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# Greek militarism in the age of Syriza

Xupoluto Tagma

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class enemies. Instead we must take things a step further by openly confronting those schemes and actions in an attempt to avert any military operations.

The first necessary step towards is to become total objectors to military service. Let no body or mind, not one dime and not one hour of our time be given to serve the interests of our class enemies. It is our duty to deny the war machine the fuel it needs to operate. Conscription must fail in attracting the numbers that army chiefs dream of, so that it becomes clear that they must fight in their own wars. We carry the weight of our choices both collectively and publicly, in order to encourage others to do the same. We promote our message to our class brothers and sisters in every corner of the earth, we organise and we collaborate.

**We organise the War against War**

**Our collective objections will lead to the demise of our class enemies.**

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that Turkey has not got an EEZ but at the same time we should not rely on the International Courts because we will lose the case!

It is obvious that SY.RIZ.A is not only completely faithful to the greek states' age-old imperialist ambitions, but it is set on maintaining and building the nationalist sentiment. It provokes Turkey by sending the defense Minister to through commemoration wreaths over the islet of Imia, a hugely disputed area on the border between Turkey and Greece, in the Aegean sea. It proposes the creation of a NATO military base in the border island of Karpathos. It continues liaising with Israel and the Egyptian junta. It sends its' MPs to support nationalist events in the northern border area of Greece and it declares the further militarisation of the Greek-Albanian border. This is what the Left means by peace and international friendship. Or to put it plainly, they are all too happy to promote anti-imperialism as long as we're not talking about their own territory.

The time has come for all those who hoped SY.RIZ.A would act as an internationalist or antifascist force, to overcome their delusions. The antimilitarist movement gained nothing from SY.RIZ.A's rise to power. There is still no organised class struggle, no internationalism, no grassroots antimilitarist organising. And there is not one political party that would not be prepared to use us as cannon fodder in the battlefields of inter-capitalist competition.

## **OUR OBJECTIONS, THEIR DEMISE**

The above arguments serve to expose the inseparable and timeless relationship of the state with national unity, militarism and expansionism. Even with a left wing leadership, that our class enemies must make these three steps if they are to succeed in the arena of inter-capitalist competition. If they are to win in the battlefield.

We know all too well that inter-capitalist competition has nothing to do with our own interests. As organised antimilitarists, we must not only expose the geopolitical schemes and actions of our

meet with the cypriot government to discuss further?

- Why do you not proceed to a balanced force reduction?

Kostas Isihos, Deputy Minister of Defense. In 2013 he was chiefly responsible for SY.RIZ.A positions on foreign policy and defense. An extract from his statement on a left wing blog, on 22/02/2013<sup>35</sup>:

According to International Law, Turkey does not have an EEZ in this marine area because it is interposed by Kastelorizo. Kastelorizo has both territorial waters and a marine shelf and it therefore has an Exclusive Economic Zone according to International Law, which borders with Egypt and Cyprus (depending on when Athens decides to define its EEZ, following agreement with its' neighboring countries). It is also doubtful that the process through the Hague International Court will produce results since the issue of "vicinity" is taken into account (for example in the France – Canada case, although the island of St. Pierre Michelin is French, Canada was given EEZ rights, including all fishing rights<sup>36</sup>).

When it comes to matters of 'national interest', the line separating the left from the right becomes dangerously blurred. Anyone who objects is treated as a pariah and is silenced. So we must bear the ramblings of SY.RIZ.As' chairmain (our current prime minister) about the EEZ of the Ionian sea, which essentially demand that Greece blocks another country's route to the EU. How internationalist of him! Similarly, the Deputy Minister of Defense informs us

<sup>35</sup> aristeriparemvasi.wordpress.com, 24 February 2013

<sup>36</sup> Despite the fact that the group of islands owned by France amount to a surface area of 210 m2, France tried to claim an EEZ of 50,000m2 around the islands, within Canadas' waters! It obviously lost the case...

*This paper was presented for the first time at the 5<sup>th</sup> Antimilitarist Gathering organised by the Xupoluto Tagma (Barefoot Battalion) on 4–5<sup>th</sup> September 2015, in Ioannina, Greece. It was then enhanced to include the period shortly after the elections of 20<sup>th</sup> September 2015. Special thanks to Laura, Sonia and Pantelis for the english translation.*

## THE CONTINUATION OF THE STATE

It is a fact, that the issue of anti-militarism is not always a central issue on the agenda of the anti-authoritarian movement and its structures. This has been the case in Greece for many years, and is especially true today. The total number of social and class struggles has clearly decreased. Despite the valuable legacy of recent struggles, they have not managed to overcome internal and external limitations in order to halt the increasingly intensified undermining of our class. Capitalist restructuring continues to rampage our lives, worsening our position within the fields of social struggle and decreasing the possibilities of collective action and thought.

Arguably, it is precisely during such a critical period, when inter-capitalistic competition makes war an increasingly less remote reality, which can be simply 'shoved under the carpet', that anti-militarism should preoccupy us in a much more serious and targeted way. The sweeping statements traditionally adopted by the Left that imply an antimilitarist approach (ie. opposing NATO or US foreign policy), have succeeded in attributing a certain 'anti-imperialist', confrontational character to their own agents and have masked the true nature of militarism and the way it has weaved itself into our everyday lives, into our neighbourhoods, in the structures of 'our own' state. There is a general tendency to view fascism, nationalism and racism as exaggerated deviations (from the otherwise 'democratic' European norm) and as socio-historic elements of only specific eras or states,

as in the case of Germany during WWII. Similarly, militarism seems to be perceived as a phenomenon that is only apparent in remote dictatorial regimes (where leaders wear military uniforms and tanks roam the streets) or in the ‘exceptional’ chapters of contemporary greek history (such as the military junta between 1967–1964). In any case, an analysis of militarism which focuses neither on N.Korea nor on the military junta of 1967, but instead, focuses its’ attention on Greece in 2015 under the rule of SY.RIZ.A, is not the ‘hottest’ of subjects. Even though Rosa Luxemburg taught us almost 100 years ago that “militarism in both its’ forms – as war and as armed peace – is a legitimate child, a logical result of capitalism”. However, we hope that through efforts such as this one, the genetic relationship between militarism and the state will become clear.

In today’s ‘reality’, the Greek Army, national defense and – so called – national affairs seem to be veiled in an invisible, protective bubble that nobody dares to rupture. Despite the end of the two-party era<sup>1</sup>, with its’ long term alternation of the same political figures, and despite the proclamations of SY.RIZ.A about a new era of “first time Left Wing” and the supposed sidelining of the old political regime, at its core, the state has carried on its’ business as usual. This, off course, comes as no surprise to anyone who understands the inextricable link between militarism, the status quo and the role of the government in administering and preserving class oppression.

In SY.RIZ.As’ case, at the same time as developing its’ partnership with AN.EL (the far-right party that has joined SY.RIZ.A to form the current coalition government), it also managed to exploit and absorb the social struggles that took place in recent years, particularly from the greek equivalent of the Indignados movement

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<sup>1</sup> The post-war scene of parliamentary politics in Greece was dominated by the interchanging of two main parties: the right wing party of ‘New Democracy’, and the center/ social democrats of PASOK.

himself, Alexis Tsipras, from a speech he gave in Parliament on 24/01/2011, as reported by the party newspaper, Avgi<sup>34</sup>:

...On the subject of the EEZ, the chairman of SY.RIZ.As’ central committee commented that Greece had done nothing about the EEZ of Kastelorizo but instead, left another country to recognise it first! [a/n: Direct reference to Israel recognising the greek EEZ of Kastelorizo] Alexis Tsipras raised five key issues:

- Why is Turkey expanding its territorial waters and defining its EEZ to the Black Sea but Greece is not doing the same in the Ionian sea?
- Why has Albania annulled the EEZ agreement which it co-signed with Greece? A. Tsipras pointed out that G. Papandreou did not react, did not bring the agreement to parliament, continued to join the chairman of the albanian socialist party, Edi Rama, in his pre-election campaign (even though he supported the appeal against the agreement), and therefore Albania remains on its path towards EU membership despite having withdrawn from the deal.
- Why are we not progressing in defining the EEZ with Libya which will include Gavdos’ rights? “What do you do when you meet with Gaddafi in Tripoli?” he wondered.
- Why are you not following Cyprus’ example? Have you not drawn any conclusions from the Cypriot governments’ efforts that can be of use to greek foreign policy? If so, why don’t you

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<sup>34</sup> See: [www.sarajevomag.gr](http://www.sarajevomag.gr)

strategy, and despite the lack of agreement<sup>32</sup>, began conducting research in the marine area. By doing so, it indicated that it is prepared to act unilaterally. This is particularly significant if one considers the importance of a few extra EEZ miles, in determining a country's involvement (or exclusion) from international operations, such as a pipeline through the Adriatic.

Greece's claims over the EEZ are a core part of its' foreign policy. We chose to focus on the example of Exclusive Economic Zones because we predict that they will play an increasingly big part in the future of inter-capitalist competition. In Greece's case, the EEZ is a vehicle through which greek bosses are attempting to expand their borders. The greek states' aggressive policies go hand in hand with its historical pursuits for territorial expansion. As workers, we have no reason to engage in war with one another over our rulers' interests. We must therefore oppose all efforts from those who try to entrap us within a 'national corpus' and silence us in the name of national interest.

SY.RIZ.A's strategy on foreign policy is clear not only from the little time it's been in government, but throughout the party's political career. We need only look back at an event organised on 12/02/14 through which the party presented its official positions in relation to the armed forces. Apart from the usual party political figures, the event featured a presentation by K. Grivas, a member of the party's Defense Committee but also a renowned supporter of far-right ideas who teaches defense analysis and geopolitical studies at the Military Academy. K. Grivas' views are in no way 'internationalist' and he has been interviewed by more than one fascist publication (such as Stoxos, Eleftheros Kosmos, Patria)<sup>33</sup>.

With this in mind, we present a number of statements below, by key SY.RIZ.A party officials. The first one is by the party leader

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<sup>32</sup> [www.kathimerini.gr](http://www.kathimerini.gr)

<sup>33</sup> A "Marshall" in the Left, [archive.efsyn.gr](http://archive.efsyn.gr)

that resided for many months in Parliament Square in Athens, to protest against austerity. By using the language of political and civil rights movements, but embedding it with a hefty dose of anti-memorandum patriotism, SY.RIZ.A set out to deflect the more radical, class-struggle elements of these movements, replacing them instead with more harmless demands for "democracy, progress and civilised values". Therefore, it not only managed to assimilate the types of resistance in which it had more or less participated in, but it also hijacked and capitalised on the demands of political movements that had never actually liaised with the party, by banking on their internal contradictions. It then presented itself as the only 'pragmatic' representative of this new, dynamic social force that emerged during that period of social upheaval. In this respect, along with gaining the support of parts of the capitalist class, the petty bourgeoisie and petty bosses, it is not a surprise that it also managed to gain the support of low waged workers and the unemployed. It also attracted many of those who had recently got off their sofas and had taken to the streets, but had become demoralized by the lack of immediate impact of their efforts, and were therefore prepared to deposit their hopes for a better future on a representational party-political structure which made many promises and contradictory claims.

At this point we must make an important note. The 'peoples' hope for better living conditions was not the only factor that led to SY.RIZ.As' growth and rise to power. One of the most important factors was the desire of the bourgeoisie to ensure public consent. It is often said that in the 'art' of governing humans, the whip must be accompanied by the carrot. Although in the past, the two-party system had been successful in undermining our labour power, it did so without sufficient public consent. The only way to create a more solid ground from which to perpetuate and maintain exploitation, was to come up with a new 'recipe' of governance which would allow capitalist restructuring and austerity measures to carry on without interruption. Instead of achieving this through

the usual mixture of riot police, plastic bullets, teargas, destabilization and street protest, this new 'recipe' aims to achieve it through widespread public consent.

The pre-election campaign made many important promises including an end to the various austerity programmes, the re-hiring of fired workers, pay-rises, a guaranteed minimum wage of 751 Euro for future generations, as well as committing to grant the demands of grassroots campaigns like the anti-gold mine struggle in Skouries, Chalkidiki. These false promises are the reason why those who initially wanted to believe them, are now making countless accusations of betrayal in the post-election period. For most people, however, SY.RIZ.A appears to have remained loyal and consistent to its' claims for maintaining stability, restructuring the parliamentary system, guaranteeing the development of Greece within Europe, relieving small-scale businesses and securing the market from further shocks.

In our case, as anti-militarists, we really do not feel deceived. When, following a meeting with army chiefs on 20/10/2014, Tsipras' proclaimed that "the state has continuity", we did not feel as though the true nature of the future coalition had only just appeared before our eyes. In the past, SY.RIZ.As' participation in the Conscientious Objectors movement had confused many people in believing that as the party rose to power, things would change (even if at the very least that meant less state persecution of conscientious objectors by the state). Yet, SY.RIZ.A has always deliberately kept a vague attitude on matters of the army and national defense, limited to claims for further "democratization and transparency" of the institution. Specifically, when it came to the issue of military service and the treatment of total objectors, there was a deafening silence before the elections.

In the last three years, there has been only one difference :If in 2012<sup>2</sup> – while SY.RIZ.A. was still in the opposition – it was neces-

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<sup>2</sup> left.gr

sults<sup>31</sup>. Greeces' former prime minister, A. Samaras, spoke of profits reaching 150 bil EURO from oil reserves in Wester Greece, when in the same period the rate of minimum wage had fallen well below the poverty line. On the other hand, when it comes to international pipelines, a few more miles in a countrys' EEZ can make all the difference. The problem is that greek bosses know all too well, that Kastelorizo is not entitled to the EEZ assigned to it by the greek government. They are also aware that in complicated cases such as the Greek – Turkish coastline, where the distance separating the two countries is much less than 200 nautical miles and the coastline is dotted with hundreds of islands and islets, it is almost certain that there will be need for international mediation. At the same time, countries with similar claims to Greece (as seen in similar disputes, such as Ukraine – Romania, Nicaragua – Colombia and France – Canada), have never won a claim in the International Courts to this day. Therefore, Greece must follow a more indirect route in order to pursue its interests.

Which brings us to the other two geographical points- the island of Gavdos and the Diapontia islands of Corfu (Ereikousa, Mathraki and Othonoi). Greece is aware that its' claim over Kastelorizo is unreasonable and has set out to finalise negotiations with Libya before it negotiates with Turkey. It is therefore attempting to strike a deal with Libya in which Gavdos is recognised as the most southern point of its EEZ. The dispute with Albania follows a similar pattern. In 2009, the greek foreign minister (Mpakogianni), signed a deal with the Albanian prime minister (Berisha) agreeing the EEZ between the two countries. However, the albanian constitutional courts annulled the deal after an appeal by the opposition party. The oppositions' main argument was that the deal favoured Greece. For greek bosses, this was a golden opportunity to openly state their interests and set a precedent for future negotiations with Turkey. In fact, Greece followed a considerably provocative

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<sup>31</sup> left.gr

eastern Mediterranean, which would enhance and upgrade our status. This requires unity, stability and persuasive arguments, as well as an awareness of our importance in the area. We are a European country, a member of the European Union and NATO, a stable democracy, the end point in Israel's life line: Tel Aviv – Nicosia – Athens [...] Let us actively contribute to our alliances, by pointing out our common interests, pursuing them with realism and extracting the maximum possible benefits for Hellenism – from the river Sgubin and Orestiada to Karpasia.”

This is clearly a revival of the Great Idea (Megáli Idéa) by greek bosses: to expand Greece's territory from the Sgubin river in Southern Albania, to the Karpas peninsula in Cyprus. In other words, Greece may not be the neighbours' goat, but the neighbours' goat definitely belongs to Greece. As for the supposed existence of new energy reserves, it has become clear (mainly by admittance of various officials working for the regime), that such claims are nothing more than a strategic delusion. A characteristic example, is the professor of Geochemistry at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Panagiotis Mitropoulos, who in 2008, during his lecturing course on 'Mineral raw materials, Organic compounds and Oil', categorically stated: "There is no petrol within greek territory. Let's be serious. Anyone who states otherwise is a charlatan, not a scientist"<sup>30</sup>. In 2010, however, after being appointed manager at the Institute of Geology and Mineral Exploration, the same professor drastically changed his tune, and set out to convince us that we were soon to be swimming in oil... The search for energy reserves in Cyprus' territory has also failed, since research in two drilling fields (Amathousa and Onasagoras) has produced no re-

<sup>30</sup> Reference from a students' testament in Jurassic Research collective magazine, issue 4, 03/14 [jurassiccollective.wordpress.com](http://jurassiccollective.wordpress.com)

sary for five MPs to file a question in order for the 6000 Euro fine to be adjusted to the financial means of the accused, in 2015<sup>3</sup> SY.RIZ.A, as a ruling party, legislated that a question must be deposited by (at least) 46 MPs. No mention of abolishing conscription, no alternatives to military service, not a word about the absurd criminalisation of those who avoid being drafted, not the slightest concern for the persecution and convictions of their own supporters... On the other hand, there was plenty of concern about the closure of army camps in Arta, Konitsa and Filiates<sup>4</sup>. Similarly, worries had been expressed regarding the potential closure the only training centre for new recruits in Arta. These worries had been expressed in the context of a parliamentary question, signed on the 28/09/12 by three of the SY.RIZ.A MPs in Epirus, namely Gerovasili (prefecture of Arta), Mandas (prefecture of Ioannina), Barkas (prefecture of Preveza)<sup>5</sup>.

At this point, we should note, that even though the State has continued its' business as usual since the coalition of SY.RIZ.A & AN.EL have taken over state administration, this does not mean that nothing has changed. If this was the case, we would not have to re-examine the current state of affairs or re-evaluate our aims and objectives. The mere fact that the state can carry on with its' strategy but with greater tolerance from the public, is an extremely significant and alarming development. Militarism, therefore, is one of the fields in which the continuation of the State becomes totally obvious- whether through the states' strategies around foreign policy, or through the persecution and oppression of antimilitarists.

The aim of this presentation is to expose the relationship between expansionism and militarism and how it relates to the constructed concept of national unity. We believe that the successful implementation of military preparations, both within and beyond

<sup>3</sup> [left.gr](http://left.gr)

<sup>4</sup> As seen in Olga Gerovasilis' statement on 19/07/13 (See [SY.RIZ.Aartas.blogspot.gr](http://SY.RIZ.Aartas.blogspot.gr))

<sup>5</sup> [syriza-artas.blogspot.gr](http://syriza-artas.blogspot.gr)

the country's borders, is a necessary prerequisite in order for the Greek bosses to achieve their expansionist aims (for example in the scramble over the Exclusive Economic Zone which aims to expand the country's control at sea). These preparations require a solid sense of national unity which will act as a melting pot for conflicting social and class interests, by disarming and absorbing class struggle in favour of "national interest" and the "debt to ones' country". A debt that requires our own blood as payment.

## A CLOSER LOOK AT THE EXAMPLES

"After all, the rule of diplomacy by which there are no age-old friends or enemies, but merely age-old interests, is unquestionable."

Stavros Tzimas, Kathimerini, 24/07/15, "The 'Kosovo' Card"

It is clearly obvious Greece's central geostrategical interests, during this period, lie in the eastern Mediterranean<sup>6</sup>. The strengthening of the alliance between Greece-Cyprus-Israel-Egypt is the greek governments' number one priority. The greek state is currently participating in joint military exercises with Israel and Cyprus, forming a strong alliance to best serve capitalist interests in the Eastern Mediterranean. Greece's absence from the U.N. vote (10/09/15), in regard to the proposal to hang the Palestinian flag outside the organization's headquarters, should in no case be seen as accidental. In fact, the annual multinational joint naval drill between Greek, Israeli and American naval forces continues under the code name "NobleDina", since Greece replaced Turkey in the drill in 2012. This year's drill started from the military base in Souda (Crete) on 29/04/15<sup>7</sup>. In a rather suspect coincidence,

<sup>6</sup> For further info see: "The Eastern Mediterranean Strategy", Autonomie Antifa, 2015

<sup>7</sup> navaltoday.com

that there are hugely important shifts taking place across the wider Mediterranean area. To this end, Greece, has on the one hand participated in most of the wars taking place in the area (from Afghanistan and Iraq, to Libya and Syria), and on the other hand has desperately sought to be part of any international block that will grant its' unreasonable demands in the Aegean sea. The most characteristic example of this, is Greece's recent collaboration with Israel. The shifting relations between Turkey, Israel and the USA, particularly since the invasion of Iraq in 2003, have presented Greece with renewed opportunity for imperialist pursuits. In the last decade, Israel has been facing increasing geopolitical insecurity, and this has forced it to seek new alliances. In this context, Israel and Greece have been engaging in numerous political exercises, whilst Israel is the only country that acknowledges Kastelorizo as part of the greek EEZ<sup>28</sup>. At the same time, Greece has taken full advantage of the relationship between Athens and Nicosia (Cyprus), as well as a string of current events that are shifting the status quo of the eastern Mediterranean (ie. mavi marmara, the arab spring, Barbaros' research in Cyprus), in order to strengthen its own status. In an article written by renowned greek fascist F. Kranidiotis entitled "Greece is not the neighbours' goat"<sup>29</sup>, we are given a glimpse into the minds of the greek bourgeoisie and its fascist cronies:

" Now more than ever, it is of paramount importance to use these two weapons- our energy reserves and the new relationship between Greece, Cyprus and Israel, to convince the USA to become the fourth partner in a new geopolitical arrangement in the

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making a clear statement concerning Greece's sovereign interests. In the former PM's own words: "Kastelorizo is particularly important. It is important to Greece, for everything that we are negotiating in the wider area, the energy reserves, the continental shelf, etc. The fact that Kastelorizo has been promoted on an international level should be applauded [...]"

<sup>28</sup> www.defencenet.gr

<sup>29</sup> www.dimokratianews.gr, 14 August 2013

pipelines have inundated the media, and along with a host of specialist gurus, have set out to convince us that all the above are the key to us surviving our collective devaluation imposed by the bosses. In the short space of this introduction, we will try to highlight the main aims of greek foreign policy. For this purpose, we will look at the example of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and attempts to define it over the last few years. Specifically, even though the Law of the Sea makes reference to the Continental shelf and Exclusive Economic Zones as early as 1982, the greek public became accustomed to the latter term only in 2010.

The map that outlines the greek states' definition of the greek EEZ, even at a first glance, it is immediately clear that Greece has its eye set on most of the eastern Mediterranean. This represents revival of old imperialist tendencies (Great Idea)<sup>26</sup> and comes into direct conflict with the aspirations of neighbouring states. The main points of friction are the Diapontia islands on the border with Albania, Gavdos on the border with Libya and the 'legendary' Kastelorizo on the border with Turkey.

Kastelorizo is a key site for greek foreign policy because it not only gives Greece full sovereign rights over a huge area, including fishing rights, it also means that the greek EEZ will border with that of Cyprus<sup>27</sup>. In recent years, greek bosses have understood

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<sup>26</sup> Great Idea (Megáli Idéa) was an irredentist concept of greek nationalism, that expressed the goal of establishing a greek state that would encompass all ethnic greek-inhabited areas, including the large greek populations that were still under Ottoman Empire rule after the greek War of Independence, with Istanbul as its new capital. It was proposed by PM Ioannis Kolettis in 1844

<sup>27</sup> Following the military fiasco over the islet of Imia in 1996, the greek state attempted to use Kastelorizo to strengthen its' foreign policy. During that time a well-known right wing radio station (SKAI FM) attempted to setup a new station in Kastelorizo from which it would broadcast its shows. The whole operation was abandoned shortly after. Then in 2010, G. Papandreou, Greece's prime minister at the time, made his infamous public announcement that Greece was officially in trouble and would be entering a restructuring programme with the IMF. The announcement was set and publicly broadcasted from the island of Kastelorizo,

the exact same day, prime minister A. Tsipras held a meeting — for the first time ever- with Egypt's dictator El Sisi. The meeting took place on Cyprian soil, hosted by the president of Cyprus, Anastasiades. Another meeting took place soon after, during the grand opening of the new Suez Canal on the 6/08/15. Not long ago, in an even stranger coincidence, just one day before the 21<sup>st</sup> of April, the Greek defense minister P. Kammenos traveled to Cairo to make an agreement "on issues of defense"<sup>8</sup>. The agreement included an arms deal whereby Greece sold 100 used battle tanks to Egypt<sup>9</sup>. While being in the lead opposition, A. Tsipras repeatedly attacked the previous right-wing government leader, A. Samaras, for holding meetings with El Sisi who, as Tsipras proclaimed, was part of the military regime that murdered and imprisoned Egyptian rebels.

Today, the military continues its' missions' beyond the country's borders in order to secure Greece's place in a number of expansionist plans. To this end, Greece took part in NATO's annual military naval exercise — Sea Breeze 2015, held by the U.S. and the Ukraine in the Black Sea, directly contesting Russia<sup>10</sup>. Efforts to upgrade the country's geostratigical status continue in every direction- whether through plans for gas pipelines or disputes over Exclusive Economic Zones (E.E.Z.). On the 19<sup>th</sup> of June, the greek media reported the signing of a preliminary agreement between Athens and Moscow allowing the passage of a Russian gas pipe through greek soil. The pipeline is estimated to be completed in 2019<sup>11</sup>. Greece is strengthening its' position in NATO by planning the construction of new bases in the near future. In a meeting between Greek defense minister P. Kammenos and U.S. deputy defense minister Christine Wormouth, at the U.S. Pentagon on the 21/05/2015, the Greek proposal for a new base in Carpathos was dis-

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<sup>8</sup> [www.tovima.gr](http://www.tovima.gr)

<sup>9</sup> Kyriakatiki Demokratia, 26/07/15, "F-16, frigates and tanks for sale!"

<sup>10</sup> [www.mc.nato.int/Sea.aspx](http://www.mc.nato.int/Sea.aspx)

<sup>11</sup> [www.huffingtonpost.gr](http://www.huffingtonpost.gr)

cussed. It's worth noting that in all the speculation going on about Greek capitalism and how it may be forced to leave the eurozone, there was never an issue about the country leaving NATO. In fact the secretary general of the Stoltenberg Alliance, commented on how the new Left / far right coalition government "never loses the opportunity to declare its allegiance to NATO and I salute them for it"<sup>12</sup>. In the same statement he maintained that Greece should not reduce its military spending. Let it also be noted that this so-called 'Left' government maintains a proportionally huge amount on military spending in relation to the country's' GDP. In 2014, the amount of military spending summed up to 2,2% of the GDP, percentage second only to the U.S. within NATO.

Greece's efforts to reconstruct the Greek weapons industry follow similar spirit. On 22/02/15, an announcement on the webpage 'defencenet.gr', declares the first major success of the Ministry of Defense in trying to revitalize the National Defence Industry (NDI). During IDEX 2015, the military exhibition at Abu Dhabi, P.Kammenos secured an agreement worth 100m. euros annually for repairing and maintaining the United Emirats' Mirage aircrafts based at the hangars in Tanagra<sup>13</sup>. The deputy Defense Minister, Kostas Isihos, during his visit to the border region of Pogonio on 8/05/15, held a meeting with the manager of the Metalworks Industry Of Epirus, George Adamos, promising him a 'take-off' of profits through the renewal of the industry's collaboration with (the state-owned) Greek Defense Systems. At the same time he announced the creation of a War Museum in Kalpaki, which "will lead to an increase in tourism in the area but will mostly remind visitors of the valor and sacrifice of the Greeks when fighting for their ideals, but also the hardships of war."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> www.tanea.gr

<sup>13</sup> The first major deal for the defense industry: P.Kammenos bagged the UAEs' Mirage 2000-9, defence-net.gr, 22/02/15

<sup>14</sup> www.agon.gr

'national importance'), and domestic stability (which allows the development of expansionist foreign policy)- all are carrying on their business as usual.

## EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE

"International Law is national interest equipped with better Army, Navy and Air forces"

Ioannis Mazis, Geopolitics: Theory and practice, Papazisi, 2002

In order to understand SY.RIZ.As' political strategy on militarism, we must clarify a number of things. Firstly, SY.RIZ.A has been part of the greek state for decades. As in the case of the Greek Communist Party (KKE), SY.RIZ.A has constituted the left side of the state for years, and has a long history of balancing the states' stability, of mediating class differences and absorbing social struggle. Secondly, if we define the state as the collegial body of the ruling class then it would be a mistake to regard a state and its' government as the same thing. Contemporary states, including Greece, have institutions, goals, objectives and strategies that follow a historic continuum.

Despite the difficulties facing greek capitalism in the last five years, it became obvious early on, that the greek state intended to make full use of its' potential geostrategic importance in order to improve its' status. In an article to the Financial Times on 20/02/15, Marc Chandler sets his arguments for "Greece's huge geopolitical importance", and states: "the country is not being rewarded enough for its invaluable contribution to Europe's common defense"<sup>25</sup>. And so, in the last five years concepts and terms such as geopolitics, geostrategy, exclusive economic zones and gas

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<sup>25</sup> www.euro2day.gr

programme, on a voluntary basis, in order for them to “be able, if needed, to deal with any danger facing our country and also staff services that would disengage other personal needed in battle”<sup>23</sup>.

In conclusion, we must also mention that the prosecution of objectors has also continued, with court trials, fines and financial burdening, and even house raids without warrants against objectors. To mention a few incidents:

- 29/04/15- Police raid the family home of Th.Nedelkopoulos who is accused of avoiding being drafted and had been issued a warrant for his arrest<sup>24</sup>
- 14/05/15- Total objector M.Tolis was charged with draft evasion and sentenced to 10 months imprisonment with a 2-year suspension (which is two months more than what he was charged with under the previous far-right government)
- 2016/06/15- The Athenian Appeal Courts reinstated the 10 month sentence of 48 year old conscientious objector D.Sotiropoulos
- 17/06/15- Objector Th. Chatziaggelou was sentenced to 10 months imprisonment with a 3 year suspension
- 25/06/15- Total objector D.Chatzivasiliadis was charged with draft evasion and sentenced to a total of 16 months. A new fine of 6000 EURO was also issued, the third of its kind.

Numerous applications for alternative military service by objectors, have been systematically refused by army authorities and the Defense Ministry.

As we can see, in the age of SY.RIZ.A, the greek state, the army, militarism (which is infiltrating the social fabric with matters of

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<sup>23</sup> [www.efsyn.gr](http://www.efsyn.gr)

<sup>24</sup> [xupolutotagma.squat.gr/2015/04/30/sxetika\\_me\\_thn\\_eisvoli\\_sto\\_spiti\\_olikou\\_arnhth\\_nedlou\\_29-04-15/](http://xupolutotagma.squat.gr/2015/04/30/sxetika_me_thn_eisvoli_sto_spiti_olikou_arnhth_nedlou_29-04-15/)

At the same time, the supply of arms continues, with the most outrageous example being the decision of the Governing Body for Foreign Policy and Defense (KYSEA), to upgrade 35-year-old anti-submarine aircrafts<sup>15</sup>. In fact, only one and a half months after the elections, Kammenos got an approval from the prime minister and council members to close a costly deal with the American company Lockheed, contracted to modernize military aircrafts for 500m. dollars. Former defense minister Dendias had repeatedly tried to implement this same programme right up until the elections. He faced several reactions within his own party (the right wing party of New democracy), the ministry of finance and from Th. Dritsas, an MP of SY.RIZ.A, who claimed that “SY.RIZ.A will not accept proceedings from a biased agreement.”<sup>16</sup> It was obviously impossible for such a deal to be achieved by a government lacking in public support, amidst the crisis and at the eve of the election. However, their successors found it easy to implement it. Only 48 days after the election, Kammenos managed to get the approval of both the prime minister and KYSEA members, in order to convince the finance staff to fork out the 45 mil. dollar deposit needed to secure the deal with the American company. Perhaps Dritsas’ anxiety to strike the deal before his government was voted out, had something to do with the potential bonuses that sometimes accompany contracts such as this one.

On the other hand, in regards to domestic militarism, things are again pretty similar. The militarized management of migration and the constant undermining of migrants continues. SY.RIZ.A has fully accepted Greece’s role as Fortress Europe’s border guard and is in fact using it as a negotiation tool, threatening that they will unleash the wave of ‘Jihadists’ towards Europe whenever the sensitive matter of european funds is mentioned. In the informal meeting of E.U. foreign policy ministers in Riga, Latvia, N. Kotzias

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<sup>15</sup> [www.protothema.gr](http://www.protothema.gr)

<sup>16</sup> [www.onalert.gr](http://www.onalert.gr)

warned in a manner only a far-right politician could, that “there will be millions of immigrants and thousands of Jihadists unleashed upon Europe should Greece collapse financially”<sup>17</sup>. More and more conscripts are sent to complete their military service in the northern border of Evros, where Frontex and the newly built Wall manage the flow of migrants and refugees created by the greek state and its’ allies. As the military and coastguard continue to drown refugees in the Aegean, those who manage to survive are then hypocritically ‘welcomed’ and supported in the islands and concentration camps along the borders. Hundreds of refugees are transferred from one makeshift camp to another and the army is brought in to manage and supervise their ‘well being’<sup>18</sup>.

The Greek army has never stopped training troops to be used in riot repression. Neither has the infamous 71<sup>st</sup> airborne regiment ceased its activities. And how could it, when the military is destined to intervene whenever it’s little brother – the greek police, has a rough time. As revealed by the Head of the general navy staff, Kosmas Christides, just in the recent past, the armed forces have been asked to intervene on civic matters at least three times<sup>19</sup>. However, we have to give it to the police for looking up to it’s older brother, the army. The famous drones that were supposedly going to save us from forest fires are currently in the hands of the Greek police. Their acquisition was set forth after several meetings of greek officials with an Israeli corporation, during the height of public protests in 2011. The main mission of these drones is obviously to be used as surveillance as part of the repressive, anti-immigrant and anti-terrorist policies of the Greek state.

Ideological propaganda aimed at boosting national conscience, has also intensified. The ruling party, in its’ recent past as the lead opposition, used to characterize military marches as an anachronis-

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<sup>17</sup> [www.skai.gr](http://www.skai.gr)

<sup>18</sup> [www.rizospastis.gr](http://www.rizospastis.gr)

<sup>19</sup> [www.koutipandoras.gr](http://www.koutipandoras.gr)

tic residue of fascist inspiration. However, it not only failed to abolish them, but on the contrary, it restored the use of battle tanks that had been previously withdrawn from their predecessors due to the high expense on fuels during the crisis. Furthermore, the military parade on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March 2015 in Athens was ‘spiced up’ with junta-like celebrations, including military bands playing folk songs and soldiers giving away treats to dancing patriots in Syntagma square. The military is planning the publication of school books, which will promote the nations’ ‘just’ claims against Germany on the matter of wartime compensation<sup>20</sup>. Moreover, SY.RIZ.A MP Konstantinos Barkas, representing the prime minister, set out to continue the so-called North Epirus struggle, an age-old imperialist aspiration that has its sights set on the north-western border of Greece. In his speech during the first electoral assembly of the candidate mayor of the city of Himara (Freedy Beleri, 20/05/15), which was full of chauvinistic warmongering, he speaks of a ‘national struggle’ that must be fought “for the sake of a part of the Greek population which must be brought back to us...”<sup>21</sup>

At the same time, plans to recreate MOMA- military engineer units that existed in the post war era involved in the restructuring process, have been approved and are ready to exploit the unpaid labour of conscripts forced into the army. The armys’ first Engineering Unit (DIDERGON), is already in operation and is taking on and managing contracts for public projects such as road construction and highway maintenance<sup>22</sup>. Ideas of how to further exploit the unpaid labour offered by the obligatory military service system include appointing teachers and doctors who are completing their military service in schools and hospitals. The only thing they’d get in return is a work experience certificate... Another interesting idea is Kammenos’ plans to include women in the basic army training

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<sup>20</sup> [www.tanea.gr](http://www.tanea.gr)

<sup>21</sup> He is off course referring to the remaining traces of greek-speaking communities on the other side of the Albanian border, See – [www.pelasgoskoritsas.gr](http://www.pelasgoskoritsas.gr)

<sup>22</sup> [www.onalert.gr](http://www.onalert.gr)