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## "The Greek Army in Modern History: International Involvement and Diplomatic Alliances"

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### Abstract

*This manuscript examines the Greek Army's multifaceted role in modern history, focusing on its international involvement and the interplay between military actions and diplomacy. From the mid-19th century to the Cold War era, Greece's military contributions extended beyond national defense, influencing and being influenced by global political dynamics. The study explores three interconnected themes: the Greek Army's relationships with Allied powers during major conflicts, its participation in international wars and peacekeeping missions, and the impact of Greek volunteers in foreign liberation movements.*

*Particular attention is given to Greece's contributions on the Salonika Front during World War I, a pivotal yet underexplored theater of the conflict, and its resistance against Axis forces in World War II, which earned international recognition but also posed diplomatic challenges. The manuscript also delves into lesser-known episodes, such as Greek involvement in the Crimean War and the Russo-Turkish War, situating these within the broader context of 19th-century geopolitics. Post-war contributions to United Nations peacekeeping and Greece's strategic alignment within NATO during the Cold War underscore the nation's enduring commitment to international security.*

*Through a multidisciplinary approach, combining archival research and historical analysis, this study sheds light on how Greece's military actions shaped its diplomatic standing and contributed to global conflict resolutions. It also examines how Greece navigated complex alliances, balancing national interests with international obligations. This manuscript contributes to the scholarship on modern Greek history and international military studies, offering fresh insights into the enduring relationship between Greece's military engagements and its evolving diplomatic identity.*

**Keywords:** Greek Army, Modern Greek History, International Diplomacy, Allied Relations, Military History, Peacekeeping Missions

## 1.0. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Purpose and Scope

The military history of modern Greece is a subject intricately tied to the nation's broader historical trajectory, yet its role in shaping international relations remains insufficiently explored. This manuscript investigates the Greek Army's contributions to global conflicts and their implications for diplomacy, focusing on its engagements with Allied powers, participation in international wars, and the involvement of Greek volunteers in foreign liberation movements. While the national struggles for independence and territorial expansion dominate narratives about the Greek Army, this study shifts attention to its involvement beyond national borders. By examining the intersections of military action and international diplomacy, the manuscript offers a more nuanced understanding of Greece's position on the world stage during pivotal historical moments.

The study begins in the 19th century, a transformative period when Greece emerged as a newly independent state amid shifting European alliances. It traces the Greek Army's contributions to broader conflicts, such as the Crimean War (1853–1856) and the Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878), to explore how these engagements shaped Greece's regional and international standing. Moving into the 20th century, the analysis extends to Greece's alliances during the two World Wars, particularly its strategic importance in the Salonika Front during World War I and its resistance to Axis powers in World War II. These events are examined not only as military achievements but as catalysts for Greece's evolving diplomatic relationships. The study concludes with an assessment of post-war developments, including Greece's participation in United Nations peacekeeping missions and its integration into NATO during the Cold War.

By addressing these themes, the manuscript seeks to fill a critical gap in the literature on modern Greek history and international military studies. It underscores the significance of military engagement as both a tool and a reflection of diplomatic strategy, highlighting Greece's contributions to global security and conflict resolution.

### 1.2. Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study is driven by several interrelated research questions that aim to illuminate the Greek Army's role in shaping Greece's international identity. Key questions include:

1. *How did Allied powers perceive Greek military contributions during World War I and World War II, and how did these perceptions influence Greece's diplomatic relationships?*
2. *What were the military and diplomatic consequences of Greece's participation in international conflicts such as the Crimean War and the Russo-Turkish War?*
3. *How did Greek volunteers in foreign liberation movements contribute to Greece's international reputation and align with its foreign policy objectives?*
4. *In what ways did Greece's integration into post-war peacekeeping efforts and Cold War alliances reshape its military and diplomatic priorities?*

The hypotheses underpinning these questions are rooted in the premise that Greece's military engagements played a critical role in defining its diplomatic trajectory. First, it is a fact that Greek

contributions on the Salonika Front during World War I and its resistance against the Axis powers in World War II were pivotal in shaping Allied perceptions of Greece as a reliable partner. Second, the manuscript posits that Greece's involvement in broader conflicts, such as the Crimean War, helped establish its position as a regional actor capable of influencing European geopolitics. Finally, it is considered that post-war peacekeeping and NATO integration signaled Greece's transition from a nation primarily concerned with territorial sovereignty to one actively engaged in global security initiatives.

### 1.3. Structure Overview

The manuscript is organized into five main chapters, each addressing a distinct yet interconnected aspect of the Greek Army's international involvement and its diplomatic ramifications.

#### Chapter 1: The Historical Context of the Greek Army in Modern History

This chapter examines the formation and evolution of the Greek Army following independence. It explores the military's role in shaping Greece's identity as a nation-state and its positioning within the broader European geopolitical landscape of the 19th century.

#### Chapter 2: Allied Relations During World War I and World War II

This chapter focuses on Greece's military alliances during the two World Wars. It delves into Greece's strategic importance on the Salonika Front in World War I and its resistance against Axis powers in World War II, analyzing how these contributions were perceived by Allied powers and their diplomatic outcomes.

#### Chapter 3: Beyond the National Borders: Greek Participation in Broader Conflicts

Expanding the analysis beyond the World Wars, this chapter explores Greece's participation in conflicts such as the Crimean War and the Russo-Turkish War. It investigates the motivations, outcomes, and diplomatic implications of these engagements, situating Greece within the broader context of 19th-century European geopolitics.

#### Chapter 4: Greek Volunteers in Foreign Liberation Movements

This chapter examines the role of Greek volunteers in international conflicts and liberation movements. It highlights their contributions to conflicts such as the Russo-Turkish War and considers how their efforts reflected and shaped Greece's foreign policy objectives.

#### Chapter 5: Post-War Greece: Peacekeeping and Cold War Alliances

The final chapter assesses Greece's military involvement in global peacekeeping missions under the United Nations and its integration into NATO during the Cold War. It explores how these developments signified a shift in Greece's military and diplomatic priorities in the post-war era.

## 2.0. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Theoretical framework and research studies

The international role of the Greek Army in modern history has been the subject of sporadic scholarly attention, often overshadowed by studies of Greece's national struggles for independence and territorial expansion. While significant works have explored the Greek War of Independence and subsequent domestic military developments, the international dimensions of Greek military involvement remain underdeveloped. This gap is

particularly evident in studies of the Greek Army's contributions to broader conflicts, such as the Crimean War (1853–1856) or the Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878), as well as its participation in global alliances during the 20th century.

Notable research on Greece's involvement in World War I often highlights the Salonika Front, emphasizing its strategic importance to the Allied cause (Army Headquarters, 1958). However, the perspectives of Allied powers on Greek contributions and the diplomatic consequences of these efforts are less thoroughly examined. Similarly, studies of World War II, such as those by Mazower, underline Greece's resistance against Axis forces, yet they seldom explore the long-term implications of these military actions for Greece's international standing (Mazower, 2001).

The few works addressing Greek participation in international conflicts before the 20th century, such as those by Koliopoulos often frame Greece's involvement within a nationalistic lens, focusing on how these engagements served domestic goals (Koliopoulos, Veremis, 2002). Less attention is given to the broader diplomatic and geopolitical repercussions of these actions. Furthermore, the role of Greek volunteers in foreign liberation movements, including the Russo-Turkish War, has been marginally studied, despite its relevance in understanding Greece's external military and political engagements.

On the topic of post-war military and diplomatic developments, scholars like Veremis have explored Greece's Cold War alignment and its integration into NATO (Veremis (1995). However, these analyses often emphasize Greece's domestic politics rather than its contributions to global peacekeeping efforts and international security.

This manuscript seeks to bridge these gaps by offering a comprehensive analysis of the Greek Army's international involvement across different historical periods, situating its military actions within the context of global diplomacy.

This study draws on the framework of constructivist international relations theory, which emphasizes the importance of identity, norms, and perceptions in shaping the behavior of states. Constructivism provides a valuable lens for analyzing the Greek Army's international involvement, as it allows for an exploration of how Greece's military actions contributed to the construction of its national identity and its standing within the international system.

A key tenet of constructivism is that state behavior is not solely determined by material capabilities but also by how states perceive themselves and are perceived by others. This perspective is particularly relevant in the case of Greece, a small state whose military contributions often exceeded its size and resources. For example, Greece's resistance against Axis forces in World War II and its participation on the Salonika Front during World War I were not merely military operations but actions that shaped international perceptions of Greece as a resilient and reliable ally.

Furthermore, the framework of geopolitical theory is employed to contextualize Greece's strategic importance within broader regional and global dynamics. Greece's geographical position at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and the Mediterranean has historically made it a focal point of great power competition and alliances. This manuscript examines how this geopolitical significance influenced Greece's military engagements and the diplomatic responses they elicited.

Finally, the concept of soft power is utilized to analyze the role of Greek volunteers in foreign liberation movements. These efforts, while military in nature, also carried symbolic and ideological significance, reinforcing Greece's identity as a nation aligned with broader struggles for freedom and justice.

### 3.0. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Research methodology

The research methodology was meticulously crafted to align with the nature of the study material and the overarching research objectives. This study employs the **historical method**, enriched with source analysis, to explore the Greek Army's role in shaping international diplomacy and military history. Historical research, by its nature, examines diverse domains, including (a) the evolution of military institutions, organization, and operational systems; (b) the analysis of alliances, conflicts, and their diplomatic underpinnings; (c) the study of individuals, decisions, and events that have left a lasting imprint on military and international history; and (d) critiques of policies and their historical impact on the dynamics of power and cooperation (Borg & Gall, 1989).

This historical inquiry falls within the realm of **qualitative research** and focuses on pivotal events and interactions that defined Greece's role in global conflicts. It examines primary archival sources, such as military documents, diplomatic correspondence, treaties, and firsthand accounts, to provide an in-depth understanding of the Greek Army's contributions and the geopolitical context of its actions. As Mavroskoufis explains primary sources are "those that originate from a specific period contemporary to the events studied," while secondary sources offer interpretative frameworks to complement primary findings (Mavroskoufis, 2005). These combined sources form the backbone of the study.

The challenges of historical research, particularly in military and diplomatic history, are well-documented. As Verdis notes the incomplete nature of archival records and the elimination of causal factors or altered conditions complicate historical reconstruction (Verdis, 2015). Furthermore, "the more remote the events, the greater the difficulties" (Athanasίου, 2003). This research embraces these challenges to situate the Greek Army's international involvement within its broader historical and diplomatic context. The study does not merely aim to uncover historical facts but to interpret their significance in shaping Greece's alliances and global standing.

The principal method employed is **historical analysis**, which aids in the critical examination of evidence to establish facts, evaluate sequences of events, and uncover causal relationships (Mialaret, 1999). This method enables the study of military campaigns, diplomatic negotiations, and geopolitical strategies that defined Greece's contributions to conflicts such as World War I, World War II, the Crimean War, and the Russo-Turkish War. Cohen and Manion define historical research as "the systematic and objective identification, evaluation, and synthesis of evidence to establish facts and draw conclusions about past events" (Cohen, Manion, 1977). Such a method is indispensable for reconstructing the Greek Army's role within the context of shifting alliances and international power dynamics.

The utility of historical research extends beyond understanding past events. As Hill and Kerber highlight, historical research provides insights into contemporary challenges by analyzing past



solutions, identifying cultural interactions, and re-evaluating established theories (Hill, Kerber, 1967). In the context of this study, these objectives guide the exploration of how the Greek Army's actions influenced international diplomacy and how these lessons resonate with contemporary global challenges.

Melanitou's assertion that "education is a social institution and consequently one of the many manifestations of a people of a certain period" underscores the importance of contextualizing historical research (Melanitis, 1957). While this study is not directly concerned with education, it recognizes the need to examine the interplay between military institutions, societal dynamics, and political ideologies of the time. The research does not simply aim to document events but to foster a deeper understanding of Greece's evolving identity as an international actor, emphasizing the enduring connections between politics, society, and military history.

This methodology prioritizes the use of primary sources, which serve as the foundation of historical inquiry due to their direct material connection to the events studied. Secondary sources provide valuable perspectives, enabling the study to critically assess and contextualize the evidence (Cohen & Manion, 1977). The analysis of these materials allows the research to reconstruct the Greek Army's international engagements with precision, offering a comprehensive account of its military contributions and their diplomatic consequences.

Ultimately, this research aligns with the goals of historical study as outlined by Nova-Kaltsouni, emphasizing the importance of understanding the past to interpret the present and anticipate future challenges (Nova-Kaltsouni, 2006). By re-evaluating past military and diplomatic interactions, the study offers insights into Greece's enduring role in international relations, shedding light on the broader interplay of power, alliances, and geopolitical strategy.

## 4.0. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. The Historical Context of the Greek Army in Modern History. Formation and Evolution

The establishment of the Greek Army in the 19th century is deeply intertwined with the nation's struggle for independence and its emergence as a modern state (Brewer, 2011). The Greek War of Independence (1821–1829) marked the birth of a military force forged in the fires of revolution against Ottoman rule. Initially, the Greek military consisted of irregular forces - bands of klephts and *armatoloi* - who had limited training but significant local knowledge and guerrilla warfare expertise. These groups, while crucial in the early phases of the war, lacked the cohesion and discipline required to confront the Ottoman Empire's professional armies effectively (Kyriakidis, 2016).

The establishment of an organized Greek Army began with the intervention of the Great Powers - Britain, France, and Russia - who sought to stabilize the region and ensure the survival of an independent Greek state. The Treaty of London (1827) and the subsequent military assistance provided by these powers culminated in the decisive naval victory at Navarino, which secured Greek independence (Woodhouse, 1965). After independence, the Greek government, under the leadership of Ioannis Kapodistrias, recognized the need for a standing army to safeguard the fledgling nation. Kapodistrias laid the groundwork for the professionalization of the Greek Army by recruiting European advisors, standardizing military organization, and

establishing military academies, such as the Evelpidon Military Academy in 1828 (Kyriakidis, 2003).

The reforms introduced by Kapodistrias, however, were interrupted by his assassination in 1831. The arrival of King Otto in 1833 marked a new phase in the Greek Army's evolution. Otto's Bavarian regency introduced a European military model, emphasizing centralized command and formal training (Kyriakidis, 2016). Despite these efforts, the Greek Army faced persistent challenges, including inadequate funding, political interference, and low morale among soldiers (Koliopoulos & Veremis, 2002). Additionally, tensions between Bavarian officers and Greek recruits hindered the development of a cohesive military force.

Significant progress was made in the latter half of the 19th century under King George I's reign (1863–1913), as Greece sought to modernize its armed forces to contend with the shifting geopolitical landscape. The Cretan Revolt (1866–1869) and subsequent uprisings underscored the need for a more capable military. By the 1880s, reforms were implemented to enhance training, introduce modern weaponry, and expand the officer corps. The army adopted elements of the French and German military systems, reflecting Greece's alignment with European powers (Kyriakidis, 2022a). These efforts laid the foundation for the Greek Army's transformation into a professional institution capable of participating in regional conflicts.

### 4.2. Diplomatic and Military Realities of the 19th Century

The 19th century was a turbulent period for Greece, as it sought to assert itself on the international stage while navigating the intricate dynamics of European diplomacy. Greece's geographic location at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and the Mediterranean rendered it a focal point of great power politics, with Britain, France, and Russia playing pivotal roles in shaping its destiny.

From its inception, Greece's military and diplomatic strategies were deeply influenced by its relationship with the Great Powers. The nascent state depended on their support for both its territorial expansion and its defense against external threats. The 1832 Treaty of Constantinople, which established Greece's borders and independence, was largely a product of great power mediation (Kyriakidis, 2024). However, Greece's reliance on external powers often came at the cost of its sovereignty, as foreign advisors and financial constraints limited the autonomy of its military and government (Clogg, 2002).

Greece's military readiness during the 19th century was shaped by its territorial aspirations, known as the "Megali Idea." This irredentist vision sought to unite all Greek-speaking populations under a single state, a goal that necessitated a robust military capable of confronting the Ottoman Empire and other regional powers (Kyriakidis, 2022b). However, Greece's limited resources and internal political instability often hampered its ability to achieve this vision. The Crimean War (1853–1856) exemplifies this dilemma (Kyriakidis, 2021). While Greece sympathized with Russia and sought to capitalize on the conflict to further its territorial ambitions, its military was unprepared for large-scale operations, and European powers intervened to prevent Greek action (Dakin, 1972).

The latter half of the century saw Greece increasingly align itself with Western European powers, particularly Britain and France, to counterbalance Ottoman dominance. This alignment was evident during the Cretan Revolt (1866–1869), where Greece supported the Cretan struggle for unification despite opposition from the Great

Powers. The revolt highlighted the limitations of Greek military capabilities and the constraints imposed by international diplomacy, as European intervention forced Greece to adopt a more cautious approach (Clogg, 1979).

Efforts to modernize the Greek Army gained momentum during this period, driven by both internal and external pressures. The defeat in the Greco-Turkish War of 1897 was a turning point, exposing the inadequacies of Greece's military and prompting widespread calls for reform (Kyriakidis, 2021). Under the leadership of military officers and politicians, such as Prime Minister Charilaos Trikoupi, the government invested in modernizing the army, acquiring new weaponry, and establishing alliances with European powers (Kyriakidis, 2016). The creation of a professional officer corps and the introduction of military education programs further strengthened the army's capabilities.

Despite these efforts, Greece's position in European politics remained precarious. The country's aspirations for territorial expansion often clashed with the interests of the Great Powers, who sought to maintain stability in the region. This tension was particularly evident during the Balkan Wars (1912–1913), which marked the culmination of 19th-century Greek military and diplomatic efforts (Kyriakidis, 2021). The Greek Army, bolstered by decades of modernization, played a decisive role in the conflicts, achieving significant territorial gains and securing Greece's position as a key player in the Balkans (Koliopoulos & Veremis, 2002).

The historical context of the Greek Army in the 19th century reveals a complex interplay of military evolution and diplomatic challenges. From its humble beginnings as a revolutionary force, the Greek Army transformed into a professional institution shaped by European influences and driven by the irredentist ambitions of the Megali Idea. However, this evolution was fraught with obstacles, including political interference, limited resources, and the constraints of great power diplomacy.

The reforms initiated during this period laid the groundwork for Greece's military successes in the 20th century, particularly during the Balkan Wars and World Wars. By examining the formation and development of the Greek Army alongside the diplomatic realities of the 19th century, the critical role of military institutions in shaping Greece's national identity and its position within the European geopolitical landscape is underlined. The lessons of this period highlight the enduring connections between military preparedness, diplomatic strategy, and the pursuit of national objectives, offering valuable insights into the complexities of modern Greek history.

## 5.0. Allied Relations During World War I and World War II

### Greece in the Salonika Front (World War I)

Greece's involvement in the Salonika Front during World War I was a defining moment in the nation's modern military and diplomatic history. The Macedonian campaign, initiated in 1915, emerged as a critical theater of war for the Allies, aimed at containing the Central Powers in the Balkans and securing vital supply routes to Eastern Europe (Kyriakidis, 2021). Greece's strategic position, bridging Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East, made its participation indispensable to the Allies' broader war effort.

Initially, Greece's involvement was fraught with internal divisions, reflecting the "National Schism" between Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos, who favored alignment with the Allies, and King Constantine I, who advocated neutrality or alignment with Germany due to familial ties to the German monarchy (Kyriakidis, 2023). This schism delayed Greece's formal entry into the war, complicating Allied operations in the region. Despite these challenges, the establishment of the Salonika Front in 1915, with Allied forces landing in Thessaloniki, marked the beginning of Greece's gradual alignment with the Entente powers (Palmer, 2009).

The Greek Army's role on the Salonika Front became more pronounced after Venizelos established a provisional government in Thessaloniki in 1916, effectively splitting the country into two competing authorities. By June 1917, Greece had officially entered the war on the side of the Allies, contributing troops and resources to the Macedonian campaign. The strategic importance of Greece's involvement was twofold: it provided the Allies with a base of operations to counter Central Power advances in the Balkans and helped secure critical supply lines to Serbia and Russia (Palmer, 2009). The Greek Army participated in key offensives, including the Battle of Skra-di-Legen in May 1918, which marked a significant victory for Allied forces and demonstrated the growing capability of Greek troops (Kyriakidis, 2021).

Despite these contributions, Allied perceptions of Greek involvement were mixed. On one hand, the Greek Army's performance in battles such as Skra-di-Legen was lauded for its tactical success. On the other hand, internal political instability and the delayed entry into the war led some Allied leaders to question Greece's reliability as a partner (Abbott, 2015). These mixed perceptions were further compounded by logistical challenges and strained relationships between Greek and Allied commanders, reflecting broader tensions within the coalition. Nonetheless, Greece's participation in the Salonika Front ultimately contributed to the defeat of Bulgaria in September 1918 and paved the way for the liberation of the Balkans, underscoring the strategic importance of Greece's alliance with the Entente powers (Palmer, 2009).

### 5.1. Greek Army and the Allies in World War II

Greece's role in World War II is widely recognized as one of extraordinary resilience and strategic significance. The Greek Army's resistance against Axis forces, beginning with the Italian invasion in October 1940, marked one of the first Allied victories of the war. This resistance not only delayed Axis plans but also provided a crucial morale boost for the Allied powers during a period of widespread German dominance in Europe (Mazower, 2001).

The Italian invasion, launched from Albania, was met with fierce resistance by the Greek Army, which managed to push Italian forces back into Albania in the Greco-Italian War of 1940–1941. The Greek counteroffensive, conducted under harsh winter conditions and with limited resources, demonstrated remarkable operational effectiveness, surprising both Axis and Allied observers. Churchill famously remarked, "Hence we will not say that Greeks fight like heroes, but that heroes fight like Greeks," underscoring the symbolic and strategic importance of Greece's resistance (Drez, Brinkley, 2009).

Germany's subsequent invasion of Greece in April 1941, as part of Operation Marita, was necessitated by Italy's failure to subdue the country (Kyriakidis, 2021). Although the Wehrmacht eventually

overcame Greek and British Commonwealth forces, the Greek Army's determined defense, particularly at key locations such as the Metaxas Line and the Battle of Crete, disrupted German timelines and forced the postponement of Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of the Soviet Union (Beevor, 1991). This delay, though debated by historians, is widely regarded as a factor in the eventual failure of Germany's campaign in the East (Mazower, 2001).

The Greek Army's contribution to the Allied cause extended beyond its early resistance. During the Axis occupation (1941–1944), Greek resistance movements, including the National Liberation Front (EAM) and the Greek People's Liberation Army (ELAS), waged a protracted guerrilla campaign against occupying forces. These efforts tied down Axis troops and disrupted supply lines, providing indirect support to Allied operations in the Mediterranean and North Africa (Margaris, 1997). Despite internal divisions within the resistance movements, their impact on the Axis war effort was significant, drawing Allied recognition and material support.

The diplomatic and military aftermath of World War II was profoundly shaped by Greece's wartime experiences. Greece's resistance and sacrifices earned it a prominent place in post-war Allied negotiations, securing its position within the Western bloc during the emerging Cold War (Clogg, 2002). However, the country also faced immense challenges, including economic devastation, political instability, and the outbreak of a civil war (1946–1949) fueled by divisions between communist and anti-communist factions. The Greek Civil War, often seen as a continuation of the ideological struggles of World War II, highlighted the complex legacy of Greece's wartime alliances and its strategic importance in the global balance of power (Collective, 2000).

Greece's integration into NATO in 1952 and its role in the Marshall Plan further solidified its alignment with the West, reflecting the enduring influence of its contributions to the Allied victory in World War II. These developments underscored the interplay between Greece's military sacrifices during the war and its post-war diplomatic trajectory, as the country transitioned from a battleground of great power conflicts to a key player in the Western alliance system (Veremis, 1997).

It turns out that the Greek Army's involvement in World War I and World War II highlights the nation's strategic importance and resilience in the face of global conflict. On the Salonika Front during World War I, Greece's contributions were essential to the Allied victory in the Balkans, despite internal political divisions and logistical challenges. In World War II, Greece's resistance against Axis forces demonstrated extraordinary resolve, delaying Axis plans and contributing to the broader Allied war effort. While Greece's military contributions were sometimes overshadowed by larger powers, their strategic significance was undeniable, influencing the course of both wars and shaping Greece's post-war trajectory. The aftermath of these conflicts underscored the complex interplay between military actions and diplomacy, as Greece navigated its role within the shifting dynamics of international relations. By examining Greece's alliances and contributions during these two world wars the enduring legacy of the Greek Army in shaping the nation's modern history and its place in the global order is illuminated.

## 6.0. Beyond the National Borders: Greek Participation in Broader Conflicts

### 6.1. The Crimean War (1853–1856)

The Crimean War (1853–1856) was a pivotal conflict in 19th-century European history, marked by the competing ambitions of major powers in the Eastern Mediterranean and the declining Ottoman Empire. While Greece's direct military involvement in the war was limited, its symbolic support for Russia and the activities of Greek irregulars underscore its aspirations as a regional actor. These efforts also carried significant diplomatic ramifications, influencing Greece's relationship with both the Great Powers and the Ottoman Empire.

Greece's involvement in the Crimean War stemmed from its historical and cultural affinity with Russia, rooted in shared Orthodox Christian traditions and mutual opposition to Ottoman dominance. Many Greeks viewed Russia as a natural ally in their irredentist aspirations, encapsulated by the "Megali Idea," which sought to reclaim territories with significant Greek populations under Ottoman rule (Clogg, 2002). During the war, groups of Greek irregulars, largely operating independently of state direction, launched small-scale incursions into Ottoman territory in Epirus and Thessaly, hoping to exploit the conflict to advance Greece's territorial goals (Dakin, 1973).

These efforts, though militarily insignificant in the broader scope of the war, carried immense symbolic weight. For Greek nationalists, the participation of Greek irregulars demonstrated solidarity with Russia and affirmed their commitment to the liberation of Orthodox Christian populations under Ottoman rule. However, Greece's alignment with Russia came at a significant diplomatic cost. Britain and France, wary of Russian ambitions and committed to maintaining the Ottoman Empire as a buffer against Russian expansion, intervened decisively to suppress Greek activities. The Anglo-French occupation of Piraeus in 1854 was a stark reminder of Greece's limited autonomy in the face of Great Power politics (Woodhouse, 1952).

Diplomatically, the Crimean War underscored Greece's precarious position in the international system. While its cultural ties with Russia resonated deeply with its populace, Greece's dependency on British and French support for economic stability and territorial integrity meant it could not afford to antagonize these powers outright. This duality highlighted a recurring theme in 19th-century Greek diplomacy: the tension between irredentist ambitions and the practical constraints imposed by the international order. The war ultimately reinforced the need for Greece to navigate a careful balance between its national aspirations and its relationships with the Great Powers, a dynamic that would shape its foreign policy for decades to come (Kyriakidis, 2021).

### 6.2. Greek Military Participation in the Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878)

The Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878) offered another opportunity for Greece to assert its regional influence, this time through the participation of Greek volunteers. While the Greek state officially remained neutral during the conflict, the widespread support for Russia among Greek society and the activities of Greek volunteers highlighted the nation's continuing commitment to the liberation of Greek-speaking and Orthodox Christian populations under Ottoman rule (Mazower, 2001).



The motivations behind Greek volunteerism in the Russo-Turkish War were multifaceted. On a geopolitical level, the war was seen as a potential turning point in the struggle between the Ottoman Empire and the Balkan states. Many Greeks viewed Russian victories as a precursor to the eventual dismantling of Ottoman rule in the Balkans, a development that aligned with the objectives of the Megali Idea (Clogg, 2008). On an ideological level, the war resonated deeply with the Greek population, reinforcing their sense of solidarity with Orthodox Christian communities and their belief in the shared destiny of the Eastern Orthodox world.

Greek volunteers, numbering in the hundreds, joined Russian and Balkan forces on various fronts, particularly in Bulgaria and Eastern Thrace. Their contributions, while modest in scale, were significant in reinforcing the perception of Greece as an active participant in the broader struggle for Balkan liberation. These efforts also had domestic implications, bolstering nationalist sentiment and fostering a sense of unity around the ideals of the Megali Idea (Dakin, 1973).

The consequences of Greek participation in the Russo-Turkish War extended beyond the battlefield. The Treaty of San Stefano (1878) and the subsequent Congress of Berlin fundamentally reshaped the political landscape of the Balkans, with significant implications for Greece. While the treaty initially favored Russian interests and provided for the establishment of a large autonomous Bulgarian state, the intervention of Britain and Austria-Hungary at the Congress of Berlin curtailed these provisions, resulting in a more fragmented Balkan settlement. Greece, although not a direct beneficiary of the war, used the post-war negotiations to press its claims for territorial expansion, particularly in Thessaly and Epirus (Woodhouse, 1977).

The war also contributed to the shaping of Greece's regional identity. By participating in a conflict that was framed as a struggle for the liberation of Christian populations, Greece reinforced its image as a defender of Orthodox Christianity and a key player in the Balkan nationalist movements. This image, however, came with challenges. The activities of Greek volunteers occasionally clashed with the objectives of other Balkan states, such as Serbia and Bulgaria, highlighting the potential for rivalry within the broader context of Balkan nationalism. These tensions foreshadowed the complex and often competitive relationships that would characterize Greece's interactions with its neighbors in the 20th century (Mazower, 2002).

It must be made clear that Greece's involvement in the Crimean War and the Russo-Turkish War illustrates the interplay between its national aspirations and the broader dynamics of 19th-century European geopolitics. In both conflicts, Greece sought to assert itself as a champion of Orthodox Christianity and a key actor in the struggle against Ottoman rule. However, the limitations of its military capabilities and the constraints imposed by Great Power politics often tempered these ambitions.

The Crimean War highlighted the symbolic importance of Greek support for Russia but also underscored the risks of antagonizing Britain and France, whose intervention in Piraeus revealed the extent of Greece's dependency on external powers. The Russo-Turkish War, by contrast, offered Greece an opportunity to assert its regional identity through volunteerism and diplomatic engagement, even as it faced the challenges of navigating complex relationships with other Balkan states.

Both conflicts contributed to the evolution of Greece's foreign policy and its role in the Eastern Mediterranean. They reinforced the importance of balancing national ambitions with the realities of the international system, a lesson that would resonate throughout Greece's modern history. By examining these episodes, the broader issues of military involvement, diplomatic strategy and national identity that continue to shape Greece's position in the world are illuminated.

## 7.0. Greek Volunteers in Foreign Liberation Movements

### 7.1. Historical Accounts of Greek Volunteers Abroad

Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, Greek volunteers played a notable role in various foreign liberation movements, reflecting Greece's ideological commitment to the principles of freedom and national self-determination. These endeavors often aligned with the broader aspirations of the "Megali Idea," which sought to unite Greek-speaking populations and Orthodox Christian communities under a singular national identity. The participation of Greek soldiers in these movements was driven by shared cultural, religious, and ideological affinities with other oppressed nations, as well as by Greece's desire to assert itself on the international stage as a champion of liberty.

One prominent example of Greek volunteerism was in the Serbian uprising against the Ottoman Empire in the early 19th century. Greek volunteers, many of whom were veterans of the Greek War of Independence, joined Serbian forces in their quest for autonomy. Their involvement was both practical and symbolic, offering tactical expertise while solidifying ties between two Orthodox Christian nations that shared common enemies and goals (Clogg, 2002). These early instances of cooperation between Greek and Serbian fighters marked the beginning of enduring alliances in the Balkans, particularly as both nations sought to challenge Ottoman dominance.

Greek volunteers also participated in the Italian wars of unification, specifically during Giuseppe Garibaldi's campaigns in the mid-19th century. Garibaldi's vision of national liberation resonated strongly with Greek intellectuals and revolutionaries, who viewed Italy's struggles as parallel to their own recent fight for independence. Notably, a contingent of Greek volunteers fought alongside Garibaldi in southern Italy, contributing to key battles in Sicily and Naples. Their participation underscored the ideological and practical connections between national liberation movements in Europe during this period (Kitromilides, 2013).

Another significant episode of Greek volunteerism occurred during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878. Greek fighters joined Russian forces and other Balkan insurgents in campaigns against the Ottoman Empire. While Greece itself remained officially neutral, the actions of these volunteers symbolized the nation's solidarity with Orthodox Christian populations in the Balkans and its broader irredentist aspirations. These fighters, many of whom operated independently or with minimal state oversight, became emblematic of Greece's enduring commitment to the liberation of its ethnic and religious kin (Mazower, 2002).

Greek volunteers also participated in conflicts outside the immediate geopolitical sphere of the Balkans. During the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939), small groups of Greek leftists joined the International Brigades in support of the Republican cause. This marked a shift from earlier instances of volunteerism, as it was

driven more by ideological commitments to anti-fascism and socialism than by national or religious affinities. Although their numbers were relatively small, these volunteers demonstrated the evolving nature of Greek engagement in foreign conflicts, reflecting broader ideological currents in interwar Europe (Lazos, 2001).

## 7.2. Diplomatic and National Ramifications

The involvement of Greek volunteers in foreign liberation movements carried significant diplomatic and national ramifications, shaping Greece's international reputation and its domestic identity. These activities projected an image of Greece as a nation deeply committed to the ideals of freedom and solidarity, even as they sometimes complicated its relationships with other states and powers.

On the diplomatic front, the participation of Greek volunteers often positioned Greece as a natural ally of nations fighting for independence, particularly in the Balkans. This fostered closer ties with neighboring states such as Serbia, Montenegro, and Bulgaria, with whom Greece shared cultural and religious affinities. Greek volunteerism reinforced a sense of shared destiny among Balkan nations, laying the groundwork for alliances that would later prove critical in the Balkan Wars (1912–1913) (Brewer, 2011). However, these alliances were not without tension. Greek volunteers' activities sometimes conflicted with the territorial ambitions of other Balkan states, particularly in contested regions such as Macedonia. These underlying tensions foreshadowed future rivalries, even as volunteerism temporarily fostered a sense of unity.

The ideological implications of Greek volunteerism also enhanced Greece's reputation in Europe. By aligning itself with movements such as the Italian unification campaigns and the Russo-Turkish War, Greece projected an image of itself as a progressive and freedom-loving nation. This helped to garner goodwill among European powers, particularly those sympathetic to the cause of national self-determination, such as Britain and France (Koliopoulos, Veremis, 2002). However, this reputation was occasionally undercut by Greece's pragmatic need to balance its alliances with the Great Powers, particularly during periods when volunteer activities conflicted with the interests of these powers. For example, Greek support for Russian efforts in the Russo-Turkish War drew suspicion from Britain and Austria-Hungary, who were wary of Russian expansionism (Woodhouse, 1952).

Domestically, the actions of Greek volunteers abroad reinforced nationalist sentiment and fostered a sense of pride in Greece's role as a defender of oppressed peoples. These efforts were celebrated in public discourse and commemorated in popular literature and art, creating a narrative of Greek heroism that resonated deeply with the populace (Kitromilides, 2009). Volunteerism also served as a rallying point for irredentist movements, reinforcing the ideals of the "Megali Idea" and galvanizing support for territorial expansion. The exploits of Greek fighters in foreign liberation movements were often mythologized, contributing to the construction of a national identity centered on the ideals of freedom, bravery, and solidarity.

However, the ramifications of volunteerism were not uniformly positive. The involvement of Greek volunteers in foreign conflicts sometimes exacerbated domestic political divisions, particularly when these activities were driven by ideological rather than national considerations. For instance, Greek participation in the

Spanish Civil War highlighted the growing polarization between leftist and rightist factions within Greece, foreshadowing the political tensions that would later erupt into the Greek Civil War (1946–1949) (Close, 1995).

Volunteerism also exposed the limitations of Greece's military and political influence. While individual contributions were often celebrated, the lack of coordinated state support for these efforts highlighted Greece's relative weakness on the international stage. This was particularly evident during the Russo-Turkish War, where the actions of Greek volunteers, though symbolically significant, had little impact on the war's overall outcome. Similarly, the lack of sustained follow-through on the aspirations of these volunteers sometimes led to disillusionment among those who had risked their lives for causes that did not align with Greece's immediate national interests (Clogg, 2002).

It is clear that the historical participation of Greek volunteers in foreign liberation movements underscores Greece's complex and multifaceted role in 19th- and 20th-century geopolitics. These efforts were driven by a combination of ideological, cultural, and religious motivations, reflecting Greece's broader aspirations as a defender of liberty and a proponent of national self-determination. While these activities bolstered Greece's international reputation and fostered alliances with other nations, they also revealed the inherent tensions in balancing national ambitions with the realities of international politics.

Domestically, the exploits of Greek volunteers reinforced nationalist sentiment and contributed to the construction of a heroic narrative that remains central to Greece's modern identity. However, the ideological and political divisions that emerged from these activities also highlight the complexities of volunteerism, particularly in an era of shifting alliances and competing interests. These historical episodes reveal the timeless legacy of Greek volunteerism in shaping both Greece's international standing and its national character.

## 8.0. Post-War Greece: Peacekeeping and Cold War Alliances

### 8.1. The Role of the Greek Army in Peacekeeping Missions

The end of World War II and the establishment of the United Nations (UN) marked a shift in global military priorities from large-scale conflicts to collective security and peacekeeping. For Greece, a nation emerging from the devastation of war and the internal strife of a brutal civil conflict, participation in international peacekeeping missions under the auspices of the UN provided an opportunity to redefine its role on the world stage. The Greek Army's contributions to peacekeeping efforts underscored its commitment to global stability and showcased its ability to operate effectively in multinational coalitions.

One of Greece's earliest and most significant contributions to peacekeeping came during the Korean War (1950–1953). Although not directly a UN peacekeeping mission, Greece's participation under the UN Command was emblematic of its alignment with the Western bloc and its willingness to support collective security. The Greek Expeditionary Force in Korea (EKSE) included a battalion-sized force of infantry and a medical unit, totaling over 1,000 personnel, who served alongside troops from other nations (Army Headquarters, 1977). Greek forces earned high praise for their bravery and discipline during battles such as the defense of Hill



381, solidifying Greece's reputation as a reliable ally in international military efforts (Schoinas, 2018).

Greece's involvement in UN peacekeeping missions expanded in subsequent decades. Notably, Greek military and police units participated in the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), established in 1964 to prevent further hostilities between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots (Mallinson, 2008). Greece's role in UNFICYP was particularly significant, as it underscored the nation's direct stake in the stability of Cyprus and its commitment to peaceful conflict resolution (Syrigos, 2018). Despite the complexities of the Cyprus dispute, Greek personnel consistently worked to uphold the mission's mandate, balancing their responsibilities as peacekeepers with the broader political dynamics of the region.

Greece also contributed to peacekeeping missions in Africa, the Middle East, and the Balkans, reflecting its evolving strategic interests. Greek forces participated in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), supporting efforts to stabilize the region after the 1978 Israeli invasion. In the Balkans, Greek peacekeepers were deployed as part of United Nations missions in Bosnia and Kosovo during the 1990s, showcasing Greece's regional leadership and its commitment to post-Cold War security frameworks.

Through these peacekeeping efforts, Greece not only contributed to global stability but also strengthened its diplomatic standing. By demonstrating professionalism and commitment in these missions, the Greek Army helped to reinforce the nation's image as a responsible member of the international community, fostering stronger ties with both Western allies and regional partners (Mallinson, 2008).

## 8.2. Greece and NATO: Cold War Military Alignments

Greece's integration into NATO in 1952 marked a pivotal moment in the nation's post-war history, cementing its position as part of the Western alliance during the early years of the Cold War. This alignment was driven by both geopolitical considerations and Greece's strategic location, which made it a critical player in the Mediterranean and Balkan regions.

NATO membership offered Greece significant military and economic benefits, providing access to advanced weaponry, training programs, and financial aid. The United States, as the leading power within NATO, played a crucial role in supporting Greece's military modernization through programs such as the Mutual Defense Assistance Act of 1949 (Veremis, 1997). This assistance was instrumental in rebuilding Greece's armed forces, which had been severely weakened by the Axis occupation and the subsequent civil war. By the mid-1950s, Greece's military had undergone a transformation, adopting NATO standards and doctrines that enhanced its interoperability with other member states.

Strategically, Greece's membership in NATO reflected the alliance's broader goals of containing Soviet influence and securing key regions against communist expansion. Greece's location at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East made it a vital component of NATO's southern flank, ensuring the security of sea lanes in the Mediterranean and providing a buffer against potential Soviet incursions into the Balkans (Zhillia, 2023). Greek military bases, such as Souda Bay in Crete, became key logistical hubs for NATO operations, further highlighting the nation's strategic importance.

However, Greece's integration into NATO was not without challenges. The political instability of the 1960s and the military junta that ruled Greece from 1967 to 1974 created tensions within the alliance. The junta's authoritarian practices and its handling of the Cyprus crisis, particularly the 1974 coup that precipitated Turkey's invasion of the island, strained Greece's relations with other NATO members (Kalyvas, 2015). These events led to Greece's withdrawal from NATO's military command structure in 1974, a decision driven by domestic political pressures and dissatisfaction with NATO's perceived inaction during the Cyprus crisis (Koliopoulos & Veremis, 2002).

Greece rejoined NATO's military command in 1980, reflecting its renewed commitment to the alliance amidst the intensifying Cold War (New York Times, 1980). This period saw Greece navigating a complex diplomatic landscape, balancing its NATO obligations with its regional interests. The nation's participation in NATO exercises and its hosting of alliance infrastructure underscored its strategic value, even as it sought to assert greater autonomy within the alliance framework (Krebs, 1999).

The military and diplomatic consequences of Greece's NATO membership were far-reaching. On one hand, NATO provided Greece with the resources and support needed to modernize its armed forces and secure its borders. On the other hand, the alliance's focus on collective security sometimes conflicted with Greece's national priorities, particularly in its disputes with Turkey, another NATO member. The Greek-Turkish rivalry over issues such as Cyprus and the Aegean Sea tested the alliance's cohesion, highlighting the difficulties of balancing collective interests with bilateral tensions (Krebs, 1999).

It can be seen that the post-war period marked a transformative era for Greece, as its military and diplomatic priorities shifted towards collective security and international cooperation. The Greek Army's contributions to peacekeeping missions under the UN reflected the nation's commitment to global stability and its desire to play an active role in the international community. From Korea to Cyprus and the Balkans, Greek forces demonstrated professionalism and dedication, bolstering Greece's diplomatic standing and fostering closer ties with both Western allies and regional partners.

Greece's integration into NATO further solidified its position within the Western alliance, providing the nation with critical resources and security guarantees during the Cold War. While NATO membership brought significant benefits, it also posed challenges, particularly in the context of Greek-Turkish tensions and the political upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s. Despite these challenges, Greece's strategic location and its contributions to alliance operations underscored its importance as a key player in the Mediterranean and Balkan regions.

Greece's role in peacekeeping and its integration into NATO highlights the interplay between military actions and diplomacy in shaping Greece's post-war trajectory. These developments not only enhanced Greece's security but also reinforced its identity as a responsible and committed member of the international community, paving the way for its continued engagement in global and regional affairs.

## 9.0. Conclusions

This manuscript has examined the multifaceted role of the Greek Army in modern history, emphasizing its international military

contributions and their diplomatic ramifications. The analysis has revealed Greece's consistent engagement with broader geopolitical dynamics, reflecting its aspirations as a regional and global actor. From its strategic participation in the Salonika Front during World War I to its resistance against Axis forces in World War II, the Greek Army demonstrated not only tactical capability but also a keen alignment with the broader objectives of its allies. These contributions elevated Greece's diplomatic stature, albeit often tempered by internal political instability and external constraints imposed by the Great Powers.

In the 19th century, Greece's symbolic involvement in the Crimean War and its volunteer contributions to the Russo-Turkish War highlighted the interplay between military action and national identity. While these efforts were often small in scale, they reinforced Greece's self-perception as a defender of Orthodox Christianity and a champion of liberation movements. This irredentist ethos, rooted in the "Megali Idea", shaped both Greece's military policies and its regional diplomacy, fostering alliances with Balkan neighbors while occasionally creating tensions over competing territorial ambitions.

The post-war era further showcased Greece's dual role as a participant in collective security frameworks and as a nation navigating regional complexities. Its integration into NATO during the Cold War underscored its strategic importance as a bulwark against Soviet influence in the Eastern Mediterranean. Simultaneously, its contributions to UN peacekeeping missions, from Korea to Cyprus, demonstrated a commitment to global stability and offered Greece a platform to enhance its international standing. However, these engagements also exposed the challenges of balancing national priorities with alliance obligations, particularly in the context of Greek-Turkish tensions.

The research questions posed in this study have been addressed through this comprehensive analysis. Allied perceptions of Greek military contributions were shaped by both Greece's successes, such as its resistance in World War II, and its limitations, including delays in joining the Allied cause during World War I. These perceptions influenced Greece's post-conflict diplomatic positioning, securing it a place within the Western bloc. Similarly, Greece's participation in international conflicts, both formal and volunteer-driven, contributed to its evolving regional identity as a defender of shared values, even as these actions occasionally complicated its relationships with neighboring states.

The historical role of the Greek Army offers valuable lessons for contemporary Greek diplomacy, underscoring the enduring interplay between military strategy and international relations. Greece's historical military engagements highlight the importance of aligning national ambitions with broader coalition goals, a principle that remains relevant in its current foreign policy.

Modern Greece continues to occupy a strategically vital position at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, much as it did in the 19th and 20th centuries. This geographic reality has historically drawn the attention of major powers, necessitating a careful balancing act between alignment with allies and safeguarding national sovereignty. Today, Greece's participation in NATO and the European Union mirrors its earlier alignment with Western coalitions, leveraging collective security frameworks to address both regional challenges and global threats.

Greece's historical contributions to liberation movements and collective security initiatives underscore the value of soft power in

shaping international perceptions. Just as Greek volunteers symbolized solidarity with oppressed nations in the 19th century, modern Greece has an opportunity to position itself as a mediator and advocate for stability in the Eastern Mediterranean and beyond. Initiatives such as fostering dialogue between conflicting parties in the region, participating in humanitarian missions, and leveraging its historical ties with Balkan states can enhance Greece's diplomatic influence while reinforcing its identity as a responsible global actor.

The historical tensions between Greece and its neighbors, particularly Turkey, also offer insights into the complexities of regional diplomacy. The lessons of the post-World War II era, when Greece sought to balance its NATO obligations with its national priorities, remain instructive. Contemporary Greek-Turkish relations, shaped by disputes over the Aegean and Cyprus, reflect the same interplay of competition and cooperation that has historically characterized the region. Greece's historical experience suggests that pragmatic engagement, backed by a credible military posture and multilateral diplomacy, can help manage these tensions while safeguarding national interests.

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