980s)

1.3.1 Strategic Importance of Greece

It was in the 1980s that the strategic and historic role of Greece within western interests, military and geopolitical planning experienced it's most profound significance yet. Greece was located at the crossroads of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, which enabled it to act as a node of mission projection and regional stability during tensions shown in the Cold War era (Arvanitopoulos, 2003, p. 19).

U.S. military bases in Greece, particularly the naval base at Souda Bay on the island of Crete, were indispensable to U.S. and NATO strategic operations. The deep-water port at Souda Bay and its facilities, because of the longstanding naval role of Crete in U.S. plans for maintaining military operations as required in the Mediterranean Sea, had been widely viewed as one of the most essential military out-of-theater bases for U.S. interests around the globe

(Navy.mil, n.d.). Moreover, the 1980s were marked by a severe crisis of the Mediterranean geopolitical space with local wars and instability (the Lebanese Civil War and Arab-Israeli issue were constant during this period). Given the context of this volatile period, Greece became crucial in supporting U.S. Cold War objectives against Soviet influence, given that amid these conditions it is classified as a western ally.

Notwithstanding the importance of its strategic location, Greece could have a difficult and sometimes strained relationship with the United States when it comes to internal Greek politics. Starting in 1981 with the election of Andreas Papandreou and his Panhellenic Socialist Movement, Greece has seen a government more outspoken against U.S. military presence and desirous to flex its muscles on behalf of Greek sovereignty (Ierodiaconou, 1981). Papandreou's government considered the closure of U.S. bases, a move in tune with its domestic anti-American base and with an inclination towards more non-aligned foreign policy. Nevertheless, the opportunities for practical U.S. benefits gained through existing security cooperation and trade ties helped sustain the U.S.-Greece military relationship.

All in all, the 1980s confirmed Greece's strategic value to the US as an essential ally in a region plagued by instability. A time when they were forced to maneuver through domestic political currents in order to benefit from someday turning Greece, strategically placed on the map, into a vital partner.

1.3.2 Greece's Role in NATO

Greece has been a member of NATO since 1952 and a key factor in the US-led alliance's effort at containing the Soviet Union during the Cold War. By the mid-1980s, living on the fault line of zone-bound repression in Eastern Europe and close to some unstable regions in the wider Middle East-North African region Greece continued to play a central role within NATO defense structures (NATO, n.d.). The position also allowed Greece to be a cornerstone for NATO force projection in these regions, featuring essential air and naval facilities for alliance operations.

The naval base at Souda Bay in Crete served as a logistics center for operations in the Mediterranean. A number of NATO exercises were conducted in the area from this base aimed strengthening collective defense capabilities against any Soviet threats and the potential threat due to their allies. Airports and military installations in Greece constituted important infrastructures for the forward deployment and mobility of NATO, key to its posture of deterrence (NATO, n.d.).

Meanwhile, domestically, the very balance of power within NATO was also thrown into question. The North Atlantic Alliance member states Turkey and Greece were influenced in different ways by internal political turbulence. The election of the socialist government under Andreas Papandreou in 1981 added a new dimension to this complex Greece-NATO relationship. Papandreou, too, chastised NATO practices and at times pursued a policy of non-alignment in a Greece where an attitude verging on disillusionment had become entrenched against Western intrusion into Greek politics (Couloumbis and Iatrides, 1980, p. 22). Greece

nonetheless effectively met its obligations under NATO, appreciating that alliance membership was both in the country's security interests and strategically necessary.

It was Greece that even mediated inside the alliance, watering down its perennial antagonisms with Turkey—a similarly key NATO member. Cyprus and territorial rights in the Aegean Sea between Greece and Turkey threatened to divide NATO. Nonetheless, as a member state, Greece endeavored to diplomatically contain these tensions through shaping NATO and sometimes unremittingly, such as during the Cyprus crisis.

Greece, for all its subsequent political troubles in the alliance during later years, was very active in NATO missions during the 1980s. So took part in numerous commands and staff top-level military training courses, joint exercises, and operations designed to improve Alliance interoperability and defense preparedness. Such contributions demonstrate Greece's alignment with NATO collective security objectives, enhancing its strategic importance to European and transatlantic security agendas (NATO, n.d.).

In short, Greece acted as a necessary strategic partner of NATO based on its national interests and its commitment to defend the alliance. Occasionally, domestic political dynamics injected uncertainty about Greece into NATO dealings, but its location and forces made it a unique player (ODETH, 2022).

1.4 The MDCA in 1990: A Response to Post-Cold War Realities

1.4.1 The Collapse of the Soviet Union

The collapse of the Soviet Union was revolutionary for global politics and changed dramatically in terms of strategic circumstances relating to Greece-USA relations. The disintegration of Soviet power in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, regions of Greece critical to its history and politics (Hatzivassiliou, 2006, p. 14), changed the security landscape on which Greek government strategy was built.

The collapse of the “Iron Curtain” (Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.) in Eastern Europe signaled the end of communist rule in Europe turned the war-ridden Balkans upside down and opened up previously inaccessible Eastern European markets for Greece, but it also caused regional turmoil because new states were fragmented along ethnic lines, and a revengeful legacy of wars emerged that had great geopolitical effect on the region.

In the case of the US, winning the Cold War meant a major realignment of its foreign policy objectives. With the threat of Soviet expansion effectively checked, US concerns were redirected to encouraging government by democracy, economic cooperation, and crisis control in regional theaters (Kissinger, 1994, p. 34). Greece remained strategically important in this changed context, but it had become so for different reasons.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union opened up ever broader possibilities for Greece to be integrated into Western economic and military structures. In the aftermath of reduced Soviet influence, Greece both sought close relations with the emergent European Economic

Community (EEC) and maintained strong ties with the United States. However, the geo-strategic importance of Greece for naval logistics ceased to be of profound implication only in reference to regional security, and this form of thinking partly determined the negotiation and trailing signature of an MDCA on July 8th, 1990 (Hellenic Republic, 1990).

The MDCA was the modern upgrade of Greece-USA defense relations, which were considered to have changed significantly in the post-Cold War aftermath. The deal was a tangible manifestation of the two countries' pledges to preserve their strategic partnership in safeguarding peace and stability in the East Mediterranean.

1.4.2 The MDCA of 1990: A Cornerstone for Greece-USA Relations

The MDCA was signed between the two countries in 1990, recognizing a historical milestone in Greek-American relations while also taking into account the new post-Cold War environment. The agreement was critical in restructuring bilateral relations and responding to changing security threats. It was not only military cooperation but also political, strategic, and diplomatic. Simultaneously, the MDCA reaffirmed Greece's commitment to the Western alliance and to NATO, thereby cementing its status as the United States' most reliable partner. Politically, it highlighted Greece's alignment to Western powers at a time of realignment across the globe as the Cold War was coming to an end (Papasotiriou, 2018, p. 35).

At the domestic level, the agreement signified Greece's determination to protect its sovereignty through strong partnerships, while at the regional level the agreement functioned as a general counterbalance to Turkey's expansionist policies in the Aegean and Cyprus (Kariotis, 1997, p. 82). Strengthening ties with the United States strengthened Greece's role within Western political and economic structures like the EEC. The MDCA recognizes Greece's position as a gateway between Europe, Asia, and Africa. The USA needed a forward base, a suburban bastion, and the ensuing experience of that was used to great effect with a US base in Greece, a key route through which US firepower could then project into the Balkans, the Middle East, and North Africa.

As the security environment changed, the MDCA allowed Greece to navigate the challenges of a post-Cold War world while upholding regional stability. The deal also enhanced energy security and solidified Greece's position. The MDCA established a stronger diplomatic bond between Greece and the United States and set the stage for deeper security and economic cooperation. The promotion of Greece's status to that of a strategic partner served to increase the intergovernmental influence Greece would have over both regional and international security matters.

Through the signing of MDCA, the United States gained access to various strategic military installations on Greek territory, particularly the Souda Bay Naval Base (Hellenic Republic, 1990), which emerged as a key pillar of NATO's operations in the Mediterranean. This access allowed for rapid deployment capabilities and bolstered the U.S. strategic posture in the region. Joint military exercises and training programs under the MDCA led to enhanced interoperability between Hellenic and U.S. Armed Forces, contributing to their mutual

readiness in light of regional contingencies. What is more, Greece received new military technology and transfers of advanced equipment, which helped to modernize the Hellenic Armed Forces.

So, the 1990 MDCA marked a defining moment for Greek-American relations, catalyzing a long-lasting partnership between the two countries. Not only did it respond to the immediate security issues post-Cold War, but it also established an important frame for long-term strategic cooperation. Furthermore, by linking Greece to a wider structure of Western military and political alignments, the agreement promoted both stability in the region and strengthened Greece's prominence in the Eastern Mediterranean. Plus, the MDCA's multifaceted effects reached beyond defense, laying the foundation for burgeoning and deepening diplomatic, economic, and technological relationships that would continue to develop and deepen in the decades that followed.

Chapter 2: The Inception and Initial Impact of the MDCA (1990-2000)

The conclusion of the MDCA in 1990 signified a unique momentum in Greece-USA relations up to that time, expanding on a tradition of strategic partnership formed during much of the Cold War era. This chapter deals with the immediate consequences of the MDCA of 1990–2000, primarily how it affected bilateral relations, regional security, and the broader strategic plans of both countries.

The MDCA was signed against the backdrop of a changing global environment that followed the fall of the Soviet Union and ushered in new security dynamics. A key element of the emergent post-Cold War order was preserving a strong US military presence in the Eastern Mediterranean as part of its response to uncertainty about how U. S. power should be used during America's unipolar moment, including in relation to turmoil appearing in both stages beyond its containment strategy (Arvanitopoulos, 2003, p. 19). The MDCA established a legal and strategic framework allowing the use of crucial military bases, like Souda Bay, thus enabling preparedness for combat capability and strategic deterrence (Hellenic Republic, 1990).

The MDCA was highly valuable for Greece, as altered security guarantees and enhanced bilateral interoperability provided the country with a strategic asset in light of brewing regional tensions, notably those revolving around territorial disputes with respect to the Aegean Sea vis-à-vis Turkey (Kariotis, 1997, p. 82). Furthermore, the agreement buttressed Greece's ties with NATO by symbolizing its dedication to collective security and taking advantage of modern military capabilities as well as bilateral training programs.

During its early decades, the MDCA directed several joint military exercises and operations that aimed to enhance the interoperability of Greek forces with their American counterparts. By using Greek facilities for basic military logistics and training, the readiness of both nations to react rapidly to regional contingencies was further enhanced. This has

empowered the strategic relationship and means that both countries can operate in concert under the NATO umbrella of collective defense.

The MDCA was also crucial during the Yugoslav wars insofar as it facilitated US efforts to provide logistics support for American operations in the Balkans. The strategic value of both Greek ports and airbases became increasingly evident as the U.S. made an effort to keep stability amidst humanitarian efforts in this area. This confirmed the relevance of operating the MDCA when military intervention was needed in time and effectively.

Politically, the MDCA served as an affirmation of Greece's western orientation and enhanced its global prestige. Its significance was highlighted, for example, in the course of the 1999 Kosovo War when Greece became actively involved in notable NATO strategic operations and supported by offering facilities and means as part of the MDCA (Karamouzi, 2021, pp. 129-133). During the 1990s, the MDCA emerged as a linchpin in deepening U.S.-Greece relations to encompass economic cooperation and political dialogue besides defense cooperation.

In summary, the first decade after the creation of the MDCA testified to its reinforcing role in Greece-USA bilateral relations and regional stability. A face-saving stipulation, the application of the agreement agreed with time in a way that would enable both countries to effectively tackle new security challenges in tune with an evolving international scenario.

2.1 The Geopolitical Context of the MDCA's signing in 1990

Greece and the United States signed the MDCA in 1990, a remarkable feat, amid dramatically altered geopolitical realities. The demise of the Soviet Union and the ensuing realignment of power across Europe and the world dominated the 1980s and early 1990s. These developments cast a new light on the strategic factors that prompted the MDCA and added to the incentives in Athens and Washington to keep U.S.-Greek military cooperation alive.

The bipolar world of the Cold War collapsed along with the Soviet Union, opening up a universe of new opportunities and difficulties. In order to maintain its place in an international system that was drastically changing throughout this transition, the United States had to reinvent its foreign policy approach. This is the period in which Greece had to reconsider its geopolitical role towards the wider region and more importantly, enhance security within an increasingly unstable Balkan, which was being burdened by a number of new states and potential conflicts as smarter breakdowns were about to be shaped through these processes that followed.

Ensuring stability in the Eastern Mediterranean became all the more important as the Balkans exploded and instability throughout the Middle East threatened to become a regional inferno, exemplified by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990-91. Due to its strategic position in the region, allowing it control over key waterways and power projection capabilities, Greece was an indispensable linchpin state for U.S. interests; located at the edge of Europe surrounded by key sea lanes (Arvanitopoulos, 2003, p. 19). The MDCA further solidified Greek credibility as an ally

in these endeavors. It gave the benefit of allowing U.S. forces to continue to use critical bases most notably its naval base at Souda Bay, in Crete-making it possible for the military to be more able to respond swiftly, if circumstances so required, in regard to either southern Europe or eastern Mediterranean crisis spots.

Greece, moreover, had to learn how to be a continually unified Europe and to cultivate its bilateral relationships with the USA. The MDCA was emblematic of Greece's dedication to these twin goals, affirming its orientation towards western powers in foreign policy and locking up security on the way as well (Couloumbis and Iatrides, 1980, p. 22). To sum up, the MDCA signed in 1990 can be contextualized within two levels of geopolitical circumstances. They saw the agreement as a product of its time but also as an updated foundation for Greek and American defense cooperation to confront new threats.

2.2 Strategic Motivations of the United States

The United States and Greece signed the MDCA in 1990 primarily to emphasize the strategic considerations for the U.S. of sustaining a robust military presence in Greek territory, which is situated at the crossroads of three continents: Europe, Asia, and Africa-something that has factored into every U.S. administration's foreign policy calculations since Harry Truman first coined his doctrine back in 1947.

One of its underlying reasons for the US to reinforce the military relationship with Greece under MDCA was around the need to maintain stability in the Eastern Mediterranean, a region accustomed to rivalry stemming from geopolitical contestations and new post-Cold War insecurity. When the Soviet Union broke up, the US was determined that no vacuums of power remained that could create regional instability or conflict, which would then threaten Western interests more broadly. The U.S. military has since used bases like the coveted naval facility at Souda Bay to project power into the greater Balkans and Middle East, exploiting them as critical logistical hubs (Reuters, 1990).

A great deal of upheaval in the Balkans after the fall of the Soviet Union included the division of Yugoslavia. In light of possible security challenges emanating from the area, the United States realized that strategically having a strong and militarily reliable ally like Greece was critical. The ability of the US to respond in peacekeeping and stabilization missions was made easier by the MDCA, which has helped so far enhance European security (Gallant, 2015, pp. 126-128). The MDCA also provided for logistical agreements that bolstered American interests at a time of heightened Middle Eastern tensions following the Gulf War. Within this framework, Greece has played a role in enabling military operations to be supported and assured energy routes opened-a significant U.S. national security goal also influencing its strategic and economic setting.

One strategic reason the US had for pursuing the MDCA was improving defense cooperation and military interoperability between US and Hellenic Armed Forces. The MDCA served to build stronger military links, which allowed for joint training exercises, equipment

transfers, and shared intelligence assets so that both countries could effectively respond to regional crises.

In a period in which NATO was defining itself as facing new challenges to collective security after the end of the Cold War, these alliances were critical to maintaining NATO's operational performance. The MDCA signified that Greece remained a trustworthy NATO partner, enhancing the alliance's flexibility and sustainability. Also aimed to bolster the deep-rooted diplomatic and strategic connection between the US and Greece. It provided the basis for further expansion of U.S.-Greek linkages and reassured the Greeks as to just where they stood in terms of American foreign policy objectives by essentially reaffirming mutual defense commitments. This was valuable for managing Greek-Turkish relations and building regional cooperation frameworks.

The US strategic rationale for MDCA covered a wide spectrum of interests, from ensuring regional stability and addressing emerging threats to advancing defense interoperability and reinforcing US-Greece bilateral relations. These all conspired to force a reassessment of the U.S. strategy in the aftermath of the ending Cold War.

2.3 Strategic Motivations of Greece

The year 1990 was following a number of strategic considerations that the Hellenic Republic made for its decision to sign up in the MDCA with the United States. This section examines the principal determinants of Greece's decisions to reinforce its defense relationship with the United States as the leading international relations actor in this critical period from the Cold War to post-Cold War.

One of the main incentives for Greece to cement its defense ties with the U.S. security and military capabilities, which was upgrading weapons. The intractable territorial disputes in the Aegean and the Cyprus issue reinforced the requirements for a credible security partnership and deterrence from potential aggression to boost Greek defense (Kariotis, 1997, p. 82).

In an effort to align closer with the United States, Greece was looking for new advanced military technologies, training, and resources to contribute in modernizing its armed forces. It allowed the procurement of more advanced military equipment as well as joint exercises, which increased Greece's preparedness and operational efficiency. In addition to its strategic motivations, Greece sought to strengthen its position in NATO and other western leagues. The MDCA confirmed Greece's loyalty to NATO while also highlighting its value as a trustworthy ally on the alliance's southeastern edge. This was especially relevant in the early post-Cold War context, as NATO attempted to address evolving security needs and regional instability.

By taking part in the MDCA, Greece was able to assert its presence and wider profile on NATO's strategic planning. Such involvement improved the position of Greece in terms of foreign diplomacy and allowed for more active participation in regional as well as international debates, especially with regard to security and defense.

In addition to boosting its military capabilities, Greece sought economic and diplomatic gain by negotiating the MDCA. The partnership with the United States was framed as a key driver of economic collaboration due to how it encouraged investments and technology transfers that would prove necessary to Greece's economic modernization. It allowed Greece to develop and gain international traction in international fora and enhanced its diplomatic leverage. Moreover, the MDCA helped stabilize a key region of the eastern Mediterranean by bolstering deterrence and cooperation with other nations in building peace through expanded contribution to regional military capabilities. Such stability was necessary to enable Greece to pursue economic and regional assistance policies that were key components of its overall foreign policy goals (Couloumbis and Iatrides, 1980, p. 19).

Overall, Greece entered the MDCA with United States for strategic purposes: increased national security; enhanced NATO alliance commitment and economic/diplomatic interests. Because these were the same motivations that drove Greece's strategic vision; to help arm Athens as a regional power, secure and prosperous in a world in constant flux.

2.4 Initial Impact on Bilateral Relations and Regional Security

The MDCA signing in 1990 stands as another benchmark in the evolving Greece-US relationship, and its initial reverberations within bilateral relations and Aegean security were both transformative and manifold. This section evaluates some consequences of the MDCA towards broader security objectives in the Eastern Mediterranean as well as globally throughout the decade that ensued.

The MDCA greatly reinforced military and diplomatic ties between Greece and the U.S., which was a clear sign of their deep attachment to the issue of security cooperation under mutual respect, support, and appreciation. It established a basis for continuous military involvement that was deepened over the years through mutual exercises and planning arrangements leading to more integrated Greek-American military capabilities. Also provided for augmentation of U.S. economic investment in Greece are new industrial technology transfers in support of Greek economic infrastructure development and modernization efforts. This dimension in the bilateral relationship showed the need for common economic goals other than pure military interests and enriched the broader domain of cooperation (Couloumbis and Iatrides, 1980, p. 22).

On a regional level, the MDCA was instrumental establishing stability in the Eastern Mediterranean, plagued by longstanding conflicts and emerging post-Cold War tensions. It served as a bulwark against regional aggression and helped provide the U.S., NATO, and other national military elements with bases from which to conduct a wide range of peacekeeping and security assistance for non-NATO countries in the area that are vulnerable to great-power pressure or conflict (Kariotis, 1997, p. 82), humanitarian operations, especially during the crises related to the Balkans.

Although the MDCA itself concentrated on U.S.-Greek relations, it affected the broader regional relations of Greece-particularly concerning Turkey. The upgrade of defense

cooperation with the US acted as a strategy to balance Turkey at a time when differences still prevailed in the Aegean and Cyprus conflict. This stood to implicitly strengthen the Greek side in negotiations (Gallant, 2015, p. 129).

Chapter 3: The Evolution of the MDCA in the 21st Century (2001-2010)

3.1 Introduction

From the beginning of the 21st century, the world experienced a major shift due to the emergence of new global security and regional dynamics. The period starting from 2001 until 2010 saw numerous international unrests occur, such as the disruptive aftermath of the September 11th, 2001, terrorist attacks and the continuing instability in the Middle East and the Balkans. All these engendered the need for a strategic military cooperation focus to address the new emerging threats as well as maintaining regional security posture through the MDCA.

The expansion of the MDCA during this period was under the context that both countries faced strategic interests, including confronting terrorism, enhancing their military capabilities, and strengthening their diplomatic ties. The development in the MDCA between Greece and the United States helped to ensure a higher operational readiness and interoperability between the Greek and U.S. militaries, as well as the need to accommodate the evolving defense dynamics of NATO's southern flank.

Therefore, this chapter addresses the challenges of the millennium and the strategic rationale for its evolution. Through the qualitative analysis based on a review of various literatures, this chapter follows the evolution patterns of the MDCA of 2001-2010.

3.2 The Global Security Environment Post-9/11

3.2.1 The War on Terror

The 9/11 terrorist attacks significantly changed the world's security environment, which prompted the US and its allies to reevaluate their defense strategies and relationships. As both countries attempted to adjust to a War on Terror, this reframed scenario would have significant ramifications for the MDCA between the United States and Greece.

After 9/11, the U.S. with its partners worldwide launched a drive to crush Al-Qaeda networks and contain terrorist threats from growing back home. Called the War on Terror (National Archives, 2003), it resulted in military action in Afghanistan and Iraq, which brought about revisiting security covenants and agreements. Greece, in turn, perceived the MDCA as central to maintaining regional stability within a fluid geopolitical scene. This period firmly underlined the geo-strategic importance of Greece as a landlocked nation at the crossroads linking Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. (U.S. Embassy in Greece, 2023) The MDCA authorized the United States to use Greek military bases (including Souda Bay) as points of

support for operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. These bases proved to be a lifeline to naval and air sorties, revealing Greece's place as an indispensable ally within the broader calculus of U.S. strategic interests in the region.

In anticipation of new security challenges, Greece expanded military cooperation with the United States, engaging in combined training scenarios to help increase operational readiness and counterterrorism capabilities. The MDCA fostered this atmosphere of cooperation by creating use of military experience, intelligence, and technology across borders. Such cooperation contributed to the effort to address the amalgamated nature of the terrorist threat and also strengthened NATO's collective defense posture (Arvanitopoulos, 2003, p. 129).

In addition, Greece's involvement in the MDCA as part of the War on Terror exhibited its dedication to international matters of security interests and a move towards support for Western defense politics. It illustrated how Greece was responsive to U.S. interests, aiding its diplomatic cachet with NATO and the rest of the world.

In summary, the MDCA in the post-9/11 world security environment was the essential condition for a reset in Greece-USA defense ties. The war on terror brought that arrangement back into the spotlight for continued military cooperation, regional security, and future global challenges.

3.2.2 NATO and Regional Stability

As a result of 9/11 terrorist attacks, NATO reconsidered the strategic purposes and precautionary measures. The organization moved away from classic state-centric threats in favor of non-state actors and asymmetric warfare, which had emerged as principal aspects of global security. This very correction was vital in reshaping the broader strategic terrain within which the Greek-American MDCA remained an ongoing work in progress.

By the time of the early 2000s, NATO was transforming its strategy to focus not only on new threats emanating from global terrorism but also on volatility in the Middle East and beyond. Subsequently, when terrorists targeted the United States, for the first time in history, the alliance invoked Article 5 to remind states of their obligation of collective defense and shared compulsion for concerted action against terrorism. It was a critical time during which NATO was shifting its operational trajectory from Europe into what we might term the global commons-beyond traditional European boundaries and subsequently into out-of-area missions like Afghanistan as well as subsumed roles in other parts of the world. (NATO, 2023)

As a long-term NATO member, Greece's strategic pivot emphasized its role as a secure ally and strategically based state with the potential to play a key alliance role in the Eastern Mediterranean. Its strategic location has enabled NATO to retain vital access to the central world zones and provide operational availability quickly near its borders with the Middle East and North Africa (Arvanitopoulos, 2003, p. 44).

In this setting, the MDCA was an essential new tool in furthering NATO grand strategic objectives through strengthening their military ties. Via the MDCA, Greece enabled the United

States and NATO to utilize its military infrastructure for missions of vital importance for alliance security. These bases now offered critical logistical plus operational capabilities for NATO operations, mainly in the field of counter-terrorism and crisis response. Such cooperation, strengthened by the MDCA, contributes to the ability of the Hellenic Armed Forces to operate effectively in concert with the US and other NATO forces and thus make a meaningful contribution within multinational operations. This led to more joint exercises, intelligence sharing, and equipment transfer, all making for more comprehensive responses to common security threats.

Moreover, Greece's involvement in NATO-friendly projects demonstrated that its own pro-peace initiatives were compatible with Western political efforts at large to bring stability to war-torn areas. The idea was that this alignment would grant Greece more weight within NATO, furnish it with increased diplomatic clout, and stress its role as a regional power base for the preservation of peace and order in the region.

Both NATO and the MDCA helped to define the new security environment in which such challenges no longer respected territorial bounds. Through such collaboration, Greece and the United States deepened their partnership within the MDCA paradigm, acting as instruments of common values enshrined in NATO's goals for both sides to maintain regional stability in a changing risk environment.

3.3 The Eastern Mediterranean and Shifting Power Dynamics

3.3.1 The Rise of Regional Instability

The first decade of the 2000s brought a serious wave of instability to the Eastern Mediterranean region, a socio-political dynamic based on great geopolitical importance. This era witnessed a plethora of emerging security challenges, which in turn reshaped local power configurations, and it was plainly underlined the value of strong defense ties through the MDCA signed between Greece and the US.

Losing control over Eastern Europe and the Balkans in the aftermath of Soviet disintegration meant that there was a strategic vacuum in Eastern Europe and along Russia's traditional zone of influence, which led to many conflicts of states dotting these regions asserting their sovereignty. The disintegration of Yugoslavia had significant geopolitical consequences, highlighting regional instability. These conflicts illustrated the requirement that a permanent and organized military presence be established to administer crises, signify deterrence, and intervene in humanitarian issues.

At the same time, political instability spread across the Middle East as terrorism, sectarian violence, and the lingering consequences of conflict in Iraq drove further chaos in the Eastern Mediterranean. These shifts in power dynamics also served to inflamed traditional regional rivalries, particular among Turkey and Syria and other significant states of the neighborhood.

In this climate of uncertainty, Greece offered a shining example of steadfastness and loyalty as an established NATO member. Greece's geographical position has always placed it at the crossroads of Europe, the Balkans, and the Middle East, providing a vital monitoring/transit location for regional intervention. The MDCA further served as the legal framework for long-term U.S. military presence in Souda Bay (Reuters, 1990), which is of strategic importance for both logistics and operation bases in the region.

Greece also acted as a cornerstone of stability, propped up the Western alliances and securing vital sea lanes and energy supplies against potential threats. This stability was indispensable in furthering European and NATO interests, preventing regional turmoil, and responding appropriately to both state and non-state actors that may pose a threat in the near future (Couloumbis and Iatrides, 1980, pp. 56-60). These emerging power games in the Eastern Mediterranean required more military preparation and diplomatic alertness. Greece regarded the MDCA as an important part of their defense policy to ensure territorial integrity, restore the power asymmetry in the region, and protect its national interests (Kariotis, 1997, pp. 120-125).

The MDCA further solidified key defensive cooperation between Greece and America, supporting joint military exercises, intelligence-sharing programs, as well as all-important strategic planning capabilities that are needed to address regional instability. It "enhanced deterrence" and underscored the enduring value of the MDCA in supporting security and stability in a turbulent Eastern Mediterranean. Consequently, the escalation of regional instability in the Eastern Mediterranean in the beginning of 21st century has brought about new strategic imperatives for Greece-USA defense relations under the MDCA. However, the agreement was an important milestone for addressing emerging threats and changing power dynamics and illustrated just how important Greece was to NATO in supporting its strategic goals of maintaining stability in the region.

3.3.2 Greek Defense Modernization

At the beginning of the 21st century, Greece significantly modified its defense capabilities in view of new power dynamics in the Eastern Mediterranean and emerging security challenges. At the same time, there was a particular connection with Greece's strategic relations as part of the MDCA with the United States that allowed for a number of advancements and partnerships in defense.

Greece had multiple reasons to modernize its Armed Forces. Foremost among these were the need to bolster national security as heightened regional tensions-especially with Turkey-and protect its borders from similar dangers. The ongoing disputes in the Aegean Sea, in combination with certain reservations about Turkey's military buildup and strategic goals, emphasized for Greece to strengthen its own defenses.

Furthermore, the increasing of military security risks that are not actuating from traditional enemies as in the case of terrorism circles requires more modern, sophisticated defense technology and tactics. In this general context efforts to modernize military equipment and infrastructure took a rise in priority being, interconnected with maintaining interoperability

with NATO allies and the ability to effectively respond to complex security challenges. This agreement enabled the MDCA with Greece to play a significant role in supporting the Hellenic defense modernization efforts through enhanced military collaboration and technological exchanges between both countries. Part of the deal was Greek access to high-tech military products, training courses, and technical upgrades that allow for a modernization of the military apparatus.

Key areas of modernization included the procurement of new aircraft, naval vessels, and advanced communication systems, which increased Greek air and sea capabilities. So far, Greece has announced plans to upgrade 84 of its F-16C/D Block 52+/Block 52+ Advanced aircraft to the F-16V (Viper) configuration in October 2017. The AN/APG-83 active electronically scanned array (AESA) radar, new mission computer, and electronic warfare suite are among its other upgrades, is expected to be completed by 2027. It is also designed to improve operational capabilities for the Hellenic Air Force (Lockheed Martin, 2023). This initiative is a testament to the Greek government's commitment to modernizing its military infrastructure as well as making sure that it is interoperable with NATO allies.

This modernization epoch served to enhance Greece's strategic standing in the Eastern Mediterranean, cementing its position as a leading NATO ally and security provider in this strategically vital environment. By strengthening its defense capabilities, Greece was now able to better project power in a regional level and contribute to the establishment of stability-addressing both traditional and irregular threats (Arvanitopoulos, 2003, pp. 45-50).

Furthermore, the modernization efforts have somewhat improved Greece's position in regard to diplomatic talks concerning regional security and cooperation initiatives. It placed Greece in the role of a partner for meeting security challenges collaboratively by becoming more prepared militarily and enabled to cooperate with his fellow partners. The ongoing collaboration under the MDCA was the key to advancing Greece's national security objectives and bilateral relations with the United States, per this assessment of the strategic value in Greece's defense modernization. To recap, by the turn of the 21st century, Hellenic defense modernization had become a strategic manifestation of MDCA-driven cooperation and compliance. Greece bolstered its military capabilities and secured itself as a principal actor in regional security.

3.4 Diplomatic Negotiations and Expansions of the MDCA

3.4.1 Diplomatic Context

The first decade of the 21st century was an intense period of diplomatic activity between Greece and the USA, mainly in terms of shaping their military relations in a new framework under the Mutual Defense Cooperation Agreement. The strategic changes and security threats of the time required nimble diplomacy to ensure the agreement continued to be durable and meaningful.

Both Greece and the United States reevaluated their strategic interests in response to the changing dynamics of the post-Cold War world. Greece's diplomatic approach was affected by NATO's expanded role beyond its usual geographical scope, as well as the instability in the Balkans, the Middle East, and North Africa. Greece sought to consolidate its position as a major Mediterranean partner and, at the same time, distill the domestic internal problems as well as resolve regional challenges (Arvanitopoulos and Ifestos, 2009, pp. 90-95).

The diplomatic climate at that point, meanwhile, was also defined by the fact that Greece nurtured aspirations of rapprochement with Western structures. Being an EU and NATO member, Greece tried to pursue her defense and foreign policies in line with broader Western goals that strengthened her position as a regional stabilizer. (Hellenic Republic, Greece in Brussels, Permanent Representation to NATO, 2023) This was also the spirit of diplomatic negotiations between Greece and the United States in this period-recognition on both sides that a new geopolitical reality had indeed arrived. The MDCA was specifically designed for increasing military flexibility and operational readiness in order to take on new global challenges like terrorism and regional conflicts that took root after 9/11. Both countries agreed to cooperate more closely to protect shared interests, i.e., secure maritime routes, energy reserves, and political stability in the region. These conversations were important in that they had caused the movement to broaden joint military exercises and technological exchanges, many of which are embraced under the MDCA system.

More negotiations focused on enlarging the MDCA's geographical and functional reach as well. This was prompted by the necessity of integrating new military technologies and meeting unconventional security challenges. The diplomatic effort led to significant infrastructure improvements in Greek military bases and expanded the strategic utility of such facilities to US forces.

To sum up, the larger diplomatic frame of the MDCA extension, between 2001 and 2010, was marked by strategic refocusing on cooperation with global partners opposed to emerging security threats combined with bilateral webs of strengthened ties in a world of ever-growing complex international security diffusion. The imperative diplomatic negotiations revealed that the MDCA should be preserved as a backbone of Greece-USA defense cooperation and regional security strategy.

3.4.2 Expansions in Military Cooperation

Between 2000 and 2010, the US considerably evolved its military cooperation with Greece under the framework of MDCA. The new millennium had seen greater synergy and modernization drives between the militaries of both countries to face newer challenges in global security.

An important part of the enhanced collaboration, particularly as to expanding the military training that was very useful when it came to creating interoperability between Hellenic and US armed forces. The exercises targeted a wide range of contemporary security threats, starting from the traditional war scenarios down to possible deployment in counter-

terrorism operations. These joint operations were indicative of the increased frequency and complexity dedicated from both nations to mutual defense and readiness. These include exercises like “Alexander the Great” (Hellenic National Defense General Staff, 2020) and “Iniochos” (Hellenic Air Force, 2024) that are quite instrumental in exercising tactical maneuvers of response should a threat arise. The MDCA led to major technological and infrastructural improvements in the Hellenic Armed Forces. The United States backed Greece, particularly with the supply of sophisticated fighter planes like the F-16s, naval frigates, and telecommunications aids, which were critical in fortifying the defense profile of Greece.

The successful inclusion of high-level U.S. technologies in the Greek military field served to encode both Greece and the U.S. against new threats, such as drones. These technology integrations were pivotal to maintaining the strategic edge in the region and to guaranteeing smooth operational interoperability within NATO frameworks (Arvanitopoulos, 2003, pp. 45-50). A further expansion of the MDCA was upgrading military infrastructure and bases in Greece, especially in Souda Bay-their strategic naval base. Key enhancements were logistical support facilities, expanded runways, and port capabilities that collectively boost the strategic utility of these bases. They served as key logistical ports for the United States and NATO in their operations across the Eastern Mediterranean, North Africa, and the Middle East (Kariotis, 1997, pp. 102-110).

These enhancements were part of a wider plan designed to be able to rapidly and effectively deploy U.S. forces with our allies in response to regional crises. Both nations were signaling their continued belief in the stated forward-looking defense strategy, which reflected the strategic feel of the times when it was originated. The broadened military cooperation achieved under the MDCA not only produced expanded defense capabilities for Greece but also raised its strategic profile in international circles. That way, Greece reinforced its hand to handle intricate regional dynamics that also relate to the growing proximity of Turkey in that period.

In the final analysis, the series of MDCA military-to-military interactions contributed to structural transformations and benefits for Greek defense. These initiatives illustrated a common resolve to meet modern security threats with collective defense measures and defense technological advances.

3.5 Conclusion

The MDCA was vital in bolstering Greek and United States military preparedness and capabilities through this time. Recalibration of joint military exercise frequency and capability under the pact provided stronger capacity to Greek and US forces for responding to changing security threats. In addition to confirming their mutual defense commitments, these exercises served as a strong deterrent in the Eastern Mediterranean-a region laden with numerous tangled geopolitical complications.

Additionally, the MDCA supported important modernization initiatives in the Hellenic Armed Forces. Greece has dramatically developed its defense capabilities by using top-notch

military technologies and infrastructure of the U.S. Armed Forces. The deal was also a way to handle the changing power politics in the Eastern Mediterranean by underlining Greece's status as a key U.S. ally. The MDCA, by focusing investment in infrastructure-especially at vital bases such as Souda Bay-ensured that both nations could respond quickly and decisively to crises across the Mediterranean Sea, buttressing regional security against a variety of potential sources of instability from state and non-state actors (Kariotis, 1997, pp. 120-123).

Diplomatic negotiations and the MDCA expansions underscored a renewed commitment to addressing new security challenges ranging from terrorism to regional conflicts. The collaboration is strong evidence of the MDCA's abiding value to peace and security amid the rapidly changing global order.

Consequently, the evolution of the MDCA between 2001 and 2010 illustrates the strategic depth and resilience of Greek-American defense relations in an era of rapidly changing security challenges. The MDCA remains a pillar of their bilateral relationship to advance common interests for regional peace and stability and protect both nations against threats.

Chapter 4: Recent Developments and Strategic Significance (2011-2024)

4.1 Introduction

The period since 2011 that includes significant geopolitical and new complex global challenges has also an additional influence on Greece-USA relations via MDCA. The MDCA continues to be a crucial element of their defense cooperation in a dynamic global setting, as they both navigate the shifting security environment, highlighting their dedication to a developing and important partnership.

In the past decade, the Eastern Mediterranean region has emerged as a significant area of worldwide interest. Increased tensions have also arisen regarding maritime boundaries, energy resources, and regional power dynamics, underscoring the importance of the US bolstering their alliance with Greece. Overcoming these challenges, MDCA has experienced extensions to cater to the new security imperatives existing around it and also to prepare for mutual defense readiness.

In 2021, the longtime defense cooperation agreement between the United States and Greece was extended and expanded; a development that as the U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken marked would promote stability in the region, while the Greek Foreign Minister, Nikolaos Georgios S. Dendias underlined that both countries were resolved to protect and defend each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity (Reuters, 2021). Greece's parliament ratified in 2022 the renewal and upgrades of the defense cooperation agreement with the United States, bolstering even more their bilateral defense relationship (Reuters, 2022). The United States and Greece had a Strategic Dialogue in February 2024, and both expressed appreciation for Greece's delivery of humanitarian support to Gaza, Greece's strong support of

Israel, and Greece's participation in Operation Prosperity Guardian (Hellenic Republic, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024)(U.S. Embassy in Greece, 2024b). They also addressed support for Ukraine and reiterated their steadfast commitment to the fundamental principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries.

The increased activism of regional-level actors (e.g., Turkey), the global shift in U.S. military strategy, and increased rivalry between international-level powers (e.g., Russia, China) is some of the key factors shaping the trajectory of the MDCA in recent years. The deal has responded to this dynamic by providing the United States greater access to Greek military installations and increasing defense cooperation as a means of strengthening deterrence while maintaining regional stability in an environment evolving rapidly.

4.2 Strategic Context and the Need for Renewals

4.2.1 Regional Instability and the Eastern Mediterranean

Over the last several years, the Eastern Mediterranean has become a region of increased geopolitical tension and strategic importance with the continued need for expanding and updating the MDCA between Greece and the US (Pagoulatos and Sokou, 2021, p. 6). One of the main drivers of instability in the region has been the increasing amount of regional tensions, predominantly due to geopolitical challenges such as land and sea disputes. Foremost among these is that of disputes concerning maritime borders and access to natural resources, particularly in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean seas. Turkey's aggressive territorial claims and exploration activities have only stoked tensions with Greece and Cyprus (SIPRI, 2020), merely further compounding the age-old disputes since the discovery of significant hydrocarbon resources in these waters.

The arguments have massive resonance because of the stakes-regional stability and NATO, and consequently European Union security interests. As a key geostrategic location in the heart of Europe, Asia, and Africa, Greece has a stake in such developments, and finding its bearings is all too essential amid today's challenges as an ally among friends conferred by the MDCA agreement.

The Eastern Mediterranean is confronted not only with territorial disputes but also with numerous security challenges such as political instability, terrorism, and the migration crisis born out of conflict in the Middle East and North Africa. Power vacuums exploited by non-state actors and foreign powers have been created, further complicating the security landscape.

Greece and the MDCA have ever since gained strategic importance, critically influencing regional security infrastructure. The pact provides critical U.S. power projection and the rapid response capabilities to address threats potentially undermining regional stability from bases in Greece (Tziampiris, 2021, p. 12).

The current strategic imperatives in the changing security environment have also required a series of renewals and expansions of an agreement. Nonetheless, the latest

amendments to the accord increased the spectrum of American military activities in Greece, enabling more robust defense infrastructure and joint exercises and extra access to facilities (Litsas and Tziampiris, 2020, pp. 45-48).

The MDCA serves as evidence for the robust strategic partnership between Greece and America, consistent with their mutual interests in preserving regional stability in an era of mounting challenges (Karakatsani, 2021, p. 5). In brief, regional instability in the Eastern Mediterranean makes necessary a compelling developing process of a MDCA.

4.2.2 U.S. Strategic Shift toward the Mediterranean

In recent years, the USA has rebalanced their attention to include the Mediterranean with a view and strategy interested in this vital region from both sides of foreign power inclinations. Here one can already glimpse a pivot that underscores the Mediterranean's salience in global geopolitical calculus, around which we must commit and deepen our strategic ties, such as the MDCA with Greece.

The Mediterranean area has a rising scene of worldwide and regional gamers, baffled and jostled in this struggle for impression. Russia's military engagement in Syria and its navy presence in the Eastern Mediterranean posed an additional challenge to U.S. influence, leading to increased emphasis on alliance building and military preparedness. The same is the case with respect to China's Belt and Road Initiative of investing in infrastructure of strategic importance like the Piraeus Port, demonstrating its growing presence in European and Mediterranean geopolitics (Karpathiotaki, 2022).

Overall, the US is afraid to lose its title of hegemon in the Middle East due to competition from Russia and China. The MDCA with Greece is essential to enabling a robust US presence and operations in the Mediterranean, furthering U.S. efforts to project power and secure western interests across a broad range of functional areas.

Due to the strategic maritime routes and emerging offshore energy reserves in the region, it forms an essential part of global energy security. It is a crucial area for the transmission of energy supplies and goods from Europe, Asia, and Africa. Moreover, the potential for regional military conflict and escalating power competition in contested sea lanes only underscores the aim that we should preserve a robust U.S. military presence to secure these strategic waterways.

The MDCA increases the U.S. capacity for dealing with these energy security challenges because they get access to Greek ports and bases (like Souda Bay and Alexandroupolis), which are essential for logistics support as well as crisis response operations. Such infrastructure is the key to ensuring safety and freedom of navigation in the open seas of the region.

This strategic shift is in accord with the aims of NATO overall, an organization led by the US. Reinforcing NATO ties to Greece through the MDCA supports NATO's southern strategy by ensuring that collective defense capabilities are strong and able to counter new challenges (Nedos, 2018). The agreement empowers the presence, and as a result, NATO's effectiveness in

the area is enhanced through cooperation serving as a deterrent to possible destabilization within the region by potential adversaries.

The MDCA rescheduling is also a product of the United States' intent to strengthen its Mediterranean alliances. This initiative highlights the important political utility of Greece as a reliable partner that can further bilateral and alliance objectives for regional peace and security.

US strategic reorientation toward the Mediterranean is a product of changing geopolitics, utilization of global competition, energy resource protection, and alliance commitment. The agreement is a testament to the essential importance of the MDCA as it pertains to U.S.-Greece relations and strengthening military collaboration.

4.3 Key Extensions - Amendments to the MDCA in 2019, 2020 and 2021

4.3.1 The 2019 MDCA Amendment

The amendment of the MDCA in 2019 put an unprecedented upgrade in Greece-USA defense relations. This became a natural amendment due to new strategic realities-particularly the swift evolution of the security dynamics in certain parts of the Eastern Mediterranean and an evolutionary change in traditional geo-security needs.

Among its most important features, the 2019 MDCA amendment emphasized expanded access to additional strategic locations throughout Greece for U.S. military forces, supplementing its longstanding access to the Souda Bay, Naval Base. This update granted more flexibility for operations and expanded management rights to significant installations, like Larissa Air Base and Stefanovikio Army Aviation Base, in addition to other Hellenic Air Force installations (U.S. Department of State, 2019).

The new sites were now added to underscore an unnamed strategic move by the US military to make its presence more diverse and ready for rapid deployment. It was extended to accommodate other defense goals to counter regional instability and deal with security issues.

In 2019, the amendment also contributed to strengthening NATO cohesion and operational efficiency in the region. Boosting the MDCA is one example of how Greece reinforces its position as an anchor of NATO in the face of taking on alliance-wide capabilities contributing to collective defense and deterrence (U.S. Department of State, USA, 2021). The enhanced American presence in Greece subsequently reinforced NATO's strategic position in the Eastern Mediterranean, helping to maintain maritime security and secure vital sea lanes (Nedos, 2021).

Feedback on this and other developments served to enhance the inter-operability of allied operations in electronic support, in the added capability respective members brought into capability technology, with these measures adding to NATO's response to new threats. Accordingly, the expansion of the MDCA was a demonstration of both alliances' agreement on enhancing alliance purposes and contributing to regional stability.

The US likewise reiterated its commitment to the defense of Greece in the context of growing regional tensions, primarily with respect to Turkey and the wider Middle East. This alignment played not only to the strategic status of Greece within Western alliance's but also as an actual diplomatic stabilizer. The renewal, too, showed the further deepening of U.S.-Greece ties beyond defense and security relations, allowing for wider economic and technological collaborations. For both countries, this bilateral strengthening was an important part of ensuring the security environment remained stable and in alignment with their strategic interests (Charalampakis, 2018).

In conclusion, the amendment and use of the MDCA in 2019 marked a significant step towards further defense cooperation between Greece and the U.S. It has included adapting to an evolving set of regional challenges, both by expanding military presence and capabilities and by enhancing the strategic objectives of NATO members as well as promoting deeper diplomatic ties among participating states to keep the accord relevant in maintaining regional stability and security.

4.3.2 The 2020 MDCA Extension

A landmark development in the defense relationship occurred with the extension of the MDCA between Greece and the United States, signifying even wider defense cooperation as compared to 2019. Organized within the context of the intensifying regional standoff, this extension was designed to reinforce the evolving geo-political environment in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Basically it extended the operational space of U.S. military missions in Greece to a greater extent and underscored and elevated level of readiness and flexibility. It also provided for continued and increased use-particularly running off of the Greek side-of strategic Hellenic military facilities, including air fields and ports that are essential to U.S./NATO operations. Specifically, the enlargement included improvements to the Larissa Air Base and beefing up the port of Alexandroupolis (Marghelis, 2020).

The commitment of these forces was further enhanced to allow U.S. responses to regional crises across the spectrum from potential military conflicts all the way to humanitarian assistance. These enhancements of access and infrastructures denote American commitments for the sustainability of its military presence throughout the region as a deterrent as well as an operational force to foster stability (Litsas and Tziampiris, 2020, pp. 29-34).

The 2020 extension introduced an important dimension to the agreement: protection of energy security and maritime stability in the Eastern Mediterranean. In fact, with territorial disputes and potential energy conflicts-especially including Turkey-active throughout the region, an augmented U.S. military presence clearly intended to ensure that key maritime routes would remain free and clear. Of course, by this time the MDCA had been upgraded so that Greece and the United States could fulfill their responsibility to monitor and perhaps intervene in conflicts over these lifeblood energy arteries.

Such strategic focus is congruent with the broader US policy goals of countering regional aggression and securing energy supplies necessary for both European as well as global markets. This provides for stronger maritime security operations down the MDCA and states Greek leadership in checking regional energy security as well.

Further contributed also to that effect, as it played a strategic and operational role, but it was politically and military equally important since it reinforced the alliance between Greece and the USA. It signaled a closer partnership at a time of growing division, particularly over Turkey's muscular conduct in the region. By renewing this Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), it has given a solidization of Greece being of strategic value to NATO and the US as a trustworthy partner for regional peace and security (Nedos, 2021).

What was more, the extension took place in parallel to broader NATO efforts to shore up its southern flank and ensure that collective defense is dynamic and robust. These efforts are further facilitated and supported in dynamic alliance relations and regional security architecture appropriately expanded by Greece through its recently improved military partnership with the U.S. under the MDCA (Litsas and Tziampiris, 2020, pp. 29-34).

In the end, the 2020 extension of the MDCA was perhaps best viewed as an exercise in cementing what was already a strong partnership between Greece and the United States reaffirming Greece as a key partner in U.S. strategic thinking; setting the ground for more security and stability in general for the wider region of the Eastern Mediterranean.

4.3.3 The 2021 MDCA New Amendment

The signing, in October 2021, of the new amendment of the MDCA was really a turning point in the history of the bilateral relations because of the extended strategic framework of cooperation, bolstering the two countries' jurisdictions to tackle evolving security threats in the Eastern Mediterranean and elsewhere (Athanasopoulos, 2021).

Among the most salient features of the 2021 MDCA amendment was the provision for an expansion of U.S. military access to additional Greek locations in addition to the long-time Souda Bay Naval Base. The agreement provided for increased flexibility in the use of the strategic assets involved, including management rights on these assets at Camp Georgoulas (Volos), the Lithochoro Range, and the port of Alexandroupolis (U.S. Department of State, USA, 2021), by offering improved logistic support vital for both NATO and U.S. operations in the regions of Balkans, North Africa, and the Middle East.



Figure 1: Additional US presence in Greek locations after the new amendment in the MDCA on Oct. 14th, 2021. Source: Nordic Monitor, retrieved from: <https://nordicmonitor.com/2022/05/erdogan-continues-disinformation-about-american-military-bases-in-greece-despite-state-agency-refutes-him/>

The most notable change brought by the renewal was the expansion of U.S. access to Greek military sites. More specifically, the pact encompassed the port of Alexandroupolis, a strategic asset for NATO's logistics and an important node for the same geographical force projection of the alliance (U.S. Department of State, USA, 2021). Alexandroupolis, located close to both the Balkans and the Black Sea, the port offers vital logistical support for NATO forces and decreases reliance on the Turkish straits for the transfer of military materiel (SIPRI, 2020). This action is consistent with broader U.S. and NATO goals of stabilizing the region and countering threats from nearly peer or adversarial actors. Additionally, it highlights Greece's growing role as a security provider on NATO's southern flank (U.S. Department of Defense, 2022).

The 2021 MDCA amendment also included new provisions for cooperation in emerging security domains such as cybersecurity and energy security, as well as expanded access for the US. Specifically, the combative emerges from the fact that the agreement addresses these new types of challenges and, even more crucially, demonstrates the ability of U.S.-Greece relations to evolve with the changing geopolitical landscape (U.S. Department of State, 2021). For Greece, this renewal is a sign of its increasing strategic importance and a reflection of Greece's pledge in providing stability and security in the region (U.S. Embassy in Greece, 2024a).

The Greece-USA partnership is a long-standing one, as highlighted by the diplomatic efforts that culminated in the new 5-year renewal (Prime Minister, Hellenic Republic, 2021). In fairness, this renewal is the first substantial upgrade to the Greece-USA strategic partnership. Significantly, it both deepens Greece's commitment to NATO while also taking into account modern-day security imperatives, which will keep the bilateral relationship strong and relevant (Ekathimerini, 2022).



Figure 2: Total US and NATO presence in Greece after the new amendment in the MDCA on Oct. 14th, 2021. Source: Nordic Monitor, retrieved from: <https://nordicmonitor.com/2022/05/erdogan-continues-disinformation-about-american-military-bases-in-greece-despite-state-agency-refutes-him/>

4.4 Strengthening of Diplomatic and Military Relations after the 2021 New Amendment

4.4.1 Diplomatic Efforts to Enhance Cooperation

Greece and the US have worked together closely and collaboratively in recent years to fortify their diplomatic ties in view of reinforcing mutual security cooperation across the board with a focus on MDCA implementations. These diplomatic efforts have been essential in steering their way through changing geopolitical contexts and enabling the strategic partnership to stay strong and current.

The renewal of the MDCA and broadened military cooperation has been supported by a deep diplomatic dialogue between Greece and the United States. The dialogue has included high-level ketene exchanges and elaborate strategic discussions to better equate national security policies addressing common challenges in the Eastern Mediterranean. As a result of this, both countries have conducted regular strategic dialogues and defense coordination meetings to review and fine-tune their joint endeavors.

These efforts have not only enhanced mutual confidence but also contributed to enhancing a collective approach in confronting regional security challenges, at least in combating terrorism, migration, and territorial disputes. Both the above have allowed for both nations to unequivocally state their respective defense and political objectives, where the MDCA evolves in sync with their security landscapes in a constantly changing terrain.

Greece has also used the momentum generated by its upgraded relations with Washington to enhance its role in regional alliances and multilateral forums. Since this knowledge is paramount to stability and other collective security initiatives in the Eastern Mediterranean, in a region where players are interested not just in defense issues but potentially even more so with economic and energy partnerships (U.S. Embassy in Greece, 2024b).

In turn, these deeper political ties have facilitated Greek involvement in NATO by confirming its alliance objectives and strengthening its strategic positioning within the European and transatlantic security systems (U.S. Embassy in Greece, 2024a). This preemptive diplomacy puts behind Greece the image of an intrinsic actor in regional stability and cooperation (Litsas and Tziampiris, 2020, pp. 29-34).

Diplomatic attention has been especially trained on defusing soaring tensions with Turkey in recent times. Greece and the US have been cooperating to handle these tensions through diplomacy, encouraging dialogue and de-escalation. Afterward, these diplomatic actions have sent a clear message within the region that the United States remains dedicated to Greek security while simultaneously undercutting aggressive moves within the area as well. In this way, the military improvements of the MDCA are coupled with a diplomatic overlay, promoting a more robust and multifaceted response to security threats. In sum, the reinforcement of Greek-American diplomatic interconnections has been a keystone framework

for the progress of MDCA. This has effectively boosted the military alliance and strategic partnership, strengthening relationships and security frameworks of Eastern Mediterranean (U.S. Embassy in Greece, 2024b).

4.4.2 Military Cooperation and Joint Exercises

In the past few years, a significant strategic increase in efficacy has been achieved by improving military cooperation between Greece and the USA, as well. At the heart of this enhanced defense relationship has been a series of growing joint military drills that has helped the two countries fine-tune their operational capability and readiness in a changing security environment in the Eastern Mediterranean and beyond.

For years, joint military exercises have been critical in strengthening Greek and American ground forces and enhancing their tactical coordination. Conducted through the framework of MDCA, these exercises are intended to range from conventional warfare to a contingency similar to the one being described here and thus cement interoperability at various mission circumstances for both militaries (Litsas and Tziampiris, 2020, pp. 50-55) .

Crucially, they also involve key exercises-like the "Iniochos" air exercise and the naval-focused "Phoenix Express," which promote cooperation between different armed services. These programs enhance strategy testing and refinement, communication, and logistical coordination to prepare for joint operations under the NATO (NATO, 2021).

The deepening of military cooperation has contributed to the process of integration in Greece, advancing U.S. military technology and tactics. These military drills have enabled experimentation with new equipment and tactics, as well as the transfer of technological best practices towards modernizing Greece's military infrastructure and capabilities.

These exercises enable Greece to make the most of its strategic capabilities, such as expanded infrastructure at Souda Bay and other essential military sites (Nedos, 2018). It is the emphasis on technological integration that serves to ensure exercises are not simply an occurrence of current readiness but also an opportunity for military capabilities to be future-proofed within a geo-strategic landscape modernizing as quickly as ever. The exercises have also helped improve the readiness of Greek and U.S. forces to react to certain regional challenges, for example, tensions over maritime claims or the risk of conflict in the Eastern Mediterranean. These rehearsals serve to put on display the operational capabilities and resilience to present a formidable alliance deterrence against any prospective aggressors.

In addition, through this effective collaboration, Greece can assist further in promoting military actions and shape its position in NATO. This enables a more unified and responsive regional security structure as both nations help to advance collective defense against potential threats by harmonizing military capacities and objectives with alliance-wide security goals (U.S. Embassy in Greece, 2024b).

On July 25th, 2024, Greece took the first step toward procuring 20 Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II combat aircraft when it signed a U.S. government Foreign Military Sale Letter of

Offer and Acceptance (LOA). The deal also includes the option of an additional 20 aircraft, with deliveries to start in 2028. The procurement is a landmark for the Greek defense modernization and ensures interoperability with its NATO allies while significantly bolstering its deterrence posture. The entry of the F-35 into the Hellenic Air Force encompasses the strategic depth of the Greek-American defense cooperation framework under the MDCA (Hellenic Republic, Ministry of Defence, 2024) (F-35 Lightning II, Lockheed Martin, 2024).

In conclusion, the deepening of military cooperation and the organization of joint exercises under MDCA has substantially improved defense cooperation between Greece and the United States. This maintains both countries readiness at the strategic military level to negotiate effectively in the complicated and constantly changing security situation of the Eastern Mediterranean.

4.5 Strategic Implications for Greece and the USA

4.5.1 How the 2021 MDCA Strengthened Greece's Regional Role

The connection between the MDCA and the consolidation-strengthening of NATO's grip on Greece has enabled the effectual instrumentalization of military power in strategic attacks that have militarized Greece to its core. These events have been instrumental in shaping the new defense strategy of Greece and its position in geopolitics within the larger context of the Eastern Mediterranean.

The 2021 MDCA has been important in the development of Greece's military, giving access to advanced U.S. military technology and training. These efforts have helped in the upgrading of some of the key assets of the Hellenic Armed Forces capacities, facilitating better operational readiness and efficiency (U.S. Department of State, 2022b). This cooperation has made Greece capable of deploying the most advanced weaponry and defense systems, enhancing its capabilities to effectively deter or mitigate potential threats. Militarily, the exercises under the MDCA framework have honed Greece's tactical skills further and made sure that its capabilities remain fighting fit to address both traditional and contemporary security challenges.

Greece's strategic partnership with the United States, thanks to MDCA, has made it a key player in the Eastern Mediterranean. As Greece maneuvers through an increasingly complex regional landscape featuring territorial issues, energy exploration disputes, and dynamic alliances, the MDCA acts as a strategic bulwark safeguarding Greece's sovereignty and ensuring its footprint in such matters continues to expand as well (CEPA, 2021). This deepened military cooperation highlights the desire of Greece for stability in the region and makes it a significant player at the negotiation table among neighbors with often conflicting geopolitical interests, like Turkey.

In addition to the military implications, this agreement has had a number of diplomatic casualty returns that made Greece in a stronger position within NATO and other international institutions. Moreover, the enhanced strategic partnership cements Greece's commitment to

western policies and values-reinforces a picture of an even more reliable ally that steers along notions supporting processes of collective security (Litsas and Tziampiris, 2020, pp. 29-34). This not only enhances the strategic importance of Greece but also yields economic cooperation-investment paths, advancing its wider national interests.

This increased military cooperation, among others under the MDCA, enables Greece to encounter new security threats (today few not coming only from state actors but even non-state ones that may exist in the region). The holistic approach of this framework aligns itself to Greece's strategic objectives of safeguarding maritime security, effectively protecting its critical energy infrastructure and securing undisturbed freedom of navigation all indispensable elements for national and regional stability (U.S. Embassy in Greece, 2024b).

These developments have a broad range of strategic implications for Greece, all of which underline the significance of this MDCA in terms of its impact on Greek defense, regional influence, and diplomatic standing. This deal boosts the Greek national security strategy and underlines Greece as a prominent ally in maintaining stability and security in the Eastern Mediterranean.

4.5.2 How the 2021 MDCA Supports U.S. Security and Geopolitical Goals

The MDCA with Greece has had strategic significance for the U.S. in bolstering US military capabilities, heightening its geopolitical stance, and providing a focus of diplomatic capital in the Eastern Mediterranean as part of the broader European theater. This part details some of the principal advantages and strategic effects faced by the United States emerging from this reinvigorated partnership.

The MDCA further secures the U.S. in one of the world's most strategically significant locales. The bases are essential for operations spanning a broad swath of geography in the Mediterranean, Middle East, and northern Africa-structures that enable U.S. military power projection, intelligence-gathering, and logistical support. The expanded military footprint creates a higher level of operational and readiness capability for multiple types of threats, from terrorism to regional conflict or territorial disputes. Given the strategically located bases, more base options mean more operational agility and versatility, key in reacting quickly to crises and securing the region.

The 2021 MDCA is aligned with the U.S. strategy to contain regional enemies and global rivals, especially Russia and China, both of whom are aggressively expanding their presence in the Eastern Mediterranean (The Washington Institute, 2024). Russia's military involvement in Syria and the fact that it operates a powerful naval force both there and in the Mediterranean make direct aggression against U.S. (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2024) and NATO interests possible due to the realistic fear of escalation, while China already has economic influence through its investments, such as its stake in the important port of Piraeus. The United States, in strengthening military relations with Greece, reinforces its strategic deterrent value and in fact reduces the influence of these forces. The deal allows the U.S. to be

better placed to safeguard its objectives while dealing with new geopolitical contingencies (Litsas and Tziampiris, 2020, pp. 29-34).

The MDCA supports U.S. commitments to NATO and enhances collective security and Alliance cohesion. As a strategic ally of NATO, Greece plays an important role in the southern defense strategy of the alliance, offering operational support-including crucial intelligence sharing capabilities-that is vital for dealing with common security-related problems (ELIAMEP, 2023). The MDCA will increase the ability of the U.S. to provide global leadership and assistance, supporting NATO operations and improving deterrence of aggression and regional stability management within the alliance.

In practical terms, the MDCA strengthens bilateral ties between Greece and any other parties beyond military cooperation, also into the political and economic realms in addition to cultural engagement. This reinforced alliance helps the United States achieve its foreign policy objectives in respect to the EU and Eastern Mediterranean, too-promoting security and cooperation. Beyond that, the deal enables multilateral cooperation, which allows the US to drive collective action on how best to tackle regional issues like energy security, migration, and climate change (U.S. Embassy in Greece, 2024b). This proactive engagement also contributes to U.S. influence and leadership in defining regional peace and prosperity (Litsas and Tziampiris, 2020, pp. 29-34).

In effect, the MDCA confers key strategic benefits for America, increasing readiness by providing operational flexibility, countering global adversaries, such as Russia and China, shoring up alliance goals, and further institutionalizing diplomatic bonds. The accord continues to be a linchpin for U.S. policy in the Eastern Mediterranean, grounding sole superpower status in maintaining regional stability and furthering American security interests.

4.6 Conclusion

Over the years, the MDCA between Greece and the United States has developed considerably in response to changes in the broader geopolitical environment as well as new security concerns that have arisen in or emanated from the Eastern Mediterranean region.

The MDCA has been designed so that it can adapt to the evolving strategic context, for instance, in the Eastern Mediterranean, where geopolitical tensions are escalating alongside competing territorial claims and increasing presence by the global powers like Russia and China. The 2019, 2020 and 2021 extensions and amendments marked proactive responses to these same challenges, among them allowing widened U.S. military use of select Greek sites and operational effects that remain pivotal to regional preservation.

In short, it has significantly upgraded Greece's military capabilities and geopolitical footprint by supplying it with state-of-the-art military technologies and promoting its interoperability with the U.S. This improved defense posture does not just counter regional security threats; it also serves to reinforce Greece's strategic credentials among Western alliance's (Litsas and Tziampiris, 2020, pp. 29-34).

In the case of the United States, this MDCA advances its strategic interests through securing strategically important military points in the Eastern Mediterranean region, access to rapid response bases and as a counterbalance tool toward regional and global competitors (Hellenic Republic, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024). This partnership invests in American interests in NATO and in its allies, maintains a state of total collective defense preparedness, and assists in creating a non-wavering sense of security across an unstable region.

If anything, the diplomatic and military coordination afforded by the MDCA has to date been the bedrock of Greece-USA relations in so much as pooling resources and aligning strategically indicates both sides' shared dedication to countering modern security threats through cooperation (Hellenic Republic, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024). The MDCA is just one component of a larger defense cooperation strategy designed to reinforce bilateral defense ties in addition to broader efforts aimed at maintaining peace and security in the Eastern Mediterranean and elsewhere (Mitsotakis, 2006, p. 25).

This ongoing evolution will further cement the flexibility and resilience of Greece-USA strategic cooperation—setting the conditions for a fit-for-purpose alliance that evolves with the complexities of today's global stage, standing in defense of mutual security and shared values.

Chapter 5: The Role of Diplomacy in Sustaining and Expanding the MDCA until 2024

5.1 Introduction

Diplomacy has kept the MDCA between Greece and the United States in place. Over the years, strategic diplomatic efforts have played a vital role in making sure that the MDCA adapts to evolving geopolitical situations and remains a key focus of both countries' defense and foreign policy objectives (U.S. Department of State, 2022a). This chapter looks at how diplomatic initiatives have supported the continued and evolving life of the MDCA, illustrating a form of interplay between military cooperation and diplomacy in shaping such a resilient structure.

Global geopolitics and regional Eastern Mediterranean tensions demonstrate the need for ongoing diplomatic negotiations and adjustment of defense agreements in place, such as the MDCA. These diplomatic pursuits ensure that both nations respect each other's strategic interests to solve new problems like regional instability, energy security, and the rivalry of great powers such as Russia and China.

One key element in the military cooperation of the MDCA has also been supported by diplomatic efforts, that besides strengthening Greece's strategic position as a vital U.S. ally within the framework of NATO and internationally. This ostensible impetus has manifested in the form of strategic dialogues, high-level meetings, and joint initiatives pursued by both countries to renew and widen the scope of the MDCA to render it more strategically relevant (U.S. Department of State, 2023).

Also traces the diplomatic processes and strategies that have undergirded the MDCA's evolution, examining how Greece and U.S. diplomats engage one another in diplomacy to fortify their defense cooperation and tackle collective security concerns. In addition, it highlights the crucial role of diplomacy in defense-to-defense cooperation by reviewing these preliminary diplomatic efforts that have been designed to maintain the longevity and credibility of the MDCA (U.S. Department of State, 2022a).

5.2 The Diplomatic Framework: Establishing a Strong Foundation

5.2.1 Early Diplomatic Foundations

The MDCAs-which make up the backbone of US-Greek military cooperation-trace their origins to a deeper fabric in ever-evolving transnational diplomacy reaching back many years. These early diplomatic exchanges laid the foundation for the strategic partnership that is presented here in this MDCA. This final section describes the historical and political environment that lead to the expansive state of diplomacy supporting the MDCA.

Although the recognition of Greece was too strategically important for an American government eager to draw a line against Soviet expansionism to be free from external manipulation, by 1947, the United States-through the Truman Doctrine-offered critical military and economic aid. As it began an alliance based on parallel interests and mutual security concerns. Its 1952 membership in NATO further solidified Greece as a critical western ally, creating a defense and security construct that would ultimately support the creation of the MDCA. The NATO alliance was effective in luring Greece into the Western defense embrace and, as a result, facilitated airbases capable of prolonged joint exercise with the U.S (NATO, n.d.).

In the global political environment of the Cold War, Greece, with its Southeast Mediterranean position, played an important role in US strategic planning. The period of bilateral cooperation was marked by a strong U.S. presence, which included the establishment of American bases in Greece to help shape security dynamics in the region.

Throughout these years, diplomatic engagements aimed to counter regional security challenges, uphold the country's political stability, and maintain Greece's support of Western strategic goals. This period of time paved the way for a string of diplomatic exchanges, and that will prove to be absolutely vital in later events under the MDCA. Those preliminary diplomatic underpinnings were crucial to the eventual formation of the MDCA in 1990. They were built on trust-building measures, mutual defense agreements, and a common vision of regional security. These landmark agreements provided the infrastructure for future diplomacies, which aided in the seamless transition of Greece and the United States to a post-Cold War security environment (Gallant, 2015, pp.110-112) (Tziampiris, 2020, pp. 35-38).

5.2.2 The Role of NATO and Collective Security

Greece's membership in NATO and the concept of collective security have been key components in the diplomatic framework supporting the MDCA between Greece and the United States. Grasping these features gives an idea of what made the early diplomatic moorings sturdy and turned them into a supple strategic partnership.

Greek membership in NATO gave it an array of security guarantees that were instrumental amid regional tensions, particularly with another NATO ally, Turkey. The alliance structure enabled conversation and conflict resolution as well as cooperation among the member states, all according to NATO's collective defense responsibility thus put down by Article 5 (NATO, 2023).

The rules of collective security, established by NATO, were the cornerstone of Greek strategic and diplomatic relations with the United States. Ensured strong Greek national security interests were essential also to the overall cohesion of the alliance and therefore American security efforts foster trust, understanding, respect, and cooperation with their closest allies (Coulombis and Iatrides, 1980, p. 134).

Greece was aligned within NATO's sphere of influence, which provided the country with strategic slants such as intelligence cooperation, synchronized exercises, and access to cutting-edge military technology. This collaborative work brought a sense of commensurability, rationalizing hub and spoke maintenance that straightened ally forced posturing to a level that helped Greece build interoperability and readiness between themselves and their allies; in so doing it prepared the Hellenic Defense very significantly.

The function of NATO and the collective security backdrop offered a diplomatic and strategic parameter in which MDCA may be created and broadened. The arrangement also embedded Greece more deeply into the Western defense community, encouraging greater unity of effort and deeper military cooperation, strategic planning, and operational capacity with the United States. The continuous participation in NATO operations and collective security obligations served as a major factor maintaining the volume of the bilateral defense cooperation through relevant framework agreements such as the MDCA (U.S. Department of State, 2022a).

In summary, the diplomatic floor of Greece-USA relations has been strengthened by the role and collective security principles of NATO, creating a solid base on which to build the MDCA. Such features help keep the evolution of the agreement still enough connected to ensure that it is central for those two nations' strategic goals.

5.3 Diplomatic Strategies for Expansion: 2010s-2024

5.3.1 Managing Tensions with Turkey

The strategic relationship between Greece and the US, expressed through the presence of the MDCA, has required capable diplomacy in addressing a set of difficult bilateral issues involving Turkey. Because of the critical geostrategic role that the Eastern Mediterranean and Aegean regions have played throughout history, Greece has been in a delicate diplomatic dance with Turkey—weighing its relationship with (and dependence on) Ankara against its partnership with Washington, both politically and security-wise.

Greece and Turkey, also NATO partners, yet use overall opposites of territorial oceans, airspace rights similarly to the circumstance of Cyprus. Indeed, these have erupted into violent confrontations in the past; thus, regional stability is of great importance not only to both nations but also to allies, including the United States.

Greece has followed numerous diplomatic avenues with third countries to mitigate tensions with Turkey, through its alliance with the United States. This called for improving relations using direct negotiations, confidence-building measures, and participation in multilateral forums like the United Nations and NATO. These contacts are intended to ease the likelihood of an escalation while promoting common interests in regional stability and cooperation.

The US has acted as a mediator for Greece with Turkey using its weight to help encourage de-escalation and dialogue. This diplomatic facet is reinforced strategically by deterring any aggressive actions as the balance of power provided by the U.S. military under the MDCA fosters a measure of prudential caution from unilateral moves.

Utilizing such alliances and global legal mechanism—Greece has employed various international structures as part of its leverage to bolster its diplomatic position criticizing the assertive acts exercised by Turkey. Greece is reminding Turkey that it must respect EU law and international maritime conventions as defining envelopes for territorial seas before any bilateral complications pop up. It is supported by the United States and NATO, which enhances Greece's standing in it so that its security concerns are met and reputable at an international level (Litsas and Tziampiris, 2020, p. 72).

Greece's diplomatic strategies have been considered stronger today after the implementation of strategic enhancements by the MDCA, e.g., its latest expansions in 2019 and 2020. These developments have been used by Greece in order to enhance its negotiating power and show that the country can serve as a collateral-free partner with other Western security interests, which makes it once again reliable.

Its strategic location has allowed Greece to assert its hard-line but diplomatic take on Turkey, favoring talks over fights. Consequently, the MDCA is of high strategic importance since it goes far beyond military context, footing with diplomatic essence as it grants Greece the required capabilities to fight its way through Turkey and into civility in conversation.

Ultimately, balancing the needs of superpower and partner might be critical for controlling tensions with Turkey, or it is not necessary at all if the MDCA serves here as an example to demonstrate how such a delicate equilibrium can work. Greece is able to manage

these regional challenges with efficiency, thereby promoting stability and cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean thanks to her diplomatic outreach supported by the MDCA.

5.3.2 U.S.-Greek Strategic Dialogue

A U.S.-Greek strategic dialogue has been a key diplomatic tool in building upon and amplifying the function of the MDCA. This dialogue is a reflection of common will to solve regional security challenges and pursue mutual defense and political goals in a rapidly changing geopolitical landscape.

This provided structure to what are already very high-level strategic communications between the U.S. and Greece on a range of topics, including defense cooperation, energy security, economic cooperation, and regional stability that have been ongoing since late in the last decade. The dialogue came about as a necessity to review and redefine strategic goals in light of changes in threats and opportunities in the Eastern Mediterranean and beyond.

The strategic dialogue allows state-to-state communication and consultation by bringing political representatives and military brass from both countries to a common platform. This is also critical as it ensures that any collaborative issues are dealt with in a timely and positive manner, strengthening the trust and cooperation fundamental to the MDCA (U.S. Embassy in Greece, 2024b).

Through the MDCA, the strategic dialogue serves to further deepen Greece and the United States military cooperation, enabling joint exercises in all areas and allowing for intelligence sharing as well as other forms of technology cooperation that are vital for both countries. The dialogue was also focused on strengthening energy security and infrastructure development in the region besides military issues. In its emergence as an energy hub with promising natural gas reserves, the United States helped advance goals to interconnect secure and stable supply routes, absolutely essential for both regional and European energy security.

Moreover, it discussed more extensively geopolitical concerns, including keeping relations with Turkey balanced and containing the impact of Russia and China in the region. Yet, Greece and the United States can also build on these dynamics by synchronizing their foreign policy and strategic aims throughout the region, which will ultimately strengthen their leadership role in promoting regional stability (Liu, 2021).

The U.S.-Greek strategic dialogue, in turn, has directly shaped the form and utility of the MDCA by ensuring that it contributes to addressing current security challenges. The consequences of the dialogue have concretely shown Greece as an important strategic ally for the USA and deepened their cooperation in promoting NATO goals, serving also the special US interests in the Eastern Mediterranean.

This is possible due to the fact that, by doing so, both countries were able to predict and act upon future threats through ongoing engagement-making sure their defense cooperation remains strong and effective. This ongoing commitment is crucial if the MDCA is to continue serving as a cornerstone of bilateral relations (U.S. Embassy in Greece, 2024b).

To sum up, the strategic dialogue between the United States and Greece is vital to ensure that the MDCA can be saliently maintained and expanded, thereby helping develop an integrated and adaptive approach to regional security challenges. The treaty was a success in demonstrating the value of diplomacy in military alliances and as one way to address the numerous nuances of complex international relationships.

5.4 The Broader Implications for NATO and Regional Stability

5.4.1 Enhancing NATO's Southern Flank

The intensification and widening of the MDCA with Greece on 14th October 2021 have far-reaching potential consequences for NATO, notably in shoring up its southern flank. The strategic collaboration between Greece and the U.S.-based on the MDCA is a pivotal part of NATO's overarching strategy for safeguarding security, stability, and deterrence in the Eastern Mediterranean region and beyond. (U.S. Department of State, 2022a)

Due to the geographic location of Greece in East Mediterranean, this makes Athens a natural partner in strengthening NATO's southern flank. The MDCA's expansion has paved the way for the modernization and greater use of key Greek military bases, crucial to NATO operations and logistics. NATO gets from these bases an indispensable infrastructure for rapid deployment and high operational readiness, in particular towards upcoming threats emerging in North Africa, the Middle East and the Balkans (ODETH, 2022).

The military capabilities and infrastructure generated by the MDCA are strengthening NATO power projection and deterrence abilities along our southern periphery. These developments also contribute to regional stability and defense against adversarial powers such as Russia; numerous Mediterranean Sea allies are threatened in their naval security by increased naval activities from Russian war ships (Litsas and Tziampiris, 2020, p. 72).

The MDCA was signed to promote greater interoperability between Hellenic Armed Forces and U.S. forces, a key aspect of NATO's collective defense. Such joint operations and military missions help increase the ability levels of Greek forces in accordance with NATO standards and targets. It can be crucial in ensuring the collective operability of all member states during common missions or conflict situations.

Greece's contribution to NATO-led activities and the country has supported such initiatives as maritime security operations, counterterrorism actions, and boosting the alliance's ability to tackle increasingly complex threats. The agreement enables a better forward defense presence that strengthens the ability of NATO to respond adequately in times of crisis and support regional stability.

In this context, too, the strategic pivot of Greece to the US under the MDCA also balances regional balances of power in situations such as Turkey, which has its strategic interests. The MDCA also promotes distressing regional tensions and supports conflict resolution by strengthening Greece's defense capabilities, leading to secure tactical channels and alliance mechanisms.

This equilibrium is central to the preservation of NATO solidarity and preventing intra-alliance disputes from drawing other members into hot conflicts. The assistance availed by MDCA assures fellow NATO members to view the pledge to security and defense as a common Alliance undertaking, advancing cooperation at the expense of unilateral interests(Sokou, 2023, p. 16).

Consequently, the MDCA serves multiple functions in support of enhancing NATO's southern flank by offering strategic location and infrastructure as well as interoperability, which are needed components for regional security. This agreement with Greece enhances the Alliance's collective defense and represents one of the greatest contributions to peace in one of the world's most strategically important regions (Litsas and Tziampiris, 2020, pp. 72-74).

5.4.2 Regional Stability and Energy Security

The US-Greece MDCA helps to strengthen NATO's southern flank and enhance regional stability and has become an essential tool in securing energy supplies for Europe from the Eastern Mediterranean. The region has been attracting attention for both the geopolitical tensions in the area and rising energy exploration.

The Eastern Mediterranean is a hotbed of geopolitical tensions, and not just in terms of overlaid territorial and maritime claims between Greece, Turkey, Cyprus, and other regional states (International Crisis Group, 2023). The MDCA increases their defense capacities in Greece, contributing to a stabilization factor that reduces the occurrence of crises and encourages diplomatic solutions-because if you can deter with power, as in having this counterbalance both consideration-wise and military ability-wise .

The MDCA further cements and enhances regional stability, as it supports Greece by offering the backing needed to pursue peaceful resolution of disputes. It is crucial to the security of life at sea with respect to critical maritime routes that are fundamental for regional stability and global commerce, helping prevent the risks of interruptions that may have serious implications for global markets as well.

Recent gas discoveries in the Eastern Mediterranean have brought to light energy security as a critical issue, giving birth to numerous opportunities and challenges in this vein. Meanwhile, these energy resources give the opportunity to re-vitalize regional economies at the same time as leaving this process of economic exploitation in the middle of confrontation over territorial disputes, as seen not only on land but also, and especially, in maritime zones (Nicholasen, 2022).

Greece is thus able to safeguard its sovereign rights in the exploitation of these resources, and the MDCA is pivotal for that to take place. The enhanced military presence, combined with greater USA cooperation, serves as a force multiplier able to facilitate Greece's newfound confidence and capacities in asserting its energy exploration and exploitation activities for itself and usefully contributing towards the larger objective of European energy security (Litsas and Tziampiris, 2020, pp. 72-74).

The MDCA advances energy security and encourages less reliance on well-known free energy routes, finding ways to protect sea lanes of transport along with essential power investments. By extension, the strategic collaboration ensures a stable and secure energy environment in the region - not only does it redound to the national benefit of Greece but also to increased energy security for its European partners and beyond.

Additionally, the MDCA makes it easier for Greece to participate in multilateral projects that promote collaboration on energy exploration and security. This benefits strategic initiatives like the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, between Egypt, Israel, Cyprus, and other regional partners, now augmented by Greece's own enhanced defense capabilities (EMGF, n.d.). This coordinated conversation highlights that the MDCA is crucial for Greece to become not only part of, but a potential leader in, regional energy cooperation, security, and economic development dialogues (Tsafos, 2019).

In sum, the MDCA is advancing regional stability and security, adding layers of complexity to how Greece negotiates geopolitics in pursuit of what it deems as within its national interest. Greece enhances its ability to create and participate in a more peaceful, secure, and prosperous Eastern Mediterranean region by building up its military power and strategic partnerships, emphasizing how the MDCA affects not only regional security but global peace and security as well.

5.5 Conclusion

Diplomacy is becoming increasingly vital to threading through contemporary geopolitical mazes. During the 2010s and into the present, strategies to bolster the MDCA as a central pillar in Greece-USA relations have been nested within ongoing diplomacy aimed at shaping Greek and American practices to respond to shifts in the security environment.

The MDCA has been strengthened by diplomatic efforts, preserving regional security even if Turkey wants to extend its ambitions. Both Greece and the United States have been able to address the crisis in a careful way through strategic dialogues and effective diplomatic channels. This diplomatic standing has played an important role in diffusing the risks entailed in a region with historical enmities and territorial conflicts.

The U.S.-Greece Strategic Dialogue illustrates the advancement of military cooperation through high-level diplomacy within the framework of the MDCA. But it is only recently that this dialogue has not just streamlined military strategies and priorities but also strengthened broader economic, energy, and strategic collaborations (U.S. Embassy in Greece, 2024b). Both countries have used these dialogues to support their strategic aims, strengthening the MDCA's role as a distinct means of promoting collective security in the Eastern Mediterranean (Litsas and Tziampiris, 2020, p. 72).

Finally, the MDCA content becomes even more significant in its broader implications for NATO and regional stability. It should be noted that, on other key aspects of the agreement, such as bolstering NATO's southern flank and aiding energy security, Greece remains a critical

asset for both balancing regional power dynamics while also supporting multilateral stabilization efforts in the Eastern Mediterranean. Such potential also underscores the MDCA as a factor of regional security cooperation, including in endeavors such as the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, both on local and international levels.

In essence, this strategic congruence engendered by the MDCA, buttressed by strong diplomatic mechanisms for strategic dialogue, is what keeps Greece and America in a position to forge a partnership of lasting relevance and flexibility that empowers both nations in defending against a great many security threats endemic to our global environments today. The agreement is rooted in diplomacy, and it is that which supplies the mechanisms and channels for a lasting, meaningful partnership that guarantees peace, security, and mutual benefits both within the region and beyond its borders.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Summary of Key Findings

Over the years, the MDCA has served mutual interests-providing Greece with umbrella capabilities for its defense and ensuring U.S. interests in a region of significant geo-strategic import.

From the start, in 1990, the MDCA has always moved with the times and adapted to a shift on an international scale. Initial agreements were also founded on the Cold War, perceiving security gain in the short term and eventually embedding Greece upon Western defense structures via NATO. As the global context evolved, later renewals saw an expanding extent of military cooperation, with expansions in 2019 and 2020, with new amendments in 2021 to address modern threats.

The MDCA has allowed the U.S. to shift its military installations to better strategic ground in the Eastern Mediterranean and provide it with access to key bases like Souda Bay Naval Base as well as additional facilities that come into play, making sure that they are both better able to deter and react. The regular joint drills and exchanges of knowledge and technology significantly improved Greece's defense capabilities and reinforced the utilization within the canon of NATO, hence enhancing our common security (Litsas and Tziampiris, 2020, pp. 101-105).

Diplomacy has been a crucial component of maintaining and advancing the MDCA. The agreement has been updated through high-level dialogues and strategic consultations that have helped to shape the further development of the text in line with common security interests, from regional tensions with Turkey all the way to energy security. The collaboration has also increased the contribution of Greece to international alliances, advancing the concrete goals of NATO and important regional interests.

Ideologically, the MDCA locks in military modernization for Greece; strategically, it is another guard against any aggression; diplomatically, it strengthens Greek leverage regionally. The MDCA is a regional security investment that ensures balanced power and conflict prevention. This squares well with NATO priorities for collective defense, maintaining a Greece that will remain an engaged player in promoting peace through its complex and volatile geostrategic neighborhood. In turn, this facet of the agreement functions to enhance energy security and further reinforces its multi-level impact at both the national and international levels.

By highlighting these key takeaways, this thesis reasserts the MDCA's position as a pillar of Greece-USA relations. This underscores the status of the agreement as an important enabler for building a cohesive and adaptive defense partnership in response to changing global and regional security challenges.

6.2 The Significance of the MDCA in Greece-USA Relations

Currently, the flagship of Greece-USA relations is the MDCA, an institution that underlines both countries' contributions to mutual defense and common strategic objectives. That importance is only further emphasized by its military, diplomatic, and geopolitical implications on two countries with a rich legacy of partnership, an enduring and evolving one (Prime Minister, Hellenic Republic, 2021).

Access to a deterrence package made up of the MDCA has been instrumental in enhancing Greece's defense capacities by securing access to leading American military technology and training infrastructure (U.S. Department of State, 2022b). This agreement has been reached through the establishment of joint military exercises and strategic partnerships, promoting in practice the interoperability of Greek and U.S. forces as well as arrangements that guarantee their ability to function efficiently together in a wider framework with NATO. This military cooperation does not only bolster Greek defense but also assists in the collective defense initiatives of NATO, underpinning alliance unity and preparedness.

The MDCA is a critical strategic win for the US in the Eastern Mediterranean. Being able to at least access major Greek military installations like this one in Souda Bay is crucial for logistical support and deploying rapidly to respond to crises within the region, as well as providing power projection influence throughout the Mediterranean, Middle East, and North Africa (U.S. Embassy in Greece, 2024a).

Politically, the MDCA signals the Greeks' more harmonious identification with Western political and security objectives while underscoring to their NATO and EU partners that Greece continues to warrant its place among them. Greece, in turn, finds more influence in regional affairs by further aligning itself with U.S. strategic objectives and hence gains negotiating leverage on core issues like territorial disputes as well as energy exploration.

The growing comprehensiveness of this deal in recent years, against the backdrop of regional tensions with Turkey and some maritime controversies, highlights its value as a

strategic stabilizer. While provisions for the troops in Greece do act as a deterrent, their physical presence provides a bridge to assist in diplomatic agreements to help de-escalate controversial international circumstances.

The MDCA serves as a linchpin for promoting regional stability and supporting Greece's ability to address a wide range of security challenges, including terrorism and energy security threats. The agreement serves to reinforce the space of stability through functioning strategically because it permits a U.S. military presence, which in turn safeguards strategic maritime routes and energy infrastructure that is crucial for Europe's own energy diversification and security (Litsas and Tziampiris, 2020, p. 76).

Additionally, the MDCA has established discussions and reinforces Greece to take part in regional projects, such as the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, contributing towards the greater entrenchment of Greece in regional security architectures, further strengthening cooperative-security initiatives throughout the eastern Mediterranean.

Ergo, the MDCA forms one of the building blocks of Greece-US relations-the military synergy, geopolitical convergence, and regional security combine to constitute a holistic defense partnership. Its continuing evolution proves its capacity to navigate the changing geopolitics of the area and is a testament to its importance in advancing both Greece's and America's strategic aims. The MDCA has become increasingly important to the traditional and emerging security threats that will continue to challenge both countries as they attempt to progress their security and defense commitments and obligations into a more secure, stable regional environment.

6.3 Future Developments and Prospects for Military Cooperation

As the geopolitical landscape in Europe, and more specifically around Greece, continues to change rapidly and is likely to bring new security threats or opportunities in the Eastern Mediterranean region and surrounding area, this section discusses some of the future possibilities and implications regarding military togetherness within the MDCA.

By far the most probable type of development in case of future agreements under the MDCA is that Greece's military infrastructure would become yet more vast and modern. This infrastructure modernization will afford both countries added operational flexibility and readiness, allowing for a quick response to regional contingencies and strengthening deterrence. Additionally, the enhanced infrastructure will enable more advanced military drills, and with the incorporation of new technologies like cyber defense capabilities and a wide range of unmanned systems, it will help keep Greek and US forces ahead in military innovation.

More and more of the future platform driven cooperation under the MDCA will deal with addressing emerging security threats, including cyber, hybrid and novel tech. Furthermore, as political conflicts spread to new battlegrounds-such as disinformation campaigns and hybrid wars-Greece and the USA may work together to create coordinated responses and methods of

defense that bring the two allies even closer towards a unified military partner carrying similar security aims.

In parallel, the MDCA will support Greece further in those multilateral purposes and efforts under NATO by strengthening Greece's participation in regional security frameworks. By enabling Greece to function as an important allied security partner, such as through multilateral exercises and cooperative-security initiatives that bolster the collective-defense capabilities of NATO allies. In addition, the MDCA can bolster Greece's role in regional fora such as the East Mediterranean Gas Forum that combine security with energy diplomacy. Such enhanced cooperation in these fields would help establish Greece as a stabilizing force for the eastern Mediterranean and will enable synergy-building between broader security alignments and coalition-building efforts.

The MDCA will continue to be vital in light of the changing power dynamics as global and regional powers (such as Russia) project power into the Mediterranean. (U.S. Department of State, 2022a)The accord would mostly focus on regional stability, checking adversarial influence, and protecting international waterways crucial to global trade and energy security. To sum up, the future of military cooperation through the MDCA points increasingly to further adjustment and growth in security challenges. Formerly content to trust the longstanding foundations of their bilateral partnership, Greece and the United States also stand well-positioned to deepen mutual defense efforts by ensuring agility, flexibility, and alignment with current regional security imperatives.

6.4 Areas for Further Research

While this thesis has tried to give a deep analysis of the MDCA from 1990 until 2024 between Greece and the USA, a range of topics that are not covered have been chosen for further study. This is important information in our knowledge about how military cooperation between the two parties changes and what larger geopolitical balance the MDCA has.

Future research could explore how novel technologies may impact MDCA, as well as its operational performance. A great place to start could be looking at the potential of melding existing advancements in cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, and unmanned systems into the framework today, which can provide a vivid image of how it will help improve military readiness and resilience (Litsas and Tziampiris, 2020, p. 81). Assessing the implications of these technologies on strategic planning and bilateral exercises can offer a roadmap to future defense strategies and needs.

Another new area lies at the intersection of energy security and military cooperation under the MDCA, which could easily be explored in greater depth. While the energy sector remains at play in East Mediterranean geopolitics, one of the ways to look at this deal is by exploring how it may affect or be affected by regional energy politics. Investigating how the MDCA protects energy routes and maritime communication lanes in the light of evolving geopolitical balances, would also provide us a depth of understand on what possible impact it could have strategically.

Moreover, it would also be useful to look into the legacy of MDCA in terms of regional stability and balance of power dynamics in the Eastern Mediterranean over the long-term strategic sense (Gallant, 2015, p.125). Such research could examine plausible regional conflict resolution, deterrence and defense posture improvements, or ever-evolving strategies fought between great powers like Russia and China. These kinds of analyses could help to develop foresight-driven policy making and defense planning.

Further examination within Greece, including in terms of general public opinion, political discourse, and the realm of domestic policy, might provide better perspective connected to socio-political implications of MDCA (Nedos, 2021). Evaluating how MDCA influences national defense strategies, economic relationships, and political affiliations would help us to better appreciate its impact across various planes.

The conclusion, which outlines the multifaceted potential impacts of the MDCA on military cooperation, regional security, and even international diplomacy, reinforces these research gaps. The investigation into these subjects is necessary not only for academia but also to assist in the immediate shape of international policy and strategic thinking amidst forthcoming geopolitical distortions.

6.5 Conclusion

The MDCA between Greece and the USA epitomizes the strong ties of friendship and trust, being the main pillar that upholds Greek-US relations, from a strategic standpoint and in terms of working together for peace regardless of scale.

Since its founding during the Cold War, the MDCA has proven itself relevant in a dynamic geopolitical environment that began in the Eastern Mediterranean and spread to other vital regions of interest. It has paved the way for crucial military infrastructure, enhanced joint military operations, and reinforced Greece's position within NATO and other Western defense systems. Meanwhile, the military dimension of MDCA together with its diplomatic link, confirms the importance of the MDCA, as a military and diplomatic instrument to serve common interests and strengthen Greece's strategic importance internationally.

The MDCA also provides a vital tool for enhancing defense capabilities, as well as supporting regional stability and energy security (Tziampiris, 2021, p. 12). The agreement ensures economic and strategic interests key for both the European market platform and wider global markets alike, by securing maritime routes and critical infrastructure. It encourages a cooperative model of solving issues in the region-such as territorial disputes and energy exploration spends (Litsas and Tziampiris, 2020, p. 84).

The thesis highlights avenues for future research, such as the implications of new technologies, energy geopolitics, and states/regions-based inquiries into ongoing transformations along MDCA. At the same time, these lines of inquiry are likely to enhance our understanding of the broader security effects of the deal and help shape policies meant to mitigate new threats.

Consequently, the MDCA is still indispensable for Greece-USA relations, and its continued existence demonstrates that it constitutes a strategic partnership that has stood the test of time when tested against changing geopolitical configurations. The MDCA will remain an essential conduit of cooperation and regional security as both nations address new challenges and opportunities. But its contemporary resonance showed both the value of maintaining open diplomatic channels and the need for vision and experience in an age of rapidly evolving international relations.

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