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Men of the Gun and Men of the State: Military Entrepreneurship in the Shadow of the Greek Civil War (1946–1949)

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Abstract: The article explores the intersection between paramilitarism, organized crime, and nation-building during the Greek Civil War. Nation-building has been described in terms of a centralized state extending its writ through a process of modernisation of institutions and monopolisation of violence. Accordingly, the presence and contribution of private actors has been a sign of and a contributive factor to state-weakness. This article demonstrates a more nuanced image wherein nation-building was characterised by pervasive accommodations between, and interlacing of, state and non-state violence. This approach problematises divisions between legal (state-sanctioned) and illegal (private) violence in the making of the modern nation state and sheds new light into the complex way in which the 'men of the gun' interacted with the 'men of the state' in this process, and how these alliances impacted the nation-building process at the local and national levels.

Keywords: Greece, Civil War, Paramilitaries, Organized Crime, Nation-Building

Introduction

In March 1945, Theodoros Sarantis, the head of the army's intelligence bureau (A2) in north-western Greece had a clandestine meeting with Zois Padazis, a brigand-chief who operated in this area. Sarantis asked Padazis's help in 'cleansing' the border area from 'unwanted' elements: leftists, trade-unionists, and local Muslims. In exchange he promised to provide him with political cover for his illegal activities.[1] This relationship that extended well into the 1950s was often contentious. One local officer described the militiamen as 'predators, adventurers and scoundrels' who fought only for loot.[2] Such accusations were repeated in the local press which railed against the 'inadequacy' and 'violence' of the militias and were reluctantly acknowledged by conservative politicians who admitted that while Padazis was an

1 Diefthinsi Istorias Stratou [henceforth DIS], 'Civil War Archive/1372/A/1/2, Report on the Domestic Situation/September 1945'; National Archives, FO/371/48094, Report by Lt. Col. C.A.S. Palmer, 3.

2 DIS, Civil War Archive, Folder 14/01/08/1947, Report of Colonel Papathanasiadis.

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'exemplary' patriot he was a rather poor soldier.[3] The military impact of these groups was undoubtedly minimal. However, the opposite was true of their social and political repercussions. Political wrangling, institutional weakness and violence allowed the militias to position themselves as mediators between the state, local societies and the military, graduating from merely predatory (robbery, rustling) to parasitic (extortion, protection) activities. Such undertakings helped the militias to seize control of local licit and illicit economic networks thus turning them into a significant political player.

The formation of such networks was seen by some local politicians and pundits as a direct threat to the internal security, institutions, and the local economy. Some even anticipated that the militias would become independent freebooters and turn against the state after the war. Yet, such predictions did not come to pass. Paramilitarism had a negative impact on civilian security. However, violence and mobilization also served to bring marginal communities, like Padazis's native hamlet of Labanitsa, closer to the national orbit by formulating new political and economic networks which provided rural youths, militiamen, and their affiliates with opportunities to play increasingly important roles in local and national politics. Such processes helped to build novel political ties between these communities and the state and reconfigure center-periphery relations, thereby completing the long process of transformation set in motion half a century before. Almost a decade after the parting shots of the civil war were fired Padazis, the brigand had managed to reinvent himself as a gentleman farmer, a politician, and a pillar of the community 'who was in the best terms with the prefect, the bishop and the district army commander.'[4]

These processes were not peculiar to the Greek Civil War. Charles Tilly underscored the role of private actors: militias, bandits, pirates and privateers, in state-making and war-making in early modern Europe and suggested that phenomena like 'war making, extraction, state making, and protection were interdependent […] and shared a home with their upright cousins in responsible government.'[5] Later scholarship adopted a dimmer view of such phenomena and associated

3 'Oi Galanides', *Thesprotika Nea*, 1 May 1948.

4 'Epistoles', *Thesprotika Nea*, 8 May 1952.

5 Charles Tilly, 'War Making and State Making as Organized Crime' in *Bringing the State Back*, ed. by Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 167–191 (p. 163).

private armed actors with state-weakness and institutional erosion.[6] More recent studies have retraced the thread of Tilly's arguments. Uğur Ümit Üngör's discussion of banditism and ethnic warfare in Eastern Anatolia, Aldo Civico's study of Colombian paramilitarism and William Reno's work on East African militias underscored the role of non-state armed actors in the nation building process and revealed the pivotal impact of paramilitary mobilization and economic violence; looting, forcible dispossession, illegal occupation of land and smuggling in processes of economic integration and structural modernisation. [7]

This article builds on this scholarship to re-examine the relationship between paramilitarism, crime and nation-building during and after the Greek Civil War. To do so the article shifts the focus from the battlefield to the subterranean level where militias and civilians encountered each other and discusses the transformation of social actors, structures, norms, and practices spurred on by political mobilization and paramilitary violence. The article pays particular attention to the processes and dynamics of economic violence and forceful accumulation. Activities such as forceful acquisition, extraction and protection have been relegated to the margins of enquiry or dismissed as the work of opportunistic thugs. The article instead situates these forms of 'military entrepreneurship'[8] front and center and explores their role as motivational factors and transformative tools in the state-building process.

This article draws from a wide array of archival and secondary sources including reports, memoirs and diaries generated by paramilitaries and their political backers. While these materials provide important details on the formation of paramilitary groups and the relationship between the organizations and local civilians, they also pose several challenges including ethnic and political biases and a tendency to gloss over illegal activities. To by-pass these obstacles, I employ a large number of published and unpublished source generated by the Greek Communist Party, Red Cross Officials, mainstream newspapers,

6 Francesco Strazzari, 'L'Oeuvre au Noir: The Shadow Economy of Kosovo's Independence', *International Peacekeeping*, 15 (2) 2008, 155–170; John Mueller, *The Remnants of War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

7 Uğur Ümit Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey: Nation and State in Eastern Anatolia, 1913-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Aldo Civico, *The Para-State: An Ethnography of Colombia's Death Squads* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2016); William Reno, 'Clandestine Economies, Violence and States in Africa,' *Journal of International Affairs*, 53 (2000), 433–459.

8 Thomas Gallant, 'Brigandage, Piracy, Capitalism, and State-Formation: Transnational Crime from a Historical World-Systems Perspective,' in *States and Illegal Practices*, ed. by Josiah McHeyman (New York: Berg, 1999), pp. 25–62 (pp. 48-50).

ethnographic studies, memoirs and diaries of left-wing cadres and local civilians. These sources helped to provide a more balanced overview of the militias activities and shed light on hitherto unexplored aspects such as their role in the underground economies and the impact of paramilitary mobilisation on local economic and political structures.

The article develops as follows. The first section discusses the factors that led to the alliance between the state and the militias in the immediate post-war period. The second section looks at the changing dynamics of paramilitarism during the civil war and explores the impact of unlawful accumulation and economic violence. The third and final section discusses the legacies and impact of paramilitary mobilization in post-war nation building.

The Birth of the Paramilitary World

The usage of paramilitary groups for political and military purposes has been a constant feature of Modern Greek politics. Such groups played a pivotal role during the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) and the 'National Schism.[9]' These groups reached their zenith in mid-1920 with the formation of the Republican Battalions and General Kondylis's 'Chasseurs' but declined thereafter.[10] The occupation and the consequent rise of the left-wing resistance movement of EAM [Ethniko Apeleftherotiko Metopo-National Liberation Front] led to the remobilisation of the pre-war militia networks and the formation of numerous new groups.

Occupied Greece was divided into three separate zones that were administered by the Bulgarian, German and Italian authorities. The occupation forces adopted a series of punitive policies. They confiscated huge quantities of foodstuff and machinery, disarmed the gendarmerie, and imposed steep penalties for resistance and non-compliance. These policies resulted in the outbreak of a terrible famine during the winter of 1941-1942. The toll was particularly heavy in the cities where thousands

9 The 'National Schism' is a term used to describe the clashes between pro-monarchist and liberal factions during 1915-1917. This conflict arose over a dispute about the participation of Greece in the First World War. Monarchists supported neutrality whereas liberals were ardently pro-Entente. A thorough discussion of these clashes can be found in Giorgos Mavrogordatos, *1915: O Ethnikos Dikhasmos* (Athens: Pataki, 2015).

10 For more on paramilitarism in the 1920s see Giorgos Mavrogordatos, *Meta to 1922: I paratasi tou dihasmou* (Patakis: Athens 2017).

perished from hunger and disease.[11] In northern Greece, these problems were compounded by ethnic strife and the denationalisation campaigns of the Bulgarian administration that saw the transfer of Bulgarian colonists in north-eastern Greece and the displacement of entire communities.[12]

The famine and the consequent crisis of authority led to a gradual backlash against the occupiers. The first months of the occupation were marked by several abortive uprisings in northern Greece that were subdued with very considerable bloodshed.[13] Organized resistance was slower to appear. The first efforts were centred around EAM (Ethniko Apeleftherotiko Metopo) a coalition of Communists, Social Democrats, and Liberals and its armed branch the ELAS (Ellinikos Laikos Apeleftherotikos Stratos-Greek People's Liberation Army). The activities of these two organisations were initially confined to major urban centres and the rugged highlands of Roumeli (central Greece).[14] EAM/ELAS were not the sole bearers of resistance. EAM/ELAS co-existed uneasily with a motley array of home-guard militias, self-defence groups and nationalist resistance groups such as EDES (Ethnikos Dimokratikos Ellinikos Sindesmos-National Republican League of Greece), a conservative republican organisation headed by retired lieutenant-colonel Napoleon Zervas, EKKA (Ethniki kai Koinoniki Apeleftherosi, National and Social Liberation), a republican group that active in central Greece; and PAO (Panellinia Apeleftherotiki Organosi-Panhellenic Liberation Organisation), a loose coalition of republicans and royalists which operated in Macedonia.[15]

These groups differed from EAM/ELAS in several aspects. The left organised an extensive governance apparatus that provided rural and urban communities with social services such as education, health, and policing. Moreover, it undertook considerable efforts to enfranchise hitherto marginalised groups, minorities, women, and youths. Finally, the left's agenda combined the military liberation struggle with a strong

11 On the origins and impact of the famine see Violetta Hionidou, *Famine and Death in Occupied Greece: 1941–1944* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

12 On ethnic struggle and collaborationism in northern Greece see: Nikos Marantzidis ed., *Oi Alloi Kapetanioi: Antikomounistes Enoploi sta Hronia tis Katohis kai tou Emfiliou* (Athens: Estia, 2006); James Horncastle, T*he Macedonian Slavs in the Greek Civil War: 1944–1949* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2019).

13 Stratos Dordanas, *To Aima to Athoon: Adipoina ton Germanikon Arhon Katohis sti Makedonia 1941–1944* (Athens: Estia, 2007), pp. 29-49.

14 On the rise and creation of EAM/ELAS see Stefanos Sarafis, *ELAS: Greek Resistance Army* (London: Merlin Press, 1980).

15 On the politics of national resistance see Mark Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece: The Experience of Occupation, 1941–44* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); Andre Gerolymatos, *An International Civil War: Greece 1943–1949* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2016).

drive for social and political change. The nationalists on the other had a narrow militaristic purview and tended to espouse conservative social agendas.[16] Tensions between these groups were not uncommon particularly in northern Greece where the nationalists were wary of the left's efforts to co-opt local minorities.[17] However, direct clashes were rare. EDES and ELAS in fact co-operated in a series of operations including the destruction of the Gorgopotamos bridge.[18] Co-operation was even closer in Crete where the independent resistance groups of Emmanuel Badouvas collaborated extensively with the left.[19]

However, this honeymoon did not last long. EAM's radical program of reform, its rapprochement with the minority populations in northern Greece, and rivalries over the control of routes, recruits and resources stirred up hostility between the left and the nationalists. Fear of the left led to gradual rapprochement between conservative and republican circles. On 9 March 1943 EDES's leader sent a message to the exiled King of Greece, George II, disavowing its anti-monarchism and pledging to support the return of the monarchy.[20] This shift was noticeable among other republican organizations and leaders, some of whom sought to forge alliances with the Axis Powers against the left.[21]

The first steps towards active, armed collaboration were taken in spring 1943 under the auspices of Ioannis Rallis's government. Rallis authorised the creation of several pro-Axis formations in Athens and its environs.[22] Collaboration escalated after the Italian capitulation in the autumn of 1943. This caused the Wehrmacht to seek alternative sources of manpower among local groups. The German army recruited widely among local minorities in northern Greece and Epirus and sought to forge alliances among the various nationalist groups.

16 On the modus operandi and social agendas of the nationalist resistance and the cultural divide between left and right see Riki Van Boeschoten, *Anapoda hronia: silogiki mnimi kai istoria sto Ziaka Grevenon, 1900–1950* (Athens: Plethron, 1997); Vangelis Tzoukas, *Oi oplarhigoi tou EDES stin Ipeiro 1942–1944* (Athens: Estia, 2013).

17 On the contest over national loyalties see Ioannis S. Koliopoulos, *Plundered Loyalties: Axis Occupation and Civil Strife in Greek West Macedonia, 1941–1949* (London: C. Hurst, 1999).

18 Edmund Myers, *Greek Entanglement* (Gloucester: Sutton, 1985), pp. 44-52.

19 On the Cretan resistance see Antonis Sanoudakis, *Kapetan Manolis Badouvas, O arhigos tis ethnikis antistasis Kritis: Ta polemika tou apomnimonefmata* (Athens: Knossos, 1979).

20 Robert Frazier, *Anglo-American Relations with Greece: The Coming of the Cold War 1942-1947* (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1991), p.14

21 Andre Gerolymatos, 'The Role of the Greek Officer Corps in the Resistance', *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora*, 11 (1985), 69–79.

22 Stathis N. Kalyvas, 'Armed collaboration in Greece, 1941 – 1944', *European Review of History*, 15 (2008), 129–142.

Collaboration escalated in the winter of 1943–4 when ELAS clashed with nationalist groups in Epirus, Macedonia, and the Peloponnesus. The left was able to prevail in most cases. EDES was chased out from its stronghold while its territory was reduced to a small mountain zone in western Epirus. [23]

This situation led the nationalists to forge local pacts with the Wehrmacht who agreed to supply them with guns, money, and provisions in exchange for help against the left. Collaboration was particularly prevalent in Macedonia and the Peloponnesus, where these formations numbered well over 10.000 men. Additionally, many collaborationist units were also raised in Athens and Thessaloniki. The formation of these groups led to widespread brutalisation as all groups began to target civilians with increasing alacrity. Violence reached unprecedented levels on the eve of the liberation when ELAS and nationalist groups fought a series of pitched battles in northern Greece and the Peloponnesus in which thousands of militiamen and civilians lost their lives.[24]

While the collaborationist militias suffered serious casualties, they were not a spent force. Thousands of militiamen were able to evade ELAS and surrender to the British who confined them in makeshift prison-camps.[25] An equally large number were able to switch allegiance in the last minute and refashion themselves as resisters. The punishment of collaborators became a point of contention from the very first days of the liberation. The government of Premier Georgios Papandreou had committed to purging collaborationists; however, its actual attitude was much more ambiguous. Papandreou and other politicians saw the left as a much greater threat and believed that the collaborationists could be used as a bulwark against EAM/ELAS.[26] The attitude towards collaborationism fueled distrust between the left and the government who were already at loggerheads over issues like demobilization, the distribution of local power and the position of the monarchy. Distrust escalated into all-out hostilities in December 1944 when ELAS clashed with pro-government forces and the British army in Athens. In many

23 Herman Frank Meyer, *Aimatovammeno Edelvais*, 2 vols (Athens: Estia, 2009), II, 113–119.

24 Stratos Dordanas, *Ellines enadion Ellinon: o kosmos ton tagmaton asfaleias stin katohiki Thessaloniki 1941–1944* (Thessalonica: Epikentro, 2006), pp. 350–365.

25 Vasileios Stavrogiannopoulos, *I Zoi tis Katohes kai ta Tagmata Asfeleias* (Athens: Loghi, 2004), pp. 170–175.

26 On collaborationism see Dimitris Kousouris, *Dikes ton Dosilogon: 1944–1949* (Athens: Polis, 2014).

cases collaborationists and pro-collaborationist forces were used by the government in this fight.[27]

The clashes came to an end in February 1945 when EAM and the government reached an agreement. This agreement which became known as the 'Varkiza' accord, named after the small town, where it was co-signed decreed the disarmament of non-state forces, impartial and free elections, and the re-institution of civil and political liberties. The agreement remained an empty letter. The accord and the consequent disarmament of the left led to a surge in right-wing restitutory violence that became known as the 'white terror'. This violence was carried out by a host of nationalist paramilitary forces created and sponsored by a multifarious coalition of conservative politicians, local elites, collaborationists, industrialists, and ultra-nationalist army officers.

Conservative politician Athanasios Taliadouros divided pro-state militias into two different albeit overlapping categories. The first consisted of grassroots, regionally- based organisations that had a strictly local purview and operated 'in an extremely decentralised way'.[28] Collaboration between them was relatively uncommon, 'every village', noted a left-wing weekly in the Peloponnese, 'has its own small band of thugs and terrorists', who operated independently and often with little co-ordination with each other.[29] These groups organized around natural leaders; notables and local 'hard men', many of whom had a criminal past and recruited members who were familiar with one another from the same village, quarter, or neighborhood. Local militias in Evrytania were formed around groups of fellow-villagers and relatives,[30] a similar pattern of mobilization was common in the uplands of Epirus,[31] and in Crete, where militiamen were often members of the same extended family.[32]

Patterns of recruitment were accordingly shaped by local realities on the ground. In northern Greece, militias were formed as a response to the activities of Macedonian autonomists who operated from across

27 On the 'Dekemvriana' see John O. Iatrides, *Revolt in Athens: The Greek Communist "Second Round" 1944-1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

28 Genika Arheia tou Kratous, Arheio Vasilikon Anaktoron [henceforth GAKAVA], Folder 439/205, Report of Zalokostas to King George, 20 August 1945.

29 'Oi stiles tis tromakratias', *Kinouriaki*, 10 January 1946.

30 Zaharias Zinelis, *I Dekaetia tou 1940 stin Kastania kai ta giro horia* (Athens: Privately Published, 2016), pp. 34-38.

31 Sotiris I. Karavasilis, *Apo ton Paralogo Emfilio 1943-1949 sto simera: I komikotragiki plevra tis paranoias ton Ellinon* (Athens: Privately Published: 2018), pp. 78–79.

32 Giannis Manousakas, *O Emfilios: Stin Skia tis Akronafplias* (Athens: Dorikos, 1977), pp. 138-9.

the Greek-Yugoslav border. These groups were formed along an ethnic axis. Most of the militias were raised by Pontic Greek refugees who had served in nationalist and pro-Axis groups during the occupation. Ethnic tensions were less important further south, where groups were mostly based on kinship ties and were often motivated by revenge, greed and personal differences. While most of these groups were fiercely anti-communist there were also important differences between them. Paramilitaries in Crete tended to identify with the centrist Liberal Party of Sofoklis Venizelos while their counterparts in Peloponnesus and Central Greece were ardent royalists. Political disputes and the fierce regionalism of the militias often led to clashes between the different groups.[33]

The second group consisted of large, urban-based organisations such as X, which was created by royalist General Georgios Grivas, and EVEN [National Monarchist Youth Union], created by a group of senior conservatives allied to senior monarchist politician Konstantinos Tsaldaris. These groups differed from the local militias in several ways. First, these groups were created from the bottom-down with the help of elite political networks. Second, they had a country-wide presence, a tight, centralized leadership and access to considerable financial and political resources. The rise of the X and the EVEN was facilitated with the help of a small cabal of ultra-conservative politicians known as 'Epitropi Sindesmou Ethnikou Agonos' (Committee for the Coordination of the National Struggle). This group was led by Spyros Markezinis, a lawyer from a prominent political family and confidant of King George II, industrialist Theodoros Zalokostas and Beys Mavromihalis, the scion of a powerful dynasty of Peloponnesian politicians and landowners. Even though this was not the first or only organization of its kind the group stood out for its willingness to use violence against its rivals and internal enemies within the Laikon (Monarchist) Party. Markezinis and his associates believed that the leadership of the party was too timid and indecisive and were convinced that the only way to preclude the re-emergence of the left and facilitate a monarchist victory was to work in tandem with the militias. To achieve this goal, the three men forged a bargain with Grivas who agreed to put his organization at their disposal in exchange for guns, money, and immunity from the law.[34]

Despite their sometime stark structural and operational differences, the militias proved successful in their task. The 'white terror' decimated

33 Elliniko Logotehniko kai Istoriko Arheio [henceforth ELIA], Napoleon Zervas, Archive/Folder 3.1.3, Letter of Zervas to Kokkinos, 25 October 1945.

34 GAKAVA, Folder 439/205, Report, 20 August 1945.

the ranks of the left forcing thousands of EAM supporters to seek refuge in cities and towns. The left and many liberal politicians protested this situation, but to no avail. Pro-state violence and the unwillingness of the government to punish collaborationists led the Communist Party to boycott the elections that were announced for March 1946. This act did not put an end to the violence. In fact, the 'white terror' reached its high point a month before the elections when the 'Epitropi' unleashed the militias 'to employ our own brand of right-wing terrorism' by 'abusing and assaulting the leftist [...] until they recant and promise to support us.'[35] These measures undoubtedly contributed to the landslide success of the conservative right both in the elections and the subsequent plebiscite on the restoration of the monarchy. The return of King George II sealed the conservatives' domination of national politics and gave a huge boost to the militia organizations. Many small militias took advantage of state help and tolerance to coalesce into large and relatively sophisticated organizations that commanded hundreds of foot soldiers.

The advent of a conservative government coincided with the outbreak of the civil war. The first few months of the conflict were marked by a series of setbacks in the military front. These developments led the militias and their backers to lobby the government for a more active role in the state's counterinsurgency strategy. These efforts paid off finally. In May 1946 Generals Spiliotopoulos, Ventiris, MP's Markezinis, N. Grigoriadis and three newspaper publishers founded the 'Makedoniko Komitato', a clandestine organization tasked with raising 'counter gangs' to pursue a low-key war of attrition against the insurgents and their civilian supporters. These groups had two tasks: the extra judicial killings of left-wing activists, and the organisation of a broad network of informants. The entire operation was conducted in a highly clandestine manner and under the tight supervision of a small number of trusted officers. [36]

The cooperation between the militias and the state escalated further in the autumn of 1946 when the government authorized the creation of nation-wide paramilitary apparatus. This organization was divided into two branches. The first branch was the MAY [Monades Aftoaminas Ypaithrou-Groups for Rural Self-Defense] a self-defense organization whose purpose was to defend local communities and military installations but also to act as the eyes and ears of the government in local com-

35 GAKAVA, Folder 439/205, Report, 20 August 1945.
36 GAKAVA, Folder 439/1, Note on Public Order, 6 July 1946.

munities. The second was composed by a series of organizations that included the MAD [Monades Aminas Dioxis-Groups for Defense and Pursuit], and the various independent organizations like EOK [Ethniki Organosi Kritis-National Organization of Crete] and EAOK [Ethnikes Antikommounistikes Omades Kinigon-National Anti-Communist Hunters Groups] both of which were created by local notables.

These organizations were envisioned as the vanguard of the counter-insurgency effort. The authorities believed that their knowledge of terrain, know-how of guerilla warfare, and fierce attachment to the monarchist cause would allow them to bring the fight to the enemy. The footsoldiers of these groups were provided a monthly salary, while their families were granted privileged access to aid, food, and housing. Yet, unlike the MAY that came under the provenance of the army and the Ministry for Defense, these groups were directly accountable to the Ministry of Public Order headed by general Napoleon Zervas. Moreover, while these groups operated in conjunction with the army, their formation, training, and recruitment were subcontracted to private citizens.[37]

From Proxies to Warlords: The Transformation of the Paramilitary World

The group of Kostas Galatas illustrate the nature, processes and networks used to form, recruit, and equip the militias. Galatas was a professional army officer who was drummed out of the force in the 1930's. During the occupation he formed a small collaborationist militia. The liberation found Galatas jobless once again. His luck changed in late 1946 when he was asked to form a paramilitary group in Fthiotida by the local prefect, the mayor of the local capital and a shady conglomerate of black marketers.[38] Galatas accepted this offer and used his connections to form a 200-strong band that was recruited among the demimonde; pick-pockets, pimps and burglars and slum dwellers of Piraeus and Athens.[39]

Galatas's bands had its counterparts across the country, and by early 1947, the MAD numbered over 9000 while an additional 8-10.000 had enlisted in the independent groups. This surge in militia numbers

37 Konstantinos Antoniou, *Istoria Vasilikis Horofilakis: 1833-1964* (Athens:N/A, 1964) Vol.3, p. 2229

38 Benakis Museum Archive, Sofoklis Venizelos Archive [henceforth BMASV], Folder 13/215, Letter to Sofoklis Venizelos on the situation in Lamia, n.d.

39 Konstantinos Karamanlis Foundation, Tsaldaris Archive [henceforth KKFTA], Folder 22/4/88/1, Letter to the President of the Laikon Komma Mr Tsaldaris, 25 December 1948.

was due to the serious and protracted decline of the rural economy.[40] Fighting in the countryside had led to a plummeting of food production, soaring prices, and mounting levels of unemployment giving rise to a large free-floating population of rural youths who survived on a life of petty crime and delinquency. The gradual decline of the formal economy made paramilitarism one of the very few opportunities for employment and mobility to rural youths and the working poor. The economic crisis led to the gradual creation of parallel or 'black' economic networks that provided civilians with food, goods, and recreation in the forms of drugs, prostitution, and gambling. The state made no effort to control these networks. Organized crime and delinquency were assigned low priority by the police and the gendarmerie, both of which focused all their energies on the suppression of the insurgency. Thousands of law enforcement personnel were relocated to the front and tasked with combat duties. This left the paramilitaries the main and sometimes the sole group capable of wielding organized violence in the countryside. The absence of law enforcement structures allowed the militia leaders to step in and seize control of licit and illicit economic networks.[41] The paramilitaries were not concerned with the supply side of the illegal economy. Instead, their foremost task was the provisioning of 'protection' or rather racketeering as often the militias produced 'both the danger, and at price, the shield against it.'[42]

Galata's group excelled in such activities. A local monarchist MP noted to the president of the 'Laikon' party how he and his colleagues hoped that Galatas would play an essential role in fighting against left-wing insurgents. However, according to the same report the militias were 'in no mood for fighting'. In fact, the 'chief undertaking and concern' of the group of Galatas was 'the systematic taxation and black mail of civilians.' Such activities were 'not unknown to the authorities' who 'have failed to take any measure against [Galatas]', and this was probably because several gendarmerie and police officers were on the payroll of Galatas's employers. The first task of Galatas upon arriving was to disperse all other pro-state groups that operated in the area. After they established a local monopoly of power, the 'commanding officers […] focused on organizing the collection of donations which in truth were forcible extortions in money and kind.' This method allowed them to

40 DIS, Civil War Archive, Folder 1071/B/21/MAY/MAD, Gendarmerie, On the Behavior of the Army and of Armed Auxiliaries, n.d.

41 Vasilis Daras, *G38: Vios kai Viomata Enos Aplou Anthropou* (Athens: N/A, 1995), p.32.

42 Tilly, 'War Making', p. 167.

accrue 'huge amounts' of money in addition to thousands of tons of wheat and olive oil which they dispatched to the black market in Athens. It was not long before Galatas turned his attention to his former employers. Kostas Antonakakis, the consigliere of the group extorted huge sums from local mayors and business owners. Those who refused to pay 'were assaulted and beaten savagely by his henchmen.'[43]

Galatas's group was not a local peculiarity. General Georgios Stanotas noted in a confidential report to the Chiefs of Staff that militias in his area of command in the Peloponnesus, saw 'the war as a business […] these groups genuinely hope the war continuous indefinitely since it has allowed them to accrue huge sums of money.'[44] Mantas singled out EAOK as the worst offenders. The EAOK was formed by a group of collaborationist officers, like captain Panos Katsareas, and other local elite men who operated under the protection of Minister for Defense Beys Mavromihalis. The organization that numbered 3000 militiamen was structured as a 'paramilitary confederacy' that was divided into individual territories. Katsareas's fief included large swathes of Laconia and Arcadia and included a little over 80.000 inhabitants. Every EAOK leader could tax civilians with complete impunity. Professionals such as doctors, lawyers etc. paid a monthly tax of 100.000 drachmas, while farmers and producers paid a 10–15% tax in kind. The confiscated produce was sold to the Athenian and Italian black markets. According to one estimate the EAOK had smuggled twenty-five thousand tons of olive oil during 1947-1948.[45]

EAOK was not a local anomaly. Gendarmerie reports and documents generated by local government officials in Crete present a strikingly similar image. The island was dominated by EOK (Ethniki Organosi Kritis-National Organization of Crete) formed by Emmanuel Badouvas. In contrast to Katsareas, Badouvas had played a prominent role in the anti-Axis resistance and was closely aligned to the Liberal party. Despite these differences EOK's modus operandi presented considerable similarities to that of their Peloponnesian counterparts. Badouvas's kingdom was founded on the island of Crete and included the prefectures of Lasithi, Heraclion and part of the prefecture of Rethymnon. The area was home to over 200.000 inhabitants and included some of the best agricultural land in Greece.[46] The EOK imposed a 'war tax' on local

43 KKFTA, Folder 22/4/88/1, Letter to the President of the Laikon Komma Mr Tsaldaris, 25 December 1948.
44 'Ekthesis Stanota', Eleftheria 20 August 1952.
45 '1 katastasis eis Laconian', *Eleftheria,* 24 April 1948.
46 Antonis Sanoudakis, *Kapetan Badouva Apomnimonefmata* (Heraklion: Knossos, 1979), p.411.

professionals, producers and affluent farmers that ranged between 1-2.000.000 drachmas per month. The group was also heavily involved in black marketeering. EOK militiamen smuggled sugar, coffee and hides from the Middle East, Egypt and Libya and extorted shopkeepers to buy them for exorbitant prices. Shop-owners who refused to buy and rival merchants were dealt with ruthlessly. The group also engaged in large scale graft and illegal appropriation of state and foreign aid. The awards of public contrasts were fixed by the paramilitaries who forced construction companies to pay a monthly tax to operate free and unmolested.[47] EOK was also heavily involved in gun running. The organization sold weapons and ammunition to rebel groups and guerrillas in Egypt, drug-gangs in Athens and northern Greek militias. Badouva's group accrued a little over 15.000 sovereigns from gun running alone during 1947-1948 while the total monthly income accrued by EOK ranged between 100-150 million drachmas.[48]

The paramilitaries were also heavily involved with counterfeiting currency[49] and the production and smuggling of illegal narcotics. A Communist Party cadre noted in his memoirs that in the southern Peloponnesus, marijuana had replaced wheat and olives as the most profitable cash crop.[50] Opium and marijuana farming was no less conspicuous in Macedonia where paramilitary gangs misappropriated moneys from the Marshall Fund to purchase land and construct drug-labs. Some of these paramilitary gangs cooperated with transnational smuggling networks like the Illiopoulos gang.[51] The cultivation and smuggling of narcotics was covertly assisted by the army's intelligence bureau and the British Secret Intelligence Service. The two services allowed smugglers to operate freely in exchange for their help in covert operations such as assassinations, spying, etc., in Yugosla-

47 KKFTA, Folder 28/4/12/1/ Note to the President of the Laikon Komma Mr Tsaldaris, 8 June 1948; 'To Iperkratos Badouva', *I efimeris ton Hiton*, 21 June 1948.

48 BMSVA, Folder 23/143, Letter of Sofoklis Venizelos to Emmauel Badouva, 28 July 1948.

49 Arheio Sinhronis Koinonikis Istorias, KKE Archive [henceforth ASKIKKE], Folder/24/1/41, Anti-Balkan Activities, 28 January 1947.

50 Grigoris Kribas, *Emfilios* (Kalamata: Self-published, 2012), p.179.

51 Douglas Valentine, *The Strength of the Wolf: The Secret History of America's War on Drugs* (London: Verso, 2004), 179; 'Syllipseis', *Tharros Dramas*, 22 July 1948.

via and Bulgaria.[52] The militias operated and 'protected' drug dens in provincial towns like Sparta, Trikala, and Preveza.[53]

Racketeering was not merely a rural problem. Urban gangs fenced stolen goods for their rural counterparts, helped them to launder money, and bought huge quantities of narcotics which they funneled to the urban markets.[54] The outbreak of the civil war had turned prostitution and the narcotics trade into boon industries. Interior ministry reports admitted that medium-sized cities, like Volos and Larissa, were home to hundreds of prostitutes that coexisted along with an 'army' of 'lovers and pimps' who lived off their work. The militias played an important role as pimps, 'funders' and providers of 'protection' to the prostitutes and brothel owners.[55] Prostitution was nonetheless dwarfed by the drug trade. The war created an army of drug addicts, both in provincial cities where 'the majority of our youths are systematic users of drugs like marijuana,'[56] and in Athens where the local press argued that 'drug usage has become conspicuous […] drug dealers used to ply their trade with outmost secrecy, things have changed now, heroin and hashish are sold openly and almost freely during mid-day in central Athens.'[57] Urban gangs were also involved in illegal gambling. An Athenian reporter recalled that the gambling 'frenzy' had seized all sections of society, 'black-marketeers spend millions every night in illegal casinos […] unemployed workers and displaced persons from the provinces tried their lack in the various open-air roulettes that operated adjacent to the food markets of Varvakeion.'[58] The government tried to crack-down on these operations by making gambling and prostitution illegal in January 1948. However, this did not deter the militias who moved their business underground.[59]

Such activities had a profound impact on the country's social structure, civilian security, and the war effort. Insecurity and violence led to a massive flight of population. In Laconia alone between 10-15.000 civilians 'fled the area and took refuge in the cities, the rural areas are

52 Keith Jeffrey, *MI6: The History of the Secret Intelligence Service 1909-1949* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), p. 401.

53 Vasilis Pitarakis, *Efta Hronia Fadaros* (Athens: Karavias, 1987), p. 95; 'Apo tin Polin', *Laconiko Vima*, 5 January 1947.

54 'Simmoritai tou Sourla poloun eis tas Athinas Klopimaia', *Eleftheria*, 12 October 1946.

55 GAK (Makedonias) Geniki Dioikisi Voreiou Ellados, File B26, Oikoi Anohis, 22 December 1950.

56 'Apo tin Polin', *Laconiko Vima,* 5 January 1947.

57 'Athinaiki Zoi', *Ebros*, 16 April 1948.

58 Giannis Kairofillas, *I Athina Meta ton Polemo* (Athens: Filippotis, 1988), pp. 276-286.

59 Nikos Gigourtakis, *Aftogiografia* (Athens: Self-Published, 1993), pp. 55-58.

deserted, agricultural activities have stopped altogether.[60] The situation was even worse in Macedonia and parts of Epirus where thousands of peasants relocated to the cities.[61] The displacement of such large numbers of civilians paired with the pervasive fear and the lack of security in rural areas led to a huge drop in agricultural production and the gradual erosion of the country's agricultural and pastoral basis. As a result of this tens of thousands of civilians became dependent on staple food supplies distributed from the government for their survival. The decline of the economy and the consequent shrinking of purchasing power led many businesses to use increasingly underhanded tactics to stay afloat. Many businessmen paid paramilitary leaders to threaten and even murder their competitors often over trivial disputes. In some cases, business and paramilitarism became completely enmeshed. This resulted in the creation of local oligopolies that were controlled by paramilitaries. According to the pro-government newspaper Eleftheria the timber trade, construction and the grain trade in central Macedonia were controlled by paramilitaries or business affiliated with paramilitaries.[62] Tax avoidance among these businesses was accordingly enormous, a northern Greek daily noted 'the state is losing tens of millions, meanwhile these gentlemen use their money to expand and consolidate their own businesses.'[63]

The loss of revenue due to falling production, corruption and graft resulted to a gradual transfer of power from state institutions and local elites to the various military entrepreneurs. A Communist Party cadre noted in late 1947 that 'In Laconia the official state had been replaced by a new alternative state that is run by the militias and the criminal organizations.'[64] The situation in northern Greece was described in remarkably similar terms 'here the civilians feel that they [paramilitaries] are the real state […] it is they who give orders and directives to the local authorities, the police, the district attorney […] of course there is a prefect and a governor general but they simply do [their] bidding.'[65] The fallback of the state rendered the various 'military enterprises' the main providers and creator of economic and social capital. This resulted

60 ASKIKKE, Folder 418/24/2/111, About the Party Organizations in Peloponnesus, 16 January 1947.

61 ASKIKKE, Folder 413/69/88, Note on the Party Organizations of Castoria, 26 October 1946.

62 Paranomoi Illotomoi, *Tharros Dramas*, 14 September 1948; Stathis Konstantinidis, *Hasilas: Enas alliotikos kapetanios* (Thessaloniki: Kiriakidis, 2010), pp. 330-335.

63 'Pros Gnosi', *Tharros Dramas*, 18 August 1948.

64 ASKIKKE, Folder 418/24/2/111, On the Situation in Laconia, n.d.

65 ASKIKKE, Folder 415/1, General Report on the Situation in Epirus, 28 December 1947.

in a drastic change to the vocational training of Greek society. The absence of jobs and capital led young men to seek employment in the numerous 'military enterprises,' leading to an even greater expansion of the militias which numbered close to 40.000 by late 1948. As a national daily admitted 'in this period of intense and protracted economic crisis, armed, militant hyper-nationalism has become the only and possibly the most productive form of employment' for thousands of rural residents.[66]In Laconia 1 in 20 adult males served in EAOK or in the other militia groups. The number of paramilitaries in this region exceeded 5000.[67] The situation was similar in Thessaly where local militias numbered a little over 2500 men.[68]

This had a dire impact on civilian security. The over-abundance of groups escalated the antagonism over the control of exploitable resources, thus leading to an escalation of violence both between the various militias and against civilians. In the plain of Thessaly struggles over the control of 'war tax' on trade escalated to full scale warfare between different militias who 'after some time stopped demanding tax and requisitioned the entire production' of individual farmers. The situation was similar in Macedonia where conflict over the control of rents escalated to full scale conflict between the various groups.[69]

Looting, raiding, and plundering expeditions became the main source of income not only for the militia leaders but also for their thousands of followers who were completely dependent on the militias for employment and safety, and even ordinary civilians who tried to capitalise on the fame and notoriety of militia leaders. The success of EAOK led local itinerant youths to pose as members of the organisation. The youths managed to extract significant amounts of money from local farmers before they were apprehended by the real paramilitaries.[70] The newspaper of the X mentioned a dozen similar cases were fraudsters and conmen posed as members of the organisation to blackmail and extract protection money from unsuspecting civilians.[71] Such activities led to a further deterioration of security as militia leaders used extreme violence to punish such transgressions and denote to local civilians

66 'En arhi in I praxis', *Eleftheria*, 20 April 1948

67 Karakatsanis, *O Polemos,* p. 342.

68 Ioannis Giannakenas, *Grigoris Sourlas, O kapetanios tis Thessalias* (Athens: Pelasgos, 2016), p. 303.

69 Oi Ethnikofrones, *Tharros Dramas*, 17 June 1948.

70 'Listevoun kai Apeiloun', *Laconiko Vima*, 1 December 1946.

71 'Anakoinosis', *I Efimeris ton Hiton*, 19 July 1946; 'Apo tous nomous tou Ellinikou Vasileou', *I Efimeris ton Hiton*, 7 October 1946.

and their competitors that they crossed them at their own peril. The notorious Kostas Vourlakis in one occasion 'shot point blank one of his fellow-comrades just to make the point that he was not afraid of anyone and would do whatever he wanted in his turf.'[72] Militia leaders killed and tortured civilians and competitors in particularly gruesome ways. In Messinia a militia leader tied to youths to his jeep and dragged them for over 5 miles in front of a crowd of terrified villagers.[73] Other militia leaders flayed, incinerated, and buried alive their competitors.[74]

The extremes of physical and economic violence had a profound impact on the internal dynamics of the militias and their relations to local elites. Paramilitarism was both a political project associated with the Populist Party and an effort to protect capital and the power of local elites through the use of illicit force. This project wrested on an often-uneasy alliance between urban political elites, provincial notables, and professionals of violence. Yet, this was not an alliance of equals. The paramilitary rank and file were dependent on the local notables and urban elites for money, arms, and mediation with the forces of law and order. The regression of the state and the growing importance of violence in the economy challenged the balance of power as armed groups were transformed from state-proxies and subordinates to profit-making ventures. This change allowed them to challenge the primacy of the old elites at a more direct and basic level. In many areas the militias had become the main or even the sole provider of jobs and security, and acted as a mediator between state and local societies. Civilians as a rule avoided going to the police, which according to several conservative MPs had become so corrupt and violent that 'civilians are terrified of stepping their foot inside a police station', and instead, preferred bringing their problems to the militia leaders.[75]

Of course, such changes did not go uncontested. The state tried to curb the role of the militias in two ways. First, it dismantled the MAD and outlawed all private organizations.[76] Second, it passed a law that made extortions and 'involuntary collections' a court-martial offence.[77]

72 Giannakenas, *Grigoris Sourlas,* pp. 223–224.

73 '0 Hitis tis Avias', *Eleftheria*, 22 May 1948.

74 'Edolofonithi o arhigos ton Hiton Gargagetas', *Eleftheria*, 12 September 1946.

75 KKFTA, Folder/28/5/33/1, Letter of the Northern Greek Members of Parliament to the President of the government Mr. T. Sofoulis, to the Vice President Mr. Tsaldaris and the Minister for Public Order Mr Renti, 1 September 1948.

76 KKFTA, Folder/28/1/36/1, Note on the Reduction of the Gendarmerie's Strength, 20 January 1948.

77 'Pros Gnosin', *Tharros Dramas*, 10 August 1948.

The ministry of justice went a step further and issued arrest warrants for several senior paramilitary leaders in Peloponnesus, Crete, Thessaly and Macedonia. Nonetheless, the state had no intention of demobilizing or destroying the militias. The aim of these changes was to re-assert the control of local elites and accentuate military efficacy. However, these measures backfired. The paramilitaries had become too big to fail. Militia leaders not only refused to dismantle their organization but threatened their counterparts in the regular military that 'they would turn their organizations into right-wing guerrilla groups and wage a twofold struggle against the communists and against the army.' These were not idle threats, skirmishes between the army and the militias were far from uncommon in the area and there was a 'very real' danger of a dual civil war as 'we do not have the means to suppress these organizations.'[78]

Yet, such fears were rather unfounded. The paramilitaries were not revolutionaries. As a Peloponnesian militia leader argued 'we might have acted outside the law, but this was only to serve the state […] obedience to the law in this situation is nothing short of treasonous.'[79] The purpose of these groups was not to topple the government but rather to use their control of the means of violence to negotiate their inclusion into local and national patronage networks.

The two sides negotiated a third solution which was to dismantle these groups and remobilize them under a different moniker as 'Dimosiosidirita Tagmata' [Public Funded Battalions]. Yet, while the structures and the membership remained the same the organisations differed in several ways from their predecessors. First, the state withdrew all funding. The militias had to seek funding from local authorities who were also the sole responsible for firing and hiring these bands. Moreover, they were only allowed to operate on a local basis. The authorities hoped that these changes would allow them to re-establish their authority by undercutting the paramilitary's economic independence.[80] These policies did not yield the desired results. The government's economic boycott in fact embedded the militias further into the local economic networks and hastened the transformative processes that were set in motion two years before. The local and national press decried this new failure noting that instead of curtailing the militias the measures had

78 DIS, Civil War Archive, Folder/1420/G/61, On the Situation in Laconia, 22 April 1948.
79 'En arhi in I praxis', *Eleftheria*, 20 April 1948.
80 Dimitris Ploumis, *I Elliniki tragodia 1946–1949* (Athens: Self Published, 1973), p. 244.

created 'a new elite of the unscrupulous, the daring and the violent.[81]' While the denouncement of the militias was sometimes not completely undeserved the violent and graphic language and the astonishment expressed by pundits, local notables and journalists also revealed the depth and radical nature of the changes that took place.

These processes were particularly pronounced in the 'new lands' of Epirus and Macedonia. These areas became a part of the Greek state in the aftermath of the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913. The local elites in the new lands were a motley conglomeration of pre-Balkan Wars rural notables, urbane nouveau riche, and civil servants from Southern Greece. The lack of homogeneity and ties to local societies made these groups particularly vulnerable to social change. A series of reports from local royalist party bosses noted that while voters remained relatively steadfast in their support of the monarchy the occupation had undermined the support towards local elites and called for the incorporation of 'new belligerent and energetic men' in the ranks of the party. Failure to incorporate these 'elements' would lead to massive defections and further loss of political support. This trend was partly reversed with the help of militias that were formed and hired with the assistance of local men of violence: former collaborationists, brigands and 'hard men' from the nearby cities.[82]

The conservative victory in the 1946 elections and the subsequent consolidation of the paramilitary apparatus gave a temporary respite to local elites. However, the men of the gun did not plan to remain pliant for long. The outbreak of the civil war increased both the strategic importance of the militias and their role in local economies. These events catapulted militia leaders like Antonis Fosteridis, a Pontic Greek farmer from the small town of Krinides, to the top echelons of the local and national hierarchy.[83] Fosteridis had led a nationalist organization during the occupation. In the post-war period he sub-contracted his services to the ultra-nationalist party of general Stylianos Gonatas. Fosteridis's support helped the monarchists to score a spectacular victory in Eastern Macedonia. This attracted the attention of top monarchist circles and King George II who invited Fosteridis to the court in Athens and gave him special dispensation to create his own independent militia.[84] Within a year Fosteridis had expanded

81 'Evnomia', *Tharros Dramas*, 26 August 1948.

82 KKFTA, 11/13/9/1, Letter of Petros Iakovou MP from Serres to Mr Tsaldaris, 20 July 1945.

83 Tasos Hatzianastasiou, *Antartes kai kapetanioi* (Thessaloniki: Kiriakidis, 2003).

84 'Sinadisis Diadohou Fosteridi', *Eleftheria*, 17 January 1947.

his paramilitary franchise across the prefectures of Xanthi, Rhodope, Drama and Kavala.[85]

Fosteridis's organisation accrued between six hundred million and one billion drachmas per month from a series of rackets that included 'war taxes', extortion, gun running and graft.[86] These activities rendered Fosteridis 'the single most powerful and influential person in Macedonia and Thrace', according to a Laikon party memo.'[87] In late 1948 Fosteridis finally severed his ties with Gonatas and the local nationalist elites and transformed his organization of ESEA from 'a military group to a purely political organization […] whose supporters swore blind fealty to their leader.' Fosteridis marketed his group as the defenders of the common people and the peasantry from the nouveau rich, the government and the local elites. He declared in his inaugural speech 'that the government has completely neglected Macedonia and Thrace and cares only for Old Greece […] he used the vilest expressions to describe the government' and the local elites who 'saw Macedonia as a colony,' and he denounced the local MP's and civil servants as 'intruders from the Old Greece.' Fosteridis organisation was able to replace several local officials and city councilors with its own men. Mayors and village presidents in small towns and villages were also replaced by local men who were affiliated with the militias, which also had helped them to set up new businesses and acquire state-owned land.[88]

These activities led to a profound reversal of power. A local daily noted in late 1948 that the notable class was slowly being replaced by 'groups of far-rightists and super rightists, professional patriots, enterprisers of war and violence […] who feel free to defy every law and any instrument of order.'[89] The governor general noted that the Laikon Komma and its supporters 'were finished […] they have been replaced by the rough and uncouth band-leaders and kapetanaioi.' The report continued that the organization has ushered in profound changes:

85 KKFTA,26/8/2/2, Minutes from the Meeting of the Warlords and Leaders of the National Resistance in Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, 17 August 1947.

86 'To Tagma', 'O Eleghos' *Tharros Dramas*, 21 April 1948.

87 KKFTA, 31/1/1, Confidential Note of Dimitris Sabatakakis to Mr Tsaldari, 2 January 1948.

88 GAK (Rodopis), Folder 10.1/31/02, Governor Genera of Thrace to the Ministry for Military Affairs, 23 June 1949.

89 'Evnomia', *Tharros Dramas*, 26 August 1948.

> one of the more pertinent examples were the events in the village of Krinides where the followers of this organization have occupied the land of local villagers. These newcomers have built homes and have illegally occupied hundreds of acres of state-owned which they cultivate without the authorization and permission of the prefecture.[90]

Such changes were not confined to Fosteridis's fief. Paramilitarism was a reactionary political project but was also a career open to those with talents. Members of classes subordinated in the social order: nomadic pastoralists, refugees and peasants from allophone and minority (Vlach, Arvanite) communities found in the exercise of violence and the perpetration of criminality an opportunity to access capital and political power. Paramilitary mobilization thus became a mechanism for marginal actors and groups to gain power and capital through the inclusion of peripheral areas and societies in the political mainstream. A study of the civil war in the adjoining area of western Macedonia underlined how the militias 'created a new local elite […] out of the village proletariat […] who were willing to receive arms from the state and the army and form paramilitary groups.'[91] The civil war had a similar impact in the adjoining region of Epirus, where 'the kapetanaioi, the more violent and the belligerent […] have come to dominate the area […they bought or occupied thousands of acres and have become a new elite.'[92]

Nonetheless, their emergence was not only due to violence. The social control exercised by the militias was undoubtedly brutal. However, as the case of Fosteridis hints, the broadening of the militias economic bases allowed them to offer their constituents some basic social services, protection, conflict resolution and material security. The EOK for instance formed and funded vigilante groups that met out summary justice on rustlers and petty thieves.[93] Furthermore, the illicit economic networks created and regulated by the militias provided jobs to thousands of unemployed and destitute civilians, and provided opportunities for upward mobility to the more violent, unscrupulous, and daring young peasants. The combination of economic violence, patronage and governance embedded the militias deeply into the structures of rural society and served to forge ties between the state and population groups that had been marginalized in the pre-war period.

90 GAK (Rodopis), Folder, 10.1/31/02, 23 June 1949.
91 Nikos Marantzidis, *Giassasin Millet, Zito to Ethnos* (Heraclion: University Press of Crete, 2001), p. 206.
92 'Thesprotia', *Agrotiki Ellas*, 15 July 1946.
93 'To iperkratos Badouva', *I Efimeris ton Hiton*, 21 June 1948.

Lords of the Marches: The Rise and Fall of a Violent Middle Class

The end of the civil war did not bring the activities of the militias to a halt, nor did it temper their proclivity for violence and profiteering. Wartime accumulation had turned the militias and other private armed actors and enterprisers of violence to economic 'actors of foremost importance.[94]' These organisations could marshal thousands of heavily armed members and they controlled large sections of the rural economy. The Western-Macedonian ESEA [Association of National Resistance Fighters] alone could count on the support of over 7000 heavily armed members. This organisation had significant presence in a large number of communities in the region including the cities of Kozani and Kastoria whose prefects were in effect instruments of the ESEA. Leading members of the organisation also controlled the grain trade, transportation and hauling and the distribution of state-funds directed to farmers and displaced persons. This gave them absolute control over local politics.[95] The ESEA determined civil service appointments and business loans and fixed the prices for purchasing and selling foodstuff. The situation was similar in the uplands of Fthiotida and Evrytania were the militias 'saw themselves as the supreme authorities who have life and death powers over their fellow citizens.'[96] In Epirus as well, the militias were a 'de-facto' authority almost a decade after the end of the civil war.[97]

While such activities shocked a significant part of the public, the authorities were unwilling to severe the ties with the militias. The defeat of the left did not quell the anti-communist ardor of the security services and the army who believed that any effort to control the militias would weaken the state's ability to deal with internal threats and the new situation that rose from the passage of a 'hot' war to a 'covert cold war'. Senior intelligence officers warned the government that international scrutiny would limit its ability to deploy military force against the civilian population. The internal enemy had therefore to be dealt with stealthily. The militias allowed the state to outsource shameful violence against the 'internal' enemy; trade-unionists, leftist, radical youths, etc., thus avoiding accountability and scrutiny from internal

94 GAK (Makedonias), Folder B26, Report on Prostitution, 22 December 1950.

95 Konstantinidis, pp. 330–335.

96 BMSVA, Folder/030/030, Report to the President of the Government Sofoklis Venizelos on Accusations and Complaints brought against Gendarmes in Evrytania, 9 April 1951.

97 Napoleon Dokanaris, *I Metapolemiki Ellada: 1944–2004* (Ioannina: Self-Published. 2004), pp. 155–9.

and external criticism. The militias found an additional ally among a section of junior conservatives. The war had all but destroyed the political machine of the right at the local level. The paramilitaries control and dominance of local social and economic structures was a crucial instrument in the restructuring of the right.[98]

These developments renewed the alliance between the intelligence community, the conservative right, and the militias. The bulk of the wartime militias were absorbed into a new organization the TEA [Tagmata Ethnofilakis Aminis-National Guard Defense Battalions] that came under the provenance of the Ministry for Defense. The official purpose of these groups was to aid in case of a foreign invasion. However, they were used to police the 'internal enemy' and assist the state in suppressing civilian dissent.[99] The government also allowed the various private organisations to continue their activities and permitted the organisation of new militias. The TEA and the private militias were often impossible to distinguish. Membership in both organisations often overlapped, and they enjoyed a significant degree of operational autonomy. The covenant between the state and the militias had three aims: to preserve the transformations of social order wrought by the civil war, to suppress any efforts of the left to re-enter the political arena and to improve their position vis-à-vis central elites.[100]

The alliance with the state gave them access to new streams of revenue and allowed them to consolidate and expand the scope of their illicit activities. The end of the war led to a renewed crackdown against some enterprises, like prostitution, but gave a new breath to others such as narcotics, gambling, and graft. The demand for drugs was fueled by the growth of the tourist industry, the rise of a youth counterculture and the increase of disposable income among young working-class males. In this period the cultivation of narcotics became more widespread and sophisticated. Between 1964 and 1965 the gendarmerie seized over 500.000 marijuana and 30.000 opium plants in mainland Greece alone.[101]

Paramilitaries associated with the TEA and private organizations played a pivotal role both as 'protectors' and suppliers of such illicit goods and services. The back story of Vasilis Ravdas exemplifies the

98 BMSVA, Folder/027/45/01, Report of Brigadier P. Nikolopoulos on Communist Activities. August 1950.

99 Ploumis, p. 278.

100 BMSVA, Folder/23/67, Brief Report of Georgios Fesopoulos on the Need for Education and Enlightenment, 1 November 1952.

101 'Apologismos tou agonos kata ton toxikomanon', *Makedonia*, 31 March 1965

role of the militias in these networks and their ties to the political establishment. Ravdas was an ethnic Greek who lived and worked in Romania before the war. In 1945 he fled Romania on the heels of the advancing Soviet army, and he resettled in the border town of Serres in central Macedonia. During the civil war, Ravdas joined the anti-communist militias of MAY and became particularly active in the local underworld. Ravdas and his men set up several illegal roulettes and lotteries which they used to generate income both for themselves and for their paramilitary activities. In the post-war period Ravdas joined the local chapter of the ERE (Ethniki Rizospastiki Enosi-National Radical Union), a right-wing party created by local politician Kostandinos Karamanlis. This association allowed Ravdas and his colleagues to upgrade and expand their businesses. Ravdas came to own several illegal gambling dens and night-clubs in Serres and its environs while he and his henchmen engaged in racketeering, pimping, burglaries, and usury. These activities were undertaken with the full knowledge of the gendarmerie colonel and ERE supporter Sotiris Homenidis who was locally known as 'Ravdas's uncle' for his close ties and unflinching support for Ravdas's gang. However, this was not a mere case of corruption. Ravdas and his men provided the gendarmerie with intelligence and information, performed illegal surveillance of political dissidents, and were used to 'muscle' and blackmail supporters of the left.[102]

Ravdas's case was neither a local idiosyncrasy nor a mere case of institutional corruption. This collusion was a direct product and response to profound changes in law enforcement and local politics. Post-war policing centered on combating the 'domestic' thereat, i.e., communism. By 1952 the government had created four separate authorities: the KYP (central intelligence service), the A2 office (army intelligence bureau), the special security branch of the police, and the office for extra-communitarians. These services absorbed the bulk of personnel and funding assigned for policing.[103] Moreover, funding was associated with and dispensed according to results produced by these agencies in the battle against communism. This policy created two problems. Firstly, it initiated a fierce antagonism between the various agencies that tried to generate quick and impressive results to secure and increase government funding. Second, it relegated 'common' crime to a secondary problem.[104]

102 'O Theios tou Ravda', *Eleftheria*, 09 June 1961.
103 Konstantinos Antoniou, *Istoria Vasilikis Horofilakis 1833–1964*, 4 vols (Athens: N/A, 1964), IV, 2456.
104 Dokanaris, p. 181.

This situation created additional opportunities for the paramilitaries. The security agencies delegated the suppression of ordinary crime to militias and used them for off the books operations; illicit surveillance, provocations, and contract hits.[105] The subcontracting of such activities to the militias allowed the security services to present quick and impressive results to their superiors and keep a lid on street crime by containing it to 'low interest areas', and producing the results demanded by their superiors. The militias were mobilized repeatedly to meet summary justice against habitual offenders: vagrants, itinerants, and Roma groups.[106]

Of course, the crack-down on street crime did not lead to a decrease in criminality. In fact, the ties to the security services allowed the paramilitary networks to re-organize their activities among more efficient lines and to increase their bargaining ability vis-à-vis the state and the local political class who became increasingly dependent on the militias for political support. Ravdas had excellent relations with the local ERE politicians including the mayor of the city and several MP's who used him and his gang to canvass and mobilize the local vote during election times.[107] Yet, Ravdas was not a local exception. The changes in policing and its relations to crime rendered former collaborationists, gangsters and militiamen an integral part of the political system and provided them with access to the highest levels of government.[108]

The extent and depth of collusion was revealed in a series of paramilitary scandals in the early 1960's. The most notorious case involved ERE minister Emmanuel Kefalogiannis and his extended family. In December 1960, the gendarmerie dismantled a network of drug traffickers and usurers in the island of Crete. The traffickers, most of whom were TEA leaders were able to operate with the help of Kefalogiannis and his who clan protected them in exchange for their help in canvassing and mobilizing the rural vote. The network extended into the city of Heraklion where it involved local businessmen, casino owners and entrepreneurs who helped to launder the drug money. The scandal forced Kefalogiannis to resign however, drug trafficking continued unabated.[109] A similar scandal involving several high-ranking ERE members was revealed during the same period in the northern Greek

105 ASKI/EDA Archive, Folder188, Material of the Prefectural Committee of Kavala on the activities of the nationalist Organization Blue Phalanx, n.d.

106 Goudis Hristos Goudis, *Aima kai Homa, Blood and Soil* (Athens: M-Press. 2018), p.250

107 'O Theios tou Ravda', *Eleftheria*, 09 June 1961.

108 ELIA/ Nikitiadis Archive, File 1.1.1., Letter to the Ministry for Naval Affairs, 20 November 1958.

109 'Sinehizetai I kalliergeia hashisi eis pollas perioxas tis Kritis', *Makedonia*, 20 December 1960

city of Kavala where the president of the local ERE association was arrested on charges of drug trafficking and graft.[110]

Such revelations did not put an end to collusion. Indeed, it seems that ties to the state and the political class allowed the paramilitaries to expand their provenance into white collar crimes such as enterprise corruption, bid rigging and graft. The personal archive of general Napoleon Zervas provides numerous examples of such activities. One militia affiliate used Zervas's help to smuggle several tons of sugar and beef through customs. Others used his services to sell antiquated and inoperative weapons to the various TEA units[111]. Graft and corruption were particularly prominent in the ports of Piraeus and Thessaloniki. Militias used their ties to local authorities to acquire no-show jobs for their members. These groups also 'taxed' longshoremen and other port workers who were forced to pay a monthly fee to the local militia leaders and engaged in the smuggling of luxury goods, coal, and oil.[112]

Militias also made huge profits from the appropriation of foreign aid. Acquiring a loan and/or access to modern farming implements was depended on political affiliations. Applicants had to produce the 'certificate of national affiliations,' to prove they had no ties with the left. This document had to be co-signed and sponsored by local conservative notables who were often the heads of the local militia. This allowed them to extort bribes from applicants and appropriate aid by issuing false or duplicate certificates.[113]

The paramilitary's control of the local means of violence and access to political networks enabled them to consolidate their stranglehold on both urban and rural economies and societies. Militia leaders used violence to appropriate and open commons land and seize properties that belonged to persons of 'questionable' political affiliation. The 'patriotic society' lead by the Beys's criminal clan appropriated 300 acres of commons land by threatening violence, and in one case murdering local peasants.[114] Such processes were even more common in border areas like Kastoria, Florina and Thesprotia which fell under the provenance of the 'colonisation' legislation. The purpose of this

110 'Dia Kalliergeia hashish katigorithi o proedros tis ERE in Kavala', *Eleftheria*, 18 December 1961.,

111 ELIA/Zervas Archive, Box 3, documents 1–25.

112 'O Kapelonis itan o arhigos tis Karfitsa', *Eleftheria*, 17 June 1963; ASKI/EDA Archive, 188, Material of the Prefectural Committee of Kavala.

113 Anastasia Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood, Passages to Nationhood in Greek Macedonia, 1870–1990* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1999), pp. 209–216.

114 'Oi Tromokratai tis dexias', *Eleftheria*, 25 September 1951.

legislation was to bolster the ethnically 'trustworthy' population in the border areas by settling persons and groups of 'pure' ethnic feelings. Local paramilitaries took advantage of this legislation to appropriate hundreds of acres that belonged to peasants of 'questionable' loyalty through a combination of extortion, threats, and sheer brutality.[115]

These changes ushered the creation of several local oligopolies on agri-business. Paramilitaries fixed the price of what and olive oil and controlled the prices for renting a threshing machine or using an olive press. Competition was driven out through force. Foreigners or non-affiliated peasants who tried to set up a business were beaten or had their equipment destroyed. Militia leaders also took advantage of their access to state-funding to purchase modern farming equipment and introduce new methods of cultivation and new crops. These processes had a revolutionary impact on traditional farming methods and communities. The expansion of arable land and the mechanization of agriculture facilitated industrial scale mono-cultivation of crops like wheat and maize in particularly competitive prizes. This allowed the integration of these hitherto marginal areas into European-wide market networks. These developments increased and consolidated large landholdings and eventually drove out small farmers who were already hard pressed because of lack of money and land. Those who remained in their villages became completely dependent on the militia leaders for loans, work and access to equipment.[116]

Similar transformations were taking place in urban areas where militia leaders were slowly transitioning from entrepreneurs of violence to legitimate businessmen and politicians. The Sourlas clan provides a characteristic example of upward mobility. The Sourlas were pastoralists who made the long trek from the uplands of Pindus to the lowlands of Thessaly in the turn of the century. Grigoris Sourlas, the head of the clan formed a pro-state militia with the help of local notables and landowners in 1945. Sourlas gang taxed local wheat farmers and 'protected' businesses which they charged between 5-10% of their gross monthly income. Loot and profits were laundered and sold with the help of Athenian fences and businessmen. In the post-war period Sourlas and his lieutenants used their ties to acquire significant properties in agricultural land and

115 Gennadeios Library, Filippos Dragoumis Archive, 94.4, Minute of the meeting of the sub-committee formed by the Foreign Ministry on 15 October 1952 on the colonization of the abandoned lands in Northern Greece, 15 October 1952.

116 Karakasidou, pp. 209–216; Hans Vermulen, 'Repressive Aspects in Process of Outmigration: The Case of a Greek Macedonian Tobacco Village', *Mediterranean Studies*, 1 (1979), 32–45.

real estate and establish businesses in the local towns of Farsala, Volos and Larissa, 'where they also acted as bosses for the monarchist party.' These ties rendered the militias a powerful lobby and allowed them to elect their own men in the parliament.[117] Similar transformations occurred in border areas such as Thesportia, Ioannina, Castoria and Serres as well as in the island of Crete and the Peloponnesus where militia leaders were slowly transitioning from 'men of the gun' to 'men of affairs.'[118] Nonetheless, the urbanisation of these networks did not result in the 'gentrification' of paramilitarism. Indeed, as Karakasidou noted this violent bourgeoisie stood out for their 'manifest willingness […] to employ violence, terror, or extortion in pursuit of their goals and defense of their interest.' Accordingly, the ability to control, regulate and deploy violence 'was an important aspect of their dominance, both political and economic.'[119]

These transformations did not temper the militias' politics. Indeed, the growing industrialisation, the continuous influx of internal immigrants and the transformation of agriculture along industrial lines was slowly but steadily undermining their supremacy. Industrialisation fostered and encouraged pressures for democratization among middling strata that were increasingly disaffected with the mechanisms and methods of the security services. More importantly, modernisation facilitated the centralization of the security apparatus thus undercutting the militias' opportunities for collusion and entrepreneurship. These developments were perceived by the paramilitary world as a direct threat to their status and led them to forge alliances with ultra-nationalist and conspiratorial elements in the army. The collusion played a particularly important role in ushering the military junta that ruled Greece between 1967 and 1974. The collapse of the junta finally signaled the undoing of the militias. The TEA were officially dissolved in 1981. The marginalisation of the militias was not only a matter of state policy. The increased modernisation of the economy and outmigration from the countryside made rural bosses obsolete and undercut the need for patronage ties among the urban working class. The ties between the state and the world of private violence were not severed completely though.

117 Gianakennas, p. 288.

118 Karakasidou, pp. 212–216; Hans Vermulen, 'Segmental Factionalism, Class, and Conflict in a Greek Macedonian Village', in *Transactions: Essays in honor of Jeremy E. Boissevain* ed. by Jojada Verrips (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis Publishers), pp. 157–175; Dokanaris, 135–140; Ioannis Nikolaidis, *Ta hronia pou perasan, anamniseis: 1941–1967* (Ioannina: Self-Published, 1994).

119 Karakasidou, p. 210.

The memory and practices of these groups survived in rural societies and the urban demimonde alike and were occasionally mobilized in periods of social and political crisis to augment the authority of the state and meet out rough 'justice' to internal enemies of all hues.

Conclusion

The outbreak of the civil war took place during a period of profound social and economic upheaval. The inability of the state to quell the insurgency forced local power brokers to rely on professionals of violence or 'military entrepreneurs.' The formation of these groups militarised local societies in unexpected ways, thereby generating new constellations of political power and governance. Warfare, reprisals, and violence undermined established social and political practices while the formal economy was replaced by informal networks that depended on illicit activities such as smuggling, raiding and mercenary service. The control of these networks allowed them to challenge and, in many cases, displace their paymasters. The social orders created by the militias were often unstable. Feuding between different militias was quite common as was graft and others forms of criminality. However, in the long run they facilitated the absorption of the area into the national-body politic by modernising the rural economy and allowing marginal individuals and constituencies to become active political players in the nation-building process.

Such practices did not lose their salience after the war. Insecurity and high unemployment enabled these groups to refashion their role as mediators and brokers between the central state and the civilian population and retain their hold over the informal economy. Despite their involvement in illicit activities, the new elites were by no means opposed to the state. In fact, militia leaders and their followers cooperated with the state to complete the process of violent nation-building that started in the pre-war period. This relationship was often fraught with difficulties. The reconstruction of post-war Greece was sometimes described in terms of a powerful state imposing its will from the top down. Realities on the ground, however, were quite different. Local state building took the form of painstaking negotiations between the state and a series of local and national actors, political parties, military and security operatives and armed groups with highly divergent interests and agendas. These processes allowed militia-leaders

a particularly high-degree of latitude and facilitated the persistence of a series of parallel institutions: veterans associations, paramilitary groups and political committees that co-governed with the local authorities. This process did not weaken 'the power of the state,' in fact 'the intertwinement' between non-state actors and the national authorities allowed the state to extent its writ in marginal areas and facilitate the modernisation of the economy.

Such process were not unique to Greece. Indeed, what happened in the country was part of a much larger wave of ethnic violence, displacement and nation building in the post-WW2 'west'. Studies of these processes have presented the reconstruction of post-war states as a combined process of the monopolisation of force, cultural pacification and institutional modernisation. Accordingly, they have focused on the national and transnational elites and institutions that contributed to this restructuring. The article demonstrated instead that this process was much more piecemeal and fragmented than previously suggested. Reconstruction was mediated and assisted by a host of private actors whose cooperation allowed the state to extend its reach in the margins during a critical time. Yet, such cooperation was not only a matter of state-weakness. In Greece and countries such as France,[120] Japan[121] and Korea[122]among others the ties between the men of the state and the men of the gun persisted long after the war. Such alliances incurred several benefits for all participating parties; illegal activities offered large amounts of non-accountable cash that were put to use in the post-war bustling, developed markets and provided a political structure eminently suited to the security needs arising out of the Cold War. The presence and persistence of these ties puts into question ideas and perceptions of legal (state) and illegal (private-criminal) violence as mutually exclusive categories and points to the need for more rigorous and systematic research on the profane margins where public and private actors intersected and colluded during the state-making process. Future studies should move beyond state centric approaches and examine how the diverse non-state actors such as militias, gangs, aid agencies, veteran associations, and youth organisations that operated

120 François Audigier, *Histoire du SAC (Service d'Action Civique): La part d'ombre du gaullisme* (Paris: Stock. 2003)

121 Eiko Siniawer, *Ruffians, Yakuza, Nationalists: The Violent Politics of Modern Japan, 1860–1960* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

122 Eric Mobrand, 'The Street Leaders of Seoul and the Foundations of the South Korean Political Order', *Modern Asian Studies*, 50.2 (2016), 636-674.

in these regions engaged with governance and produced new local social orders that paved the way for the restructuring of the post-war state.

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