

“Military Museums And Military Tourism In Greece. A Preliminary Geopolitical Approach”

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Abstract

This article initially, examines qualitatively the recent developed project of Greek Military Tourism, in the context of a relevant memorandum of cooperation, signed at Athens in 2021. Then it studies the proposed network of war museums and monuments in Greece. Afterwards it observes whether the design and implementation of the above mentioned project, beyond its developmental and cultural characteristics, can maintain sufficient geopolitical dynamics, in favor of Greece in the Balkan complex.

Introduction:

Background: *According to four informative maps (png files, scale 1: 100.000) of the Greek territory, uploaded at the official website of the War Museum of Athens, in early 2024, a network of museums, monuments, natural sites and military cemeteries, is shaped. The strong interest and will by the half of the Greek state, to organize and develop the special form of Military Tourism in Greece is evident.*

Method: *The article attempts a preliminary geopolitical assessment, through Systemic Geopolitical Analysis, regarding the potential qualitative contribution of Military Tourism to the pillars of Greece's geopolitical power. The research area focuses on the Greek regions that are under pressure from neighboring state actors on the northern borders on issues regarding economy, minorities, cultural heritage, etc.*

Conclusion: *War museums concern the stories of peoples who paid a high price for the freedom and sovereignty of their homeland. They preserve the historical memory and forge national unity by connecting the past with the present and future of a place. Since their management is state-owned, a coordinated and scientific approach is required in order these museums, and subsequently Military Tourism, to become fields of action for the amplification of Greece, on multiple levels.*

Keywords: *Special forms of Tourism, Military Tourism (M.T), Power Shifts, Systemic Geopolitical Analysis, Prespa Agreement.*

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I. The Concept Of Military Tourism In The Greek Actuality

The concept of Military Tourism in the Greek reality is a case of a special form of tourism, which has the characteristics and typology, that place it in the category of cultural tourism and indirectly in the subcategory of heritage tourism.¹ In May 2021, a new tourism plan was announced, based on a memorandum of cooperation, where the War Museum of Athens was designated in charge for coordination, implementation and cooperation among the three competent ministries (Defense, Tourism, Culture & Sports).² The aim of the memorandum is to jointly prepare a comprehensive plan of actions to highlight, promote and advertise Military Tourism, focusing strongly on domestic war museums.³

¹ P. Moira, S. Parthenis, (2011), *Cultural-Industrial Tourism* [in Greek], Pub. Nomiki Bibliothiki, Athens, pp.148-149.

² <https://www.mod.mil.gr/ypografi-mnimonioy-synergias-to-stratotiko-toyrismo-metaxy-ton-ypoyrgeion-ethnikis/>

³ <https://warmuseum.gr/military-tourism/>

Figure 1. Map of major War, Military, Naval and Air force Museums in Greece.



(<https://warmuseum.gr/military-tourism/War Museum Website/ Activities>)

Greece obtains a great number of military sightseeing throughout its territory, such as museums, monuments, lighthouses, collections of weaponries and relics, as well as locations where significant military events (battles, naval battles, conflicts, etc.) took place, associated to Greek (and international) history. These assets constitute the core of Military Tourism. Alongside national tourism development planning, Military Tourism aims to become a particularly dynamic sector, significantly contributing to the country's economic growth and sustainable development. Moreover, a relevant announcement by the Ministry of National Defense mentioned that Military Tourism belongs to the relatively new and rapidly developing types of tourism internationally and therefore, it is considered important to highlight and utilize tourist monuments of military interest, ideally as expected, mutually with their immediate man-made and natural environment.

The offered product of the Military Tourism is therefore based on military history, while its touristic nature is determined by the personal motivations of people to visit places of past military operations, museums, monuments, camps, military cemeteries and other facilities (Table 1). Although Military Tourism includes activities that are part of Dark Tourism or Death Tourism, however these two forms of tourism are not identical.⁴ Their essential difference lies in the motivations, the expected stimuli and the positive imprint that Military Tourism offer to the visitor - tourist. The purpose of its conduct is considered psycho-spiritual and aims at informing, educating, highlighting traditional and social values, producing scientifically proven knowledge, preserving historical memory and of course at the spiritual upliftment of the visitor.⁵

Table 1. Military Tourism in Greek territory as is being formed. Composed by D. Katiniotis and Miltiadis Botsis.

	Places to visit	Related activities
At initial position	Historical battlefields, base Camps, Naval Bases, Airfields, Forts, Castles, Lighthouses, Bursts, Monuments of fallen soldiers, Militants' residence museums	Reenactments of battles and naval battles under the auspices of the Ministry of National Defense
At selected place	Monuments of important battles, Military cemeteries of Greek and foreign allies, Memorials, War museums, Military Museums, Naval Museums, Air force Museums	Air shows, exhibitions with historic military vehicles, historic warships, historic military aircrafts

The subject of Military Tourism of course stands as a global practice, utilizing either the internal national military history of a country, or the history of a country through military expeditions abroad. For example, the battlefields of the Great War (World War I) and World War II in Europe attract the interest of

⁴ R. Dunkley et al, (2011), “Visiting the trenches: Exploring meanings and motivations in battlefield tourism”/ *Tourism Management* 32 p. 861.

⁵ C. Winter, (2009), “Tourism, Social Memory and the Great War”, *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 36, No. 4, p. 617.

thousands of visitors annually. Equally important are the military cemeteries of the aforementioned wars, along with their inherited cenotaphs. War museums offer a comprehensive educational experience to tourists, due to the breadth of their exhibits; they present a more complete cultural depiction of every host country. Depending on their particular history, the objects offered as military tourism attractions may include fortifications, medieval castles, military vehicles, ships and aircrafts, without of course being limited to them.⁶

II. The Economic And Cultural Potential Of Military Tourism

The gradual excessive development of mass tourism led to the need for specialized forms of tourism, which are divided into, a) those of special interests and b) alternative forms of tourism, depending on the purpose and the fulfillment of the obligation they ask for. These forms of tourism are associated with environmental and social values. Contrary to the negative impacts of mass tourism, they are organized at small scales from residents or local bodies, in order to provide a positive interaction between tourists and services. The emphasis of special forms of tourism on the protection of the cultural heritage of a region, when performed, as well as their ability to be carried out complementary, enrich the final tourist product and enhance the tourist completeness of that region.⁷

The contribution of tourism to local and regional development is even more important for isolated areas, which do not seem to have wealth-producing potentials, such as the Greek mountainous areas. In recent years, in areas where tourism activity is under development, occurs a multiple benefit, since necessary infrastructure projects are executed, such as the transportation network. Airports and ports are being upgraded to accommodate more visitors. Tourism generally improves the quality of life in a community, due to the improvement of infrastructure and the services provided. This contributes to the creation of new jobs and to incentives for further development of economic activity and new investments. The Military Tourism as a new tourism product in Greece appears to be developed mainly in boundary areas, ever since this is projected on the relevant maps of the War Museum. Through this, an opportunity is presented to reinforce the countryside an offer opportunities for employment and wages beyond urban centers.⁸

Table 2. Decoding of the Military Tourism map with the 25 Museums in terms of their geographical distribution (War Museum Website/Activities, at <https://warmuseum.gr/military-tourism>)

Regions of Greece /without Mount Athos	War and Military Museums in Greece	Neighboring countries (Greek military museums in proximity of them)
Attica	4	-
Peloponnese	3	-
Central Greece	1	-
Thessaly	2	-
Epirus	2	Albania (1)
Crete	2	-
Western Macedonia	8	North Macedonia (2), Bulgaria (2)
Eastern Macedonia and Thrace	3	Bulgaria (2), Turkey (1)
8 of 13	Total 25	4 (8)

The War Museum of Athens has already arranged four maps regarding initially the network of military, naval, air force and war museums, which are spotted throughout Greece and form a basic network for the development of Military Tourism. This network is complemented by a set of selected historical sites, a set of military monuments and a set of military cemeteries. The above museums are related to Greek and allied military history and host in their collections war relics such as: artillery, ammunition, uniforms, maps, operational orders, decorations and medals, personal belongings, photographs, dioramas, vehicles, aircrafts, vessels, scale replicas, etc. These museums can be characterized as custodians of the Greek history, civilization, values and culture. By visiting these museums and spaces, social and psychological reflexes get activated. There, a broader and deeper connection arises between visitors and the ancestral fighters, whose historical memory is preserved by war museums.

The national identity of a society is forged both by the struggles of its ancestors and their repetition by its descendants. The cohesive element of a populace or nation cannot be found such in common characteristics

⁶ G. M. Zavarika, (2021), “Military Tourism as a peculiarity of tourism development in a post-conflict territory”, *Journal of Geology Geography and Geoecology*, 31(1), pp.188-190.

⁷ M. Venetsanopoulou, (2019), *The state’s contribution in Tourism, Alternative forms of Tourism: Historical Evolution- Institutional frame* [in Greek], Pub. Fedimos, Athens, pp.62-67.

⁸ X. Kokkosis, P. Tsartas, E. Griba, (2000), *Special and alternative forms of tourism. Demand and Offer for new products of tourism* [in Greek], 2nd edition, Athens, p.46.

as origin, language, religion, but in the common consciousness. In fact, this cohesion outweighs internal rivalries in periods of national crisis.⁹ According to sociologist Durkheim, the collective conscience, expressed as the set of beliefs and feelings of a society that the average member possesses, exceeds, precedes and follows these members. In the course of collective conscience, all the complexity of natural life is confronted.¹⁰ Moreover, according to the theory of sociology, when a danger threatens a society, such as war for example, a mechanism is activated to strengthen social cohesion in the sense of uniting its members.¹¹ Therefore, Military Tourism seems to have a threefold effect on tourists:

- a. First, it satisfies their conscious desire to gain knowledge about military structure, tactics, technology and history.
- b. Second, it empowers their psyche with feelings of sympathy, emotion, enthusiasm, pride, elevation and emotional connection, through understanding the self-sacrifice and self-denial of their forebears.
- c. And, finally third, it strengthens and maintains the collective identity, which essentially is deciphered as the attitude to life and the value system that governs the cultural distinctiveness of a society.¹²

III. The Military Tourism As A Soft Power Factor

The museums mentioned in this article enclose collections, relics and documents from the entire military history of Greece beginning from antiquity reaching to the modern era. Specific, at the eight War Museums (supervised by the Ministry of Defense), the collections and exhibitions cover a long period, starting from early Bronze Age. Exhibits from classic era, the medieval, the Greek War of Independence (1821-1829), the Macedonian struggle (1893-1912), the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), the First and Second World War, the Greco-Turkish War (1919-1922) and the Korean War (1950-1955) constitute a significant collection. However, the military tourism project seems to obtain a temporal specialization. The historical subject is more targeted and concerns the military actions during the 20th century. The concept could be described by introducing the Macedonian struggle, followed by the First and Second Balkan Wars and succeeded by the First and the Second World War. The above wars have a historical and geopolitical continuity.

According to the historian N. Svoronos, the Balkan Wars can be considered the prelude to the First World War. Europe had already been divided into two opposing and hostile camps since 1904. The one side involves Italy, France and Russia, while the other camp assembled the Central Powers. The two opposing camps attempted to attract small states as satellites with the consequent processes in full swing.¹³ Both, Balkan Wars and the subsequent First World War had a great cost in human lives. They brought stagnation to agricultural and industrial production, an event with a great impact on the Greek economy. On the other hand, however, the size of Greece more than doubled and social and political development accelerated.¹⁴

Table 3. Decoding of the Military Tourism map with the 29 Military Monuments, which relate to the Balkans Wars and World Wars I and II. (War Museum Website/Activities at <https://warmuseum.gr/military-tourism>)

	Nationality of deceased soldiers	Number of Military Monuments,	Contiguous countries at the monument areas
1	Greeks	9	Albania, North Macedonia
2	Russians	2	North Macedonia
3	Serbians	5	North Macedonia
4	French	3	North Macedonia
5	Commonwealth allies	8	North Macedonia
6	Entant allies	1	North Macedonia
7	Australians	1	North Macedonia
	Total	29	2

Soft power and generally non-traditional forms of power function as complements and not as substitutes for traditional *hard power*, such as military and economic power.¹⁵ Within the framework of the grand strategy which a country, wishes to implement, chooses an ideal combination of power instruments, the result is called smart power. Greece possesses reserves of soft power, especially cultural, expressed with a synthesis of inherited history, philosophy, fine arts, democracy and a primordial system of values. Greece is

⁹ A. Nicolaidis, (2008), *Considerate Sociology* [in Greek], Pub. Grigori, Athens, pp. 160-161.

¹⁰ A. Nicolaidis, (2008), p.169.

¹¹ A. Nicolaidis, (2008), pp. 171-172.

¹² A. Nicolaidis, (2008), p.168.

¹³ N. Svoronos, (1994), *Overview of the Modern Greek History* [in Greek], Pub. Themelio, pp. 109-110.

¹⁴ N. Svoronos, (1994), pp.124-125.

¹⁵ Joseph Nye coined the term "soft power" in the late 1980s. Soft power lies on the ability of someone to attract and persuade.

characterized as a tolerant, hospitable, extroverted, peaceful and tourist attractive country. Its credibility, moderate and prudent foreign policy, with participation in important Western institutions promotes Greece’s partnership among countries with significant ancient heritage.¹⁶ Furthermore, the recognition and honoring of the allied countries, which fought alongside Greece, strengthens interstate ties and promotes its role internationally through the soft power exercised by cultural influence. The effectiveness of the political and cultural factor is indicatively reflected in the following table No. 4 as *soft power*.¹⁷

Table 4: Contribution of the tourist phenomenon to the redistribution of power. From: A. Stogiannos, M. Botis, “Tourism Politics or Tourism Geopolitics? Demarcating Two Similar-Sounding Research Fields”, *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, Volume 29, Issue 2, Series 4 (February, 2024) pp.10-16.

Geopolitical Pillar	Type of Power	Effect of Tourism
Defense	Hard Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control of critical national infrastructures (e.g., airports, ports) by foreign states • Security conditions for tourists (terrorism, organized crime)
Economy	Hard Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excessive dependence of the economy on foreign tourism • Control of tourist information
Politics	Soft Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism as a means of rendering political identity (e.g., Spain) • Influence of large enterprises in decision-making, at all levels
Culture	Soft Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hegemonic cultural influence

IV. Tourist Flows And Geopolitical Correlations

The prominent geopolitics theorists Mahan and Ratzel argued at the beginning of the 20th century that powerful states exercised the right to expand in space. That is why the territory of a state cannot be permanent and stable perpetually.¹⁸ The geographer Ratzel, studying the influence of environmental conditions on human activities, defined the term *living space* (Lebensraum), which expands when necessary to strengthen a nation.¹⁹ Geopolitics, as a scientific/theoretical subject, is a tool for deciphering the aforementioned processes.²⁰ The models of power redistribution are the results of synthesis and conclusions in the four geopolitical pillars of power, namely Defense/Security, Economy, Politics and Culture/Information, in the field of reference of a complete synthetic geographical space.²¹

In the current subject of Military Tourism, which of course must be nationally managed, it is estimated that it could possibly act as a deterrent (to a certain extent) to these exogenous redistribution in power. The wary management of the abovementioned monuments in combination with the adequate information of visitors/tourists (mostly those traveling by vehicles), can overall positively influence the perception of visitors/tourists, stressing the historically significant geopolitical, and sometimes even geostrategic, importance of this region.

¹⁶ P. Hinofotis, (2024), *the soft power of Greece. How is it promoted, utilized and safeguarded* [in Greek], Ed. GSHN, Athens, pp.29-34.

¹⁷ Soft power is the ability to affect others, to obtain the desirable outcomes through attraction rather than coercion or payment. A country's soft power rests on its resources of culture, values, and policies. See. J.S. Nye, Jr., "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power". *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Mar., 2008, Vol. 616, Public Diplomacy in a Changing World (Mar., 2008), p.94.

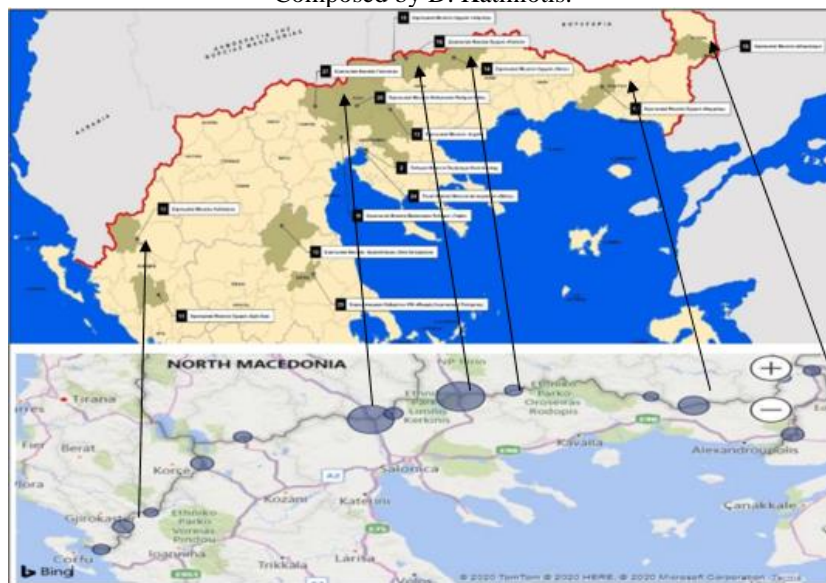
¹⁸ B. Blouet, (2001), *Geopolitics and globalization in the twentieth century*, Pub. Reaktionbooks, London, pp.26-29.

¹⁹ I. Mazis, M. Troulis, X. Domatioti, (2019), *Neorealist Approach for International Relations Theory and Systemic Geopolitical Analysis* [in Greek], Pub. Leimon, Athens, p.61.

²⁰ I. Mazis et.al., (2019), p.60.

²¹ I. Mazis et.al., (2019), p.29.

Figure 2. Territorial correlation between military museums (<https://warmuseum.gr/military-tourism>) and Border Stations at Northern Greece (https://insete.gr/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/20-06_Odikos_2012-2019).
Composed by D. Katiniotis.



The emerging setting of the Military Tourism plan, through the network of the specified Museums, Monuments, Historical Sites and Cemeteries, presents a dense concentration in northern Greece. From the border stations, several millions of tourists are driving through every year, starting from numerous countries. In particular, it is reported that road trip tourism for the period January-December 2023, demonstrates a significant increase in inflows from all neighboring countries, compared to 2022. More specific, the largest increase in absolute differences is recorded from Bulgaria by +1.5 million arrivals (+50.6%), reaching totally 4.5 million vehicle arrivals. Furthermore, 1.2 million vehicle arrivals were recorded from Turkey, increased by 395 thousand, marking a percentage difference also +50.6%. Entries by car from North Macedonia recorded the number of 3.1 million arrivals, an increase of +344 thousand vehicles and a percentage of +12.5%. Finally, the increase in inflows from Albania amounted to +200 thousand (+13.2%), while 1.7 million actual road arrivals were recorded.²²

Therefore, through the appropriate promotion and advertising of the above mentioned landmarks, the product of Military Tourism may acquire a special significance for the related inhabited areas of northern Greece, since the aforesaid network of military museums and monuments functions as an active guardian of historical memory. Not only because the emotional ties for the natives with their ancestors and their homeland will remain vigorous, but also because it acknowledges and reminds foreign visitors of the long-established fighting spirit of the Greek people, in favor of their homeland and freedom. Historical examples narrate that, national unity and sincere patriotism, when sustained at high levels, increase resilience against external interventions.

V. The Geopolitical Exploitation Of Military Tourism In The Case Of The Prespa Agreement

Following the establishment of FYROM and its recognition by the UN as the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the official list of UN member states, on 8 April 1993, it became clear that the word “former” refers to the entire name, which was also temporary. It therefore refers to the Yugoslav federal entity and not to a state under the name Macedonia.²³

The 2018 *Prespa Agreement* project sought, on the one hand, to resolve the temporary name issue, but mainly to normalize relations between the two contracting countries, as the designation “Macedonia” has been a field of controversy and tension in the political arena, both within the two countries.²⁴ Furthermore, the name

²²Insete Intelligence, Bulletin No 90, Special Edition- 2023 Review [in Greek], March 2024, p.24. Available at https://insete.gr/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Bulletin_2023-2.pdf

²³ I. Mazis, (2021), *Mediterranean Palimpsest: From Davutoğlu to Erdoğan* [in Greek], Pub. Leimon, Athens, p.142.

²⁴ In the terminology of administrative division, through the Balkan Wars, Greece incorporated the part of Macedonia, which had historical continuity with the ancient Greek kingdom of the same name, but only up to

issue affects the relations of the Republic of North Macedonia with supra-systemic actors (EU and NATO). These two organizations ask for compliance with the Prespa Agreement.²⁵ The USA urge NATO'S integration in the Balkan perimeter in cooperation with Macron's France, which is currently formalized by the French (strategic) naval presence in Cyprus, in order to control Russian influence in the Mediterranean. The USA is indifferent to the kind of resolution about the name issue and simply supports an unexpected acceptance by the Greek side and of course seeks to overturn the potential German monopoly. In the subsystem of the central-western Balkans, the competition between the USA and Berlin is clear, as Berlin is working on the abolition of any Anglo-Saxon influence or NATO-type energy security provision of the European Union.²⁶ The German arm of influence seeks control of the Rotterdam port's spot hydrocarbon market, through the planned waterway of the Axios-Morava-Danube Rivers (Fig. 3).

Figure 3. The Geopolitical Axes of the Mediterranean. From: I. Th. Mazis, *A Geopolitical Approach for a New Greek Defense Doctrine*, Pub. Papazisis, Athens 2006, (Map 7, p. 48).



In combination with the new Silk Road OBOR (One Belt One Road), Greece is particularly favored, because its ports are the closest European land ports to the Suez Canal, while the role of maritime transport and the strategic character of the Bosphorus Straits are downgraded (Fig. 4). This clearly upgrades the geopolitical importance of Greece and North Macedonia, but downgrades the geopolitical importance of Turkey.²⁷

the borders with the Kingdom of Serbia. It was given the name “General Administration of Macedonia” in 1914. Later and after World War II, the Yugoslav authorities introduced the administrative designation “People's Republic of Macedonia in 1946, for the southern federal state, which was renamed “Socialist Republic of Macedonia in 1963”. With the dissolution of Yugoslavia in 1991, the state appeared as a sovereign state calling itself Macedonia. See M. Ioannidis, “Naming a state. Disputing over symbols of statehood at the example of “Macedonia”, *Max Planck Yearbook of United Nations Law 14 (2010)*, pp 510-516.

²⁵https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/north-macedonia-statement-spokesperson-use-constitutional-name-new-president-her-address-swearing_en. Retrieved at 31/5/2024.

²⁶ I. Mazis, (2021), pp.147-148.

²⁷ I. Mazis, (2021), p.152.

Figure 4. The Belt and Road Initiative, formerly known as One Belt One Road (OBOR), is a global infrastructure development strategy adopted by the Chinese government in 2013.

https://merics.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/Silkroad-Projekt_EN_2020_150dpi.png



Of course, special attention is needed to the issues of neo-Balkan irredentism between the two countries, which the infamous Prespa agreement did not seem to ensure in any way.²⁸ The newly elected President of North Macedonia, Gordana Siljanovska, prevailing with 65%, was sworn in on 12/5/2024, at a special session of the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia and during her swearing-in, she referred to her country as "Macedonia", despite the fact that in the text of the oath, which was recited by the President of the outgoing Parliament, calling on Siljanovska to repeat it, the country was referred to as "North Macedonia".²⁹ Greece's reaction was immediate and was expressed institutionally through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through a written statement, according to which: *This act blatantly violates the Prespa Agreement, as well as the Constitution of the neighboring country, which has been harmonized with its international obligations.*³⁰

Furthermore, in addition to the governmental responses, related to the political crisis in North Macedonia, a sequence of events of ceremonial interest, took place. More specifically, the Greek Minister of National Defense attended as a representative of the Government, at Fort Rupel, the memorial religious service for the fallen soldiers, on Sunday, 12th May 2024. After the memorial prayer, he gave a speech before the reenactment event "RUPEL 1941: THE REVIVAL", which was organized by the Municipality of Sintiki, in collaboration with the "Stenopos" Association, in the context of the "Month of Forts", in the presence of thousands of visitors, who visited Fort Rupel.³¹

A few days later, on May 20 and a few weeks before the 2024 European elections, the Prime Minister of Greece visited the city of Thessaloniki. His visit there incorporated the Thessaloniki War Museum and the Destroyer VELOS, where he was accompanied by the Minister of National Defense.³² The Greek Prime

²⁸ The dual parliamentary and presidential elections in North Macedonia on Wednesday, May 8, 2024, dealt a humiliating defeat to the ruling Social Democratic Party (SDSM) and returned the nationalists of VMRO-DPMNE to power after a seven-year hiatus. President Siljanovska had pledged during the election campaign that they would not use the designation "North" in the name of their country.

²⁹ <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/north-macedonian-presidents-inauguration-revives-name-dispute-with-greece-2024-05-13/>

³⁰ Announcement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the swearing-in ceremony of the President of North Macedonia (12.05.2024). see. <https://www.mfa.gr/epikairofita/diloseis-omilies/anakoinose-upourgeiou-exoterikon-skhetika-me-ten-telete-orkomosias-tes-proedrou-tes-boreias-makedonias-12052024.html>

³¹ <https://www.mod.mil.gr/paroysia-yetha-nikoy-dendia-ochyro-roypel-stin-epimnimosyni-deisi-toys/>

³² The Destroyer (D16) "VELOS" is designated as a MAA (Museum of the Anti-Dictatorship Struggle). Her transfer from the bay of the «Naval Tradition Grove» in Paleo Faliro proved to be precarious in 2023. The PM's announcement in 2024 that VELOS is going to remain in Thessaloniki may have a double political reading (on the one hand in favor of the local community of Thessaloniki, on the other hand for the sake of those who are annoyed by the democratic symbolism of the DESTROYER VELOS

(<https://www.mod.mil.gr/wpcontent/uploads/2024/01/%CE%95%CE%A1%CE%A9%CE%A4%CE%97%CE%A3%CE%97-1832.pdf>)

Minister highlighted the historical importance of these facilities, as well as the permanent collections they host. In fact, the ship Naval Museum VELOS is one of only four remaining destroyers, three of which are in USA. This living museum has already been visited by hundreds of thousands residents from Thessaloniki.³³

The above mentioned locations, where visits and statements placed by the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defense (Fort Rupel, Thessaloniki War Museum and Destroyer VELOS), stand among the main museums for the planned Military Tourism. Their selection by government officials for submitting declarations in the midst of a crisis in Greece's relations, mainly with neighboring North Macedonia, indicates their notable special weight, at least in the effort to shape a climate of inner national unity and security. All the aforesaid suggest that the status of Military Tourism as a geopolitical factor of power redistribution is getting empowered, since according to the theory of Systemic Geopolitical Analysis, it appears to have an impact on the pillars of Economy (from revenues as a tourist product), Politics (both at internal and external level) and Culture (through the promotion of monuments, museums and education). In fact, the subsequent signing of a Joint Ministerial Decision between the Deputy Minister of National Defense, the Minister of Culture and the Deputy Minister of Tourism, regarding the establishment of a Joint Coordination Committee for Military Tourism, reinforces the particular geopolitical importance of Military Tourism, as the Joint Coordination Committee will be responsible for monitoring and coordinating the actions and activities referred to in the 2021 Memorandum of Cooperation between the three Ministries, so that within six months of its establishment, a comprehensive action should be jointly prepared, so as to promote and hype Military Tourism.³⁴ Perhaps the disturbances caused to the Prespa Agreement by the changes in the political leadership of North Macedonia demonstrated the need for an integrated completion of actions regarding the institutionalization of Military Tourism.

VI. Conclusions

This study would be conceptually based on the evolving term of Military Tourism, as comprehended by the Administration of the War Museum, in collaboration with the Ministries of Tourism, Culture and Defense. Currently, there is no explicit legislative provision for the identity and content of M.T, as in the case of the distinctive forms of Cultural Tourism of article 13 (Greek law 4582/2018).³⁵ Although the recently formed tourism product of Military Tourism is already being implemented in several countries, the academic research about this topic is at a primary level, which implies that there are no sufficient data, conclusions or feedback.

Furthermore, since the basis for the Military Tourism, namely the museums, are managed by Legal Entities of Public Law, they are directly dependent on the state and must follow a specific policy regarding the promotion of events of national importance. In this context, certain basic parameters necessary for the establishment of the museum must be taken into account, such as the purpose of the museum, the level of promotion for the historical subjects and the interdisciplinary cooperation and planning.³⁶

Secondly, it is crucial to emphasize in the integrated promotion and communication via telephone, e-mail, and website and of course social media. Feasibly, there is room for expansion of the applicable areas, given that the principal design of Military Tourism does not include for example, Hellenic Maritime Museum of Greece (opened in 1969), the Naval Museum of Crete (opened in 1973) as well as at least eleven other military museums supervised by the Hellenic Army General Staff.³⁷ Finally, a number of queries arise regarding the definition of Military Tourism, such as: What are the confines of this special form of tourism in relation to historical Tourism? Does it concern military events, with only regular troops, of state entities? Does it include civil strife and guerrilla warfare? Does it engage dependence on domestic politics or propaganda? Can and should be used geopolitically or as an arm of states' policy? Further study will probable provide the answers.

³³ <https://www.primeminister.gr/2024/05/20/34275>. Information note on the visit of Prime Minister in Thessaloniki on May 20, 2024.

³⁴ <https://www.mod.mil.gr/en/the-deputy-minister-of-national-defence-mr-giannis-kefalogiannis-signs/>

³⁵ The greek Law 4582/2018 for Cultural Tourism endorses and indicates activities such as visits and tours to world cultural heritage sites, archaeological sites, museums, buildings and monuments of architectural heritage, national and historical monuments, which prompt the Hellenic tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

³⁶https://www.academia.edu/7987117/_2013_with_G_Papaioannou_Tales_of_war_in_military_museums_Case_studies_in_Greek_announcement_in_conference_titled_Stories_of_war_in_Southeast_Europe_An_approach_trough_the_ages_in_Greek_Athens_University_of_Athens_Department_of_History_and_Archaeology_2013

³⁷ <https://army.gr/mouseia/>

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