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## **UNDERMINING DEMOCRACY AND NATIONAL SECURITY: PUBLIC POLICY AND COVERT ACTIONS OF THE U.S. IN GREECE DURING THE COLD WAR**

### **Abstract**

The subject of this paper is the political penetration of the United States into Greece during the Cold War, with a particular emphasis on the role and position of the Greek military in this process. The aim of the study is to explore, describe, and explain the causes, *modus operandi*, and consequences of the manipulation of the political systems of smaller countries by great powers, particularly from the perspective of their subjugation, dependency, and incorporation into an international order based on the division of spheres of influence. The paper examines this phenomenon through a synthesis of theoretical concepts from international politics and civil-military relations as the most significant institutional component of defence policy and a crucial aspect of national security policy, utilising methods of qualitative analysis, triangulation, and process tracing through the case study methodology. The research findings indicate that the armed forces and the Central Intelligence Service of Greece, as targets of US political penetration, became key instruments for maintaining an undemocratic order through political interference and reduced combat readiness in favour of US foreign policy goals. The conclusions underline the importance of strengthening

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institutional capacities as essential conditions for defending national sovereignty and democracy.

**Keywords:** international relations, security, civil-military relations, hierarchy, political penetration, sovereignty, democracy, Cold War, USA, Greece

## INTRODUCTION

Foreign influence represents a major political and security problem, as it directly calls into question concepts of sovereignty, autonomy, and the balance of power within the international system. External interference can lead to the undermining of internal political independence, the erosion of democracy, the weakening of national security, and the subjugation of states within hierarchically organised international structures dominated by great powers. The case of Greece during the Cold War provides a compelling example of this process, as its geopolitical position made the country a strategic focus of the United States' (US) efforts to strengthen its influence in a region critical to Western security architecture. Although scientists bear significant responsibility "when security is at stake" (Milošević and Stojadinović 2024, 28), the illegitimate influence of great powers on the development, organisation, and interrelations of democratic and security institutions in smaller countries has not often been addressed in the academic literature on international relations and security studies. In this regard, the case study of Greece offers valuable insights into how political penetration by a great power can lead to the erosion of sovereignty and the long-term implications such dependency can have on democracy, institutional stability, and national security.

Theoretical generalisation is insufficient for a thorough understanding of this phenomenon. It is impossible to fully grasp the geopolitical and strategic interests of the US at the dawn of the Cold War, the decision-making rationale of this great power when handling key policies, or the *modus operandi* of its implementation, nor establish a direct link between decisions made in Washington and developments occurring in Greece, without resorting to historical narration. For this reason, archival records served as the most valuable data sources. Primarily, these included published documents from the US security and foreign policy apparatus (Foreign Relations of the United States [FRUS]) and

unpublished materials stored in the Serbian state, military, and diplomatic archives, which are particularly relevant due to Yugoslavia's active role in the given context and period. Yugoslav diplomatic and military representatives were uniquely positioned to gain in-depth insights into the circumstances at the time.

Using the methods of qualitative analysis and triangulation of various sources, types, and categories of data, as well as tracking processes, this study investigates the causal relationship between: (1) the policies and actions of the US towards Greece immediately before and after the adoption of the Truman Doctrine, and (2) the development of an institutional framework governing democratic civilian institutions and their relationship with security organisations, as well as the everyday practices, specific actions, procedures, and behaviours in US interactions with Greek civilian and security elites. The aim of the study is to examine, describe, and explain the causes, mechanisms, and consequences of the US establishment of dominance over Greek national institutions during the early Cold War period from the perspective of shaping a hierarchical international system. A theoretical framework is presented to explore the influence of a great power on the development of democracy and civil-military relations (CMR) in a country situated within its sphere of interest. The subsequent discussion includes an analysis of the geopolitical and strategic reasoning behind US actions towards Greece, assessing their consequences for the institutional framework, everyday democratic practices, and CMR within the studied context.

The central thesis of the study posits that at the dawn of the Cold War, the US—guided exclusively by the pursuit of its geopolitical and strategic security interests—aimed to achieve hegemony by employing instruments available within the framework of agreed spheres of influence. With a high degree of intensity, these actions negatively impacted the development of democratic institutions and CMR in Greece, seeking to mould their character to align with US interests and objectives. In other words, the inherent features of the international system, in which great powers possess an insatiable drive for power and aggressive intentions, result in the exploitation of hierarchically organised spheres of interest to serve the security of leading nations. In smaller countries subjected to the zones of influence of great powers, depending on the degree of their geopolitical significance and the entrenched strength of indigenous national institutions, this process can not only disrupt the established balance in CMR but also challenge the democratic character and independence of national institutions.

## **POLITICAL PENETRATION AND DEMOCRATIC CIVILIAN CONTROL OF THE MILITARY IN DEPENDENT SOCIETIES**

Firmly rooted in the maxim that “during the time men live without a common Power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called Warre; and such a warre, as is of every man, against every man” (Hobbes 1985, 185), the realist perspective on international politics starts from the fundamental assumption that the structure of the international system is anarchic (Morgenthau 2006; Waltz 1979). The absence of a supreme authority compels states, particularly great powers whose ultimate goal is hegemony, to insatiably increase their power (Mearsheimer 1990: 1994–1995; 2001). A slightly different view on relations between states finds its roots in the creation of the Athenian League before the Peloponnesian Wars (Thucydides 2010, 33–47), the concept of sovereignty as a permissive right not based solely on brute force but on a just, reasonable, and reciprocal obligation between a sovereign and their subjects (Bodin 1992), and the principle that “nations are not primarily ruled by laws, less by violence” but rather “by a knowledge of their temper, and by a judicious management of it” (Burke [1874] 1999, 70–71). These notions underpin the perspective that the international system is not exclusively a state of anarchy and that great powers tend to construct hierarchical order through a social contract that grants them legitimate authority, establishing dominance over weaker states (Lake 1996; 2007; 2009). While recognising that legitimate authority based on “positive consequences” for other states is often more effective than coercion (Walt 2005, 163–166), realist scholars predominantly agree that great powers typically favour traditional methods. Among these methods are the exertion of illegitimate influence over smaller states through specific tools of great power policy: international bribery—offering economic and military assistance that renders the recipient dependent—and political penetration, which manifests as the manipulation of smaller states’ political systems (Walt 1985; 1990).

Regarding civil-military relations (CMR), the developmental construct of the garrison state suggests that prolonged international tensions can lead to the dominance of military elites and the militarisation of society. In such a state, all societal activities are subordinated to war preparations, and its elite maintain power through fear of war (Lasswell 1937; 1941; 1997). The institutional theory emphasises objective civilian

control, achieved by professionalising the military and distancing it from politics, which simultaneously ensures subordination to civilian authority and combat readiness. In contrast, subjective control involves the inclusion of the military in politics, which paradoxically reduces civilian control (Huntington 1957; 1968). The convergence theory highlights that the expansion of military size and the military's political responsibilities disrupt traditional concepts of professionalism. The modern military assumes a more openly political character, becoming integrated into society, politically aware, sensitive to broader contexts, and oriented towards maintaining international balance rather than exclusively achieving victory (Janowitz 1960; 1964; 1977). Finer (Finer 2017) also rejected the argument that professionalism guarantees the military's political neutrality, asserting the opposite – that professionalism often encourages military intervention in politics. According to him, military interference in politics is more likely in states with less developed and less mature political societies.

This broad theoretical framework enables a synthesis of fundamental assumptions through which the causes and consequences of a great power's policy can be understood as a dialectical interdependence between the dynamics and logic of power. This interdependence leads to the creation of highly hierarchical alliances and the militarisation of society, which simultaneously undermines both democratic civilian patterns and professional military norms. This theoretical *mélange* is particularly useful for analysing the impact of great power policies on the democratic civilian control of the military in smaller states, as it sheds light on the structural causal relationship between increased tensions among great powers and the strengthening of military power at the expense of civilian institutions. It highlights the profound implications of external influence on local security and societal structures, facilitating a nuanced understanding of the geopolitical and strategic aspects of great power policies towards smaller states, the militarisation of society, and the potential erosion of democratic principles and civilian authority in the decision-making process.

## **ESTABLISHING HIERARCHY THROUGH AGREEMENTS BETWEEN GREAT POWERS**

On the threshold of the Cold War, the great powers were afflicted with “geospatial rapacity” (Stepić 2019, 76), extending their “security

umbrella” to safeguard strategically significant geographical locations (Blagojević 2025, 42), seeking opportunities to gain power at the expense of their rivals and believing that the best way “is to achieve hegemony now” (Mearsheimer 2001, 35). This was exemplified by a pivotal event that initiated the adoption of the Truman Doctrine and drove the US to take control over Greece. The event occurred on 7 August 1946, during the Paris Peace Conference, when the Soviet Union (USSR) submitted a request for a revision of the Montreux Convention, demanding oversight of the Black Sea Straits. This prompted Dean Acheson, the acting US Secretary of State, to present a memorandum to President Harry Truman on 15 August. The key conclusion of the memorandum was that “the primary objective of the Soviet Union is to obtain control of Turkey,” that if Moscow succeeded in its objective, “it will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to prevent the Soviet Union from obtaining control over Greece and over the whole Near and Middle East” and that once it has “obtained full mastery of this territory, which is strategically important from the point of view of resources, including oil, and from the point of view of communications, it will be in a much stronger position to obtain its objectives in India and China” (FRUS 1946). Truman adopted Acheson’s recommendation and decided that the US should rapidly provide substantial military and economic aid to Greece and Turkey (Acheson 1969; Ristović 2016). This marked “the first clear and indeed vivid statements of the containment doctrine,” a sort of “axiomatic construct” and a point of no return from which all subsequent interpretations and assessments arose concluding that the USSR was not a great power operating within the established framework of the international system, but rather a revolutionary state bent on overthrowing that system (Yergin 1977, 234–235).

At the same meeting, Acheson (1969, 195) emphasised the strategic connection between Greece and Turkey, stating to Truman that everything that transpired in Turkey would have a direct impact on Greece and, ultimately, on the entire Middle East, which, on the eve of the Cold War, “held special significance for American foreign policy, primarily because of energy security but also as an important geopolitical arena” (Pavković 2019, 64). All of this led the US to articulate its policy by viewing Greece and Turkey as two interconnected entities, “Siamese twins” crucial for safeguarding American security interests; as well as to the transformation of Greece into “the alternative option” in US foreign policy in the region in case of a deterioration in US-Turkish relations

(Roubatis 1987, 25, 56). The Truman Doctrine was formally announced on 12 March 1947 in a speech before both houses of Congress, during which Truman mentioned democracy no fewer than six times as the *raison d'être* for providing military and economic aid to Greece (NA, USHR, RG-233; Truman 1955). By 23 March, Yugoslavia's ambassador in Washington, Sava Kosanović, had assessed in a report that Truman's speech had initiated a process that "could have major consequences for political development" that were "much farther-reaching than what the potential aid to Greece of several hundred million dollars might imply" (AJ, ZSK, 83, K-8).

From "the military point of view," the US Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) considered that "Turkey is strategically more important than Greece since it dominates major air, land, and sea routes from the USSR to the Cairo–Suez area and to the Middle East oil fields" (FRUS 1948b). The JCS also estimated that "even with considerable military and economic assistance from the United States, Greece will in all probability never have the capability of successfully resisting attacks in force which the USSR and/or her satellites could launch against her long northern frontier," while also noting that "Greek military spirit is now woefully lacking" (FRUS 1948b). Based on these considerations, the US JCS offered the Secretary of Defence the following definition of the long-term US strategic interests regarding the Greek military: "a) Greece: A Greek military establishment capable of maintaining internal security in order to avoid the communist domination of Greece" (FRUS 1948b). Based on the assessments and deliberations of the military establishment, the US National Security Council (NSC) adopted a document at the end of March 1949 that became the cornerstone of a decades-long US policy towards Greece. Entitled "US Objectives with Respect to Greece and Turkey to Counter Soviet Threats to US Security" (FRUS 1949), this document relegated the mission of the Hellenic Armed Forces (HAF) to maintaining internal security while assigning Turkey's military the traditional mission of defending the country from external military threats through deterrence and the protection of its territorial integrity and sovereignty.

When, two years later, the US intelligence and security community proposed Turkey's membership in NATO (FRUS 1951b; 1951c), Greece was automatically included alongside Turkey, following the logic of the "Siamese twins," albeit as a passive actor. Thus, Greece did not become a member of NATO by its own initiative but rather through the convergence



of US and Turkish interests in countering the Soviet threat. The fact that the US structured its sphere of influence in the Balkans as a three-tiered hierarchy—with Greece situated below Turkey and at the very bottom of the hierarchical ladder, atop which the US itself stood—raises questions about the conventional conception of hierarchy as a dyadic relationship between two units within the international system (Lake 1996; 2009). In this sense, I would argue that hierarchy in international relations can also take the form of a triadic or polymeric relationship, representing an interaction between a great power and multiple smaller states organised in an asymmetrical ranked order. This ranking is stepwise—from the highest position to the lowest—according to the value and significance those smaller states hold for the actor at the top of the hierarchy.

The construct of hierarchy in international relations is founded upon the notion of legitimate authority and the premise that the subordinate party voluntarily agrees to submit to the domination of the stronger party (Lake 1996; 2007; 2009). However, this was not the case for Greece. Its inclusion in the American sphere of influence, including its subsequent accession to NATO, was not based on the free will of the Greek people. Greece was, in fact, an object of hierarchical structuring of the international system, shaped by agreements between great powers. Initially, Greece was subordinated to Great Britain as part of a “horse trading” agreement between Joseph Stalin and Winston Churchill (Kissinger 1994a, 413–414) and subsequently passed into American hands – again, involuntarily (Kennedy-Pipe 1995; Kissinger 1994b). The Greek Civil War (1946–1949) was merely the immediate trigger for the Truman Doctrine, the political penetration of the US through economic and military aid, and Greece’s admission into NATO. This is evidenced by the fact that the USSR never firmly supported the Greek communists. Stalin remained committed to the agreement he reached with Churchill between 9 and 10 October 1944 in Moscow regarding the division of spheres of influence in the Balkans, under which Greece fell under the dominant influence of Britain and the US (Churchill 1953). What is more, Stalin “rigidly refrained from using his vast trouble-making capacity in the Greek cauldron and left Churchill a free hand to deal with the Communist guerrillas there” (Jenkins 2002, 760).

That Greece fell under US domination through an agreement between the great powers, and that the USSR adhered to the agreement for reasons of *realpolitik*, is further confirmed by Stalin’s last conversation with the Bulgarian and Yugoslav leadership prior to the Cominform



Resolution, held in Moscow on 10 February 1948. As recorded first at the meeting itself (AJ, KMJ, 836, I-3-b/651) and later in the memoirs of Milovan Djilas (Djilas 1983, 135; 2014, 128), Stalin stated that the uprising in Greece should be ended as soon as possible and remarked: “What do you think, that the United States, the most powerful state in the world, will permit you to break their line of communication in the Mediterranean Sea! Nonsense. And we have no navy.” This direction of the conversation was also confirmed by Edvard Kardelj (Kardelj 1982, 107–108), who noted that once he heard Stalin’s views, it became clear to him why Soviet assistance to the Greek uprising “remained a matter of words, with only a token material effort.”

On the threshold of the Cold War, the international security environment was not favourable for American support of democratic governance in Greece. The US, which “had important strategic, political, and economic motives” to assume a comprehensive global role (Lundestad 1999, 195), was preoccupied with preparing to confront the USSR in order to protect and expand its sphere of influence. The main reason used to justify the suppression of democracy and the intervention of the Greek military in politics was the fear of communism. As a result, until 1974, Greece remained “the only country in which personnel from the resistance movement played no role in the political life of the nation” (DA, PA, K-40, f. 15, d. 44962). In such circumstances, which Lasswell (Lasswell 1997, 58) identified in his aggregate hypothesis as “the fundamental conditions of a garrison system,” preserving an anti-communist Greece as a staunch ally firmly bound to the Western bloc was far more important than establishing a democratic regime.

In this respect, the most significant causes of the Greek military’s influence on politics were not military but political in nature. They did not reflect the social or organisational characteristics of the military establishment but rather the political and institutional structure of the hierarchical order established by agreements between the great powers. Democratic governance in Greece was an obstacle to the effective implementation of American interests in the broader Eastern Mediterranean region, and the undue influence of the military on politics was a logical extension and consequence of “the Position of the United States With Respect to Greece,” which stated that it was “a deterrent to communist subversion and has encouraged the observance of democratic, constitutional political practices as well as the protection of civil liberties to the extent compatible with the security of the State” (FRUS 1951a).

Since security took precedence over democracy and freedom, the same decision by the US NSC also stipulated that “the objective of military assistance to Greece was to provide support to a Greek military establishment which would be capable of maintaining internal security and affording Greece, through certain limited accessories, a modicum of prestige and confidence” (FRUS 1951a).

## **ESTABLISHING HIERARCHY THROUGH POLITICAL PENETRATION**

The hypothesis that providing military and economic aid, coupled with political penetration, grants donors significant leverage over recipients (Walt 1985; 1990) is confirmed by the overt interference of the US in Greece’s domestic politics. This interference began in mid-July 1947, immediately following the arrival in Athens of Dwight Griswold, the head of the American Mission for Aid to Greece (AMAG). The key task that Secretary of State George Marshall assigned to Griswold was that “we see in Greece a government whose members are firmly united in their loyalty to Greece and who are primarily interested in keeping their country from falling under Communist control or Soviet domination,” while also granting him authority, in collaboration with the US ambassador, to reconstruct the Greek government, dismiss Greek officials, and remove them from office to achieve the mission’s objectives efficiently (FRUS 1947a). That Griswold, as the “most powerful man in Greece,” zealously carried out Marshall’s instructions was reported by the American press (Schmidt 1947), noted by the head of the Yugoslav delegation at the United Nations’ special session (AJ, ZSK, 83, K-8), and corroborated by a detailed report sent from Athens to the Yugoslav leadership on 23 August 1947, describing “the open interference of Americans in the purely internal political matters of Greece” (AJ, SKJ, 507, K-16, IX, 33/VI-44).

American interference soon reached such proportions that, by late October 1947, disputes among various US representatives over authority in managing the Greek government were discussed by the NSC. A directive was subsequently sent to Athens, delegating authority for all decisions in the domain of high politics to the US ambassador. It is highly likely that no better description exists of the extent of American interference in Greece’s internal affairs during this period than the instructions that placed under the US ambassador’s jurisdiction the following responsibilities:

“any action by US representatives in connection with a change in the Greek Cabinet, any action by US representatives to bring about or prevent a change in the high command of the Greek armed forces, any substantial increase or decrease in the size of the Greek armed forces” (FRUS 1947b). The same instructions also gave the ambassador authority over “any major question involving the relations of Greece with the United Nations or any foreign nation, any major question involving the policies of the Greek Government toward Greek political parties, trade unions, subversive elements, rebel armed forces, including questions of punishment, amnesties and any question involving the holding of elections in Greece” (FRUS 1947b).

Unlike interference in civilian matters, American penetration into military affairs—personnel and organisational decisions, as well as the very mission of the Greek military—began just days after the Truman Doctrine was announced. As early as 17 March 1947, Dean Acheson endorsed the consensus reached by the Department of War and the State Department, stating that the mission of the Greek military should be changed “from one defending the border against possible aggression by its neighbours, to one of maintaining internal security by overcoming the dissident armed bands” (Roubatis 1987, 43). The administration of the military component of the aid programme was entrusted to the United States Army Group Greece (USAGG), and beginning in early summer 1947, no organisational or personnel changes in the HAF could take place without the prior approval of US representatives (AJ, KMJ, 836, I-3-b/263). The General Staff of the HAF found itself “under the direct control of USAGG, which appointed and dismissed officers,” while “American officers directed the operations of the Greek military” (AJ, SKJ, 507, K-17, IX, 33/VI-62). Decisions regarding retirements and promotions were made by the US ambassador, the head of AMAG, and the American general in charge of USAGG. The decision-making process typically unfolded as follows: the Americans would prepare lists of names of Greek generals, and the Greek prime minister would select from those lists whom to retire and whom to promote (Roubatis 1987). With the arrival of a new ambassador in Athens in late July 1948, US authority in Greece “became virtually unlimited” – the head of USAGG would announce the dismissal of Greek generals, and the Supreme Military Council would officially execute those dismissals the very next day (AJ, SKJ, 507, K-17, IX, 33/VI-68). The extensive scope of US interference in Greek military affairs is further confirmed by a special report entitled

“Anglo-American Interference in Greek Military Affairs,” sent from the Greek capital to Yugoslav authorities (AJ, SKJ, 507, K-16, IX, 33/VI–44).

In all major areas of Greek policymaking, prior approval from American personnel was required, which very often initiated decisions themselves (Amen 1978; VA, JNA, K-374, f. 1). “The US changed Greek governments at its discretion, dictated their actions, determined their foreign policy orientation—in short, it became the primary driver of Greek politics” (AJ, SKJ, 507, K-17, IX, 33/VI–62). Alongside their official involvement in staffing the Greek government and military, the Americans maintained secret and extra-institutional contacts with extremist anti-communist elements within Greek politics and the armed forces, who held real power in the military and ensured its ideological uniformity (Καραγιάννης 1963; Τσουκαλάς 2020). Control over the Greek military was viewed by the US as the easiest and most efficient means to ensure internal support for Washington’s policies. This was deliberate, as the Greek military had been transformed into a “fighting machine directed not against possible external threats to the territorial integrity of the country, but, instead, the citizens of the country it was supposed to protect” (Roubatis 1987, 54).

The definitive confirmation of the US policy of “progressive autonomization” of the HAF vis-à-vis civilian authorities came at the beginning of 1948 (Alivizatos 1978, 37). Specifically, on 12 February, when the NSC adopted the decision that “the Greek Government which rests on a weak foundation,” where exists “friction among short-sighted political factions, selfishness and corruption” as well as “a dearth of effective leaders,” should not interfere in the operations carried out by its own military (FRUS 1948a). The implementation of this decision, namely, the institutional confirmation of the military’s *de facto* autonomy and its supremacy over civilian authorities, took place in early 1949 under American pressure, when the HAF “became a state within a state,” with General Alexandros Papagos (Αλέξανδρος Παπάγος) assuming effective dictatorial powers (Τσουκαλάς 2020, 209). On 20 January 1949, Papagos was first reinstated, promoted to the rank of Field Marshal, and appointed Commander-in-Chief of the HAF (AN 882/49; ΠΥΣ 62–63/49). Shortly after, on 27 January, he was granted the authority to make decisions regarding HAF operations and organisation without prior consultation with the government or any other branch of authority (AN 884/49). His appointment “essentially represented the suppression of the government and the establishment of the

Commander-in-Chief as an autonomous authority” (Ζαφειρόπουλος 1956, 86–88). The powers of the newly formed War Council with respect to the Commander-in-Chief were minimal (ΝΔ 1089/49), and its membership consisted of “all the leaders of the political parties participating in the government, ministers of war, and the US ambassador Grady” (AJ, SKJ, 507, K-17, IX, 33/VI–82).

Considering that great powers often implement their policies through intelligence institutions (Trbojević and Svirčević 2025), it is impossible to examine US political penetration into Greece following the adoption of the Truman Doctrine without paying special attention to the role of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) “as the routine instrument of American intervention abroad” (Schlesinger 2002, 455). One of the CIA’s first covert operations began in Greece, and as early as 1948, it assisted in the establishment of the Greek Central Intelligence Service (*Κεντρική Υπηρεσία Πληροφοριών [ΚΥΠ]*), with which it “clearly had a relation of great intimacy” that “entirely excluded the official US embassy” (Woodhouse 1985, 7). In addition to being headed by high-ranking HAF officers, the majority of ΚΥΠ personnel were military members who had spent significant portions of their careers detached from their regular units serving in secret political police while maintaining close ties with the US intelligence service. The close relationship between the CIA and ΚΥΠ is further evidenced by a top-secret report from the Yugoslav military attaché in Athens, warning his superiors in early August 1954 that ΚΥΠ was collecting intelligence on behalf of the CIA regarding the visit of a Yugoslav Army delegation to Thessaloniki, led by General Rade Hamović (VA, JNA, K-375, f. 1).

The CIA station in Athens numbered more than 200 agents and other permanent staff, with its personnel stationed at several different locations, including the Greek royal palace (Roubatis and Winn 1978). CIA officers infiltrated all sectors of Greek society and established direct contacts with the royal family, which concluded that the shortest path to the White House led through the CIA station in Athens. The CIA’s penetration of the royal palace was so profound that, at one point, one of its agents served as the tutor to the crown prince and spent almost every day at the Royal Court (Παπαχελάς 2017). Greece was one of the countries where the CIA exerted the greatest influence, which is supported by the fact that Athens was home to the CIA’s third-largest station in the world. Additionally, a report on its covert operations, prepared upon the request of President Dwight Eisenhower by David

Bruce and Robert Lovett, highlighted Athens as the capital where the chief of the CIA station wielded more influence than the US ambassador (Grose 1994; Schlesinger 2002).

Particularly indicative of the degree of US influence over the HAF and KYII is the fact that one of the Greek officers who participated in joint operations with the CIA in Greece during the 1950s was then-Lieutenant Colonel Georgios Papadopoulos (*Γεώργιος Παπαδόπουλος*), the future leader of the military junta (1967–1974). The leader of the 1967 coup spent a significant amount of time during the 1950s with CIA agents stationed in Greece and “had a habit of confiding in them about his conspiratorial plans and the need for military intervention in political life, while in their contacts with him, they did not hide the US’s fear of the consequences of the left coming to power” (Παπαχελάς 2017, 272). As an officer of the HAF seconded to KYII, Papadopoulos was involved in various political activities and intrigues, prompting the Commander of the Ground Forces to demand his expulsion from the HAF “for conspiring against the state” (Κανελλόπουλος 1975, 37–40). Papadopoulos was one of the key figures behind coordinated actions by the HAF and KYII to manipulate election results and weaken the outcome of centrist and leftist parties in parliamentary elections (Katrīs 1971; Παπαχελάς 2017). The fact that the HAF intervened in political life on behalf of US interests is further confirmed by the later testimony of Konstantinos Karamanlis (*Κωνσταντίνος Καραμανλής*), who stated that the military, fearing that his government’s policies would weaken Greece’s commitment to NATO, “hurriedly prepared a conspiracy against the same government, which, just a year earlier, they had actively supported by participating in election fraud to ensure its victory and continued tenure in office” (IKA 1977).

Ultimately, the persistence of US influence over Greece’s security apparatus, established during the initial years of the Truman Doctrine’s implementation, is evidenced by the fact that the CIA, a month and a half before the *coup d’état* carried out on 21 April 1967, “knew all the details (codes, codenames, and specific tasks of various units) of the plan to execute the military coup” (Παπαχελάς 2017, 293). The Yugoslav ambassador in Athens, Mihailo Javorski, reported on 4 February 1967 that democratic forces in Greece “faced significant opposition from major forces, including EPE, the royal court, and the US,” further noting that the CIA and the Pentagon operated independently of the US embassy, “pursuing their own agendas and advocating, when necessary, more radical solutions, often receiving support—among

others—from the Queen Mother” (DA, PA, K-40, f. 15, d. 44962). At the end of March, three weeks before the military coup, Javorski informed Belgrade that “the CIA and its operatives are connected with the junta” and that “they are working to postpone the elections and bring about a far-right government” (DA, PA, K-40, f. 15, d. 411539).

## **DESOVEREIGNISATION AS A CONSEQUENCE OF POLITICAL PENETRATION**

The rhetoric of the Truman Doctrine was full of high-minded language about free institutions, representative government, freedom of speech, and other lofty goals. Its implementation in Greece, however, had little in common with these ideals. In the months following Truman’s speech, Greece became one of the greatest victims of the policy of active and aggressive involvement of great powers in the internal affairs of smaller states in Europe in the second half of the 20th century. The pervasive involvement of the US “gradually came to be felt in all fields of public life, profoundly affecting not just the state but the entirety of Greek society” (Spasojević 2022, 252). Direct US interference in military affairs stripped Greece of what little sovereignty had remained after the application of the Truman Doctrine. Particularly after the signing of the agreement between the US and Greece on how military and economic aid would be received, which “allowed the US government to practically take control over the entirety of Greece’s economic and financial life,” Greece effectively ceased to be a sovereign state (AJ, SKJ, 507, K-17, IX, 33/VI–61). Its “government ceased to function as a governing entity and came under the administration of the State Department, whose officials issued orders to Greek ministers, replaced individual ministers, entire governments, military commanders, and dismissed civil servants” (AJ, SKJ, 507, K-17, IX, 33/VI–60). The Greek economy was in the hands of American experts, political parties rose to and fell from power only at the discretion of the US (VA, JNA, K-17, f. 4), and “foreign policy, while conducted by the Greek foreign minister, was formulated in the halls and offices of the American embassy and AMAG” (Roubatis 1987, 53). Institutionalised American penetration into Greece’s political and military structures had profound consequences not only for US-Greece bilateral relations but also for the legitimacy of the Greek nation-state as an independent and sovereign actor. The case of Greece “suggests the demise of the nation-state in this sense,” as it was practically “incorporated



into the political process of the United States and became an appendage of American policy” (Amen 1978, 112–113).

One of the institutional consequences of US political penetration into Greece’s internal affairs, which occurred under the guise of providing nearly unlimited military and economic assistance, was the unconstitutional and unilateral strengthening of executive power at the expense of legislative authority. This state of imbalance, or dysfunction of parliamentary democracy, persisted until the fall of the military junta in 1974. The result of US interference was the creation of a political system that operated under the façade of democratic procedures and served as a guarantee for US strategic interests in the region. The guarantor of the survival of such a political system, as well as the key lever of American influence within it, was the Greek military. Its primary mission was neither the defence of the country from external threats nor subsidiary involvement “in the implementation of the foreign policy” of its own country (Blagojević 2023, 166); rather, it was the transformation of Greece into an alternative option for US foreign policy in the region, in case of a deterioration in US-Turkey relations. Greece “had virtually become an American colony” (Woodhouse 1985, 6), which, under the pressure and influence of this major power and an externally imposed ideology, “blindly followed foreign interests” (Spasojević 2019, 71).

From a sociological standpoint, Greek society found itself in a confrontational relationship with the armed forces (Janowitz 1964). This was primarily because the US had turned the Greek military into a politically conscious elite imposed on the rest of society. Serving US interests, this elite held primacy over civilians. Since the mission of the HAF, as defined by the US, was limited to maintaining internal security, they willingly entered the political arena, with Greek officers continuously participating in political intrigues and conspiracies. Although “no elite behaves simply on the basis of its social origin” (Janowitz 1960, 81), the Greek case confirmed the author’s later view that, in developing countries, social origins have a greater influence on shaping the political views of the military than in Western countries (Janowitz 1964; 1977). Greek officers saw themselves as guardians of the flame, in this case, of anti-communism, ensuring the continuity of the established regime through a system of recruitment and ideological indoctrination, which involved direct participation in the ruling order (Janowitz 1964). However, there was a significant difference: in the Greek case, the ruling order and

ideology had been imposed by agreements among great powers and were supported through external political penetration.

The unrestricted influence that the US achieved in Greece simultaneously confirms and ties together several important hypotheses. These include the idea that political penetration, as the covert manipulation of a state's political system by another state, is most successful "when states lack established government institutions, and may be more vulnerable to pressure, especially if they are forced to rely on foreigners" (Walt 1990, 48); that the military is more inclined and capable of interfering in politics in states with less developed or less mature "political culture" (Finer 2017, 22); and that penetration by a foreign power can ensure *de facto* control, as states vulnerable to external interference are not "important players on the international stage" (Walt 1985, 33). For all these reasons, from the perspective of the construct of hierarchy in international relations, the relationship between the US and Greece can be characterised as an "informal empire", as the US established *de facto* control over Greece's security, foreign, and economic policies, while Greece retained its *de iure* international legal personality and nominal independence (Doyle 1986, 38–40; Lake 2009, 57–58).

The case of Greece further confirms the hypothesis that in establishing and maintaining hierarchical relationships between states, interest groups play an important role by acting on behalf of the superior state to "restrain insubordination and defiance" (Lake 2009, 32). In the Greek case, that interest group was the military, including HAF officers seconded to the secret police, KYII. The US' accurate assessment that the HAF would be the most suitable instrument for maintaining an informal empire in Greece validates Finer's (Finer 2017) central thesis that "the armed forces have three massive political advantages over civilian organizations: a marked superiority in organization, a highly emotionalized symbolic status, and a monopoly of arms" (6). Under the influence of and acting on behalf of the US, the Greek military was "steadfastly loyal to NATO, at times, even to the detriment of its own country's national interests" (Danopoulos 1985, 273). This was especially evident in the Cyprus issue, where Greek officers publicly expressed support for unifying Cyprus with Greece while secretly supporting US and NATO policies aimed at resolving the issue by effectively partitioning the island with Turkey (Danopoulos 1984; Παπαχελάς 2021). Meanwhile, as the HAF sought to sustain conservative and pro-NATO elements of the Greek political spectrum through intimidation, deceit,

electoral manipulation, and even direct intervention, the primary goal of US defence policy towards Greece was “the reduction of Greece’s capacity to fight a defensive or offensive war against Turkey over the issue of Cyprus” (Roubatis 1979, 49). All of this indicates that, from the perspective of institutional theory, the HAF were effectively under the subjective control of the US. This represents “the antithesis of objective control,” as it progressively undermines democratic civilian control, involves the military in politics, and reduces its combat readiness (Huntington 1957, 80–85).

## CONCLUSION

The case of Greece during the Cold War serves as a clear example of how the military, as an instrument of political penetration, can be used to establish and maintain a hierarchical order in international relations. Acting as an interest group serving the superior power, in this case, the US, the HAF not only assisted in sustaining the informal empire of the US but also acted contrary to the interests of its own people and state. The United States’ political penetration into Greek society during the Cold War demonstrated the profound dependence of politically immature societies and institutionally underdeveloped states on dominant powers within the international hierarchy. Through direct control of Greece’s military, the US established an informal imperial system that enabled the preservation of an undemocratic regime in Greece while simultaneously eroding national sovereignty and democratic institutions. The Greek military, as an instrument of US influence, played a central role in maintaining the existing order, primarily through ideological indoctrination and the intimidation of the opposition. These processes illustrate the critical role of institutional weakness and social vulnerability as key factors enabling political penetration by an external power. The case of Greece confirms that military involvement in politics, aimed at maintaining a hierarchically established international order, degrades the military’s ability to defend national interests and highlights the need to strengthen institutional capacities and democracy in order to protect smaller states from domination by great powers in hierarchically structured international relations.

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## ПОДРИВАЊЕ ДЕМОКРАТИЈЕ И НАЦИОНАЛНЕ БЕЗБЕДНОСТИ: ЈАВНА ПОЛИТИКА И ТАЈНО ДЕЛОВАЊЕ САД У ГРЧКОЈ ТОКОМ ХЛАДНОГ РАТА

### Резиме

На студији случаја Грчке рад истражује како су Сједињене Америчке Државе на почетку Хладног рата политичком пенетрацијом обликовале хијерархијски поредак у својој интересној сфери. Тежиште анализе посвећено је улози Грчких оружаних снага, које су под утицајем САД постале инструмент очувања недемократског режима и одржавања структуралне зависности. Коришћењем теоријских концепата из области међународних и цивилно-војних односа, чланак истражује како је институционална слабост допринела рањивости Грчке на спољни утицај. Грчка војска била је носилац три кључне функције у овом односу: (1) обезбеђивања политичке стабилности кроз идеолошку индоктринацију и застрашивање опозиције, (2) легитимисања доминације стране силе у унутрашњој политици, и (3) редуковања одбрамбених капацитета у корист страних политичких интереса. Уз помоћ грчке војске национални интереси земље били су подређени спољнополитичким циљевима и геополитичкој стратегији САД. Резултати истраживања показују да је неформална империја САД, у виду *de facto* контроле над безбедносном, спољном и економском политиком Грчке, одржавана кроз институционалне слабости и недостатак демократске цивилне контроле војске. Закључци чланка указују на интегралну потребу за јачањем демократских и институционалних капацитета како би се спречила политичка пенетрација и осигурао суверенитет држава у сличном политичком и економском контексту. Ова анализа нуди значајан допринос разумевању односа између хијерархијских структура, међународног утицаја и институционалне независности у времену преовладавања великих сила. Контекст политичке и

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институционалне пенетрације САД у грчко друштво и војску јасно илуструје како међународна хијерархија проистиче не само из економских и војних ресурса доминантне државе, већ и из способности да се обликују институције и политички систем подређене државе. Грчка војска, као главни гарант интереса САД, деловала је против националних и државних интереса и демократских вредности у корист одржавања хладноратовског поретка. Последиčna деградација грчког суверенитета и демократије потврђује да политичка пенетрација у slabим државама често води дугорочним негативним последицама по њихову политичку стабилност и независност.

**Кључне речи:** међународни односи, безбедност, цивилно-војни односи, хијерархија, политичка пенетрација, суверенитет, демократија, Хладни рат, САД, Грчка

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