

Εναρκτήριο Χαιρετισμός του Αρχηγού ΓΕΕΘΑ
στο Greek - British Symposium 2026

It is an honour to open the tenth Greek-British Symposium, here on the Athenian Riviera, on the same Attic shore as Laurion, where, twenty-five centuries ago, its silver built the fleet that saved Greece: ***an early reminder that prosperity and security have always sailed together.***

Let me begin with a conviction every soldier learns early on: geography generates history. Mountains, straits, and seas do not decide the fate of nations, but they set the terms on which it is decided. Herodotus called Egypt the gift of the Nile. Thucydides showed how the sea made Athens, and how the contest between a sea power and a land power shaped the war that followed.

Greece and the United Kingdom are both children of the sea. Two maritime nations at the edges of Europe, we have always looked outward, because our geography placed us on the routes of trade, of energy and, too often, of conflict. In 1941, on Crete, that same geography placed Greek and British soldiers side by side.

Geography endures. Security, however, is not a static condition. I maintain that it is a perpetual process of adaptation. What has changed is the speed at which geography is contested, and the number of domains in which it is fought over. Security has moved beyond the narrow limits of the conventional threat with linear characteristics. Today we face a dynamic, non-linear web of risks.

We are living through the return of Revisionism. Russia's war against Ukraine is its starkest expression: an attempt to redraw borders by force on European soil, in defiance of every principle on which

European security has rested for eighty years. But it is not an isolated case. Around the world, there are actors who treat treaties as provisional, sovereignty as negotiable, and the international law of the sea as a matter of convenience.

Thucydides gave Revisionism its creed in the Melian Dialogue: ***the strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they must.***¹ The international order built after 1945 was, in essence, a refusal of that sentence. Our duty, as the armed forces of democracies, is to keep refusing it.

That is the purpose of deterrence. ***Deterrence is not provocation.*** It is the capacity to convince any would-be revisionist that the cost of acting will always exceed the gain. And in 2026, ***deterrence must be holistic***: credible in more domains, and at greater speed than ever before.

Speed, however, begins with knowledge, and the Greeks understood this long before the age of satellites. Aeschylus opens the *Agamemnon* tragedy with a watchman² waiting for *phryctoriae*³ to carry the news of Troy's fall across the Aegean in a single night. Our ancestors understood a simple law: ***whoever knows first, decides first.*** In today's information-saturated environment, where truth and falsehood travel at the same speed, that law has a second clause: ***it is not enough to know first; we must also know accurately.***

¹ «τὰ μὲν δίκαια ἀπὸ τῆς ἰσῆς ἀνάγκης κρίνεται, δυνατὰ δὲ οἱ προσιόντες πράσσουσι καὶ οἱ ἀσθενεῖς συγχωροῦσιν»

² «καὶ νῦν φυλάσσω λαμπάδος τὸ σύμβολον, αὐγὴν πυρὸς φέ»ουσαν ἐκ Τροίας φάτιν ἀλώσιμόν τε βάζειν» - Κι ἀκόμη καρτερῶ το σύνθημα της φλόγας, τη λάμψι της φωτιάς, να φέρη ἀπὸ την Τροία την εἶδησι πως πάρθηκε

³ ἀρχαῖες φρυκτωρίες: τὰ ραδιοσήματα της ἀρχαιότητος

That law now governs everything. Information has become a strategic capital. The battlespace is overwhelmed with sensors: satellites, drones, signals, open sources. The challenge today is not a lack of data, but its interpretation under pressure, to reach the right decision in the right place at the right time. Superiority no longer rests only on firepower or numbers, but on the speed, accuracy, and reliability with which we collect, protect, and exploit information. Artificial intelligence does not replace command; it strengthens it, compressing the time between detection, assessment, and action. Decision cycles are now measured in seconds, and the slower cycle loses.

This is the logic of multi-domain operations. Land, sea, air, space and cyberspace are no longer separate theatres coordinated at the top. They form one battlespace. A satellite cues a missile on an island; a cyber operation blinds a radar before the first shot is fired. Ukraine, and this year the war at sea around the Strait of Hormuz, have shown how low-cost unmanned systems can threaten expensive platforms, and ***how adaptation decides outcomes.***

Our adversaries know they cannot defeat the Alliance in a conventional contest, so they work below the threshold of war. Hybrid threats exploit the seams between peace and war, civilian and military, national and allied responsibility: cyber attacks on hospitals and power grids, sabotage of undersea cables, the weaponisation of migration. Disinformation and deepfakes no longer aim merely to disrupt systems, but to shape human perception itself. Cyber warfare is the purest form of this contest. ***It has no front line and no ceasefire.***

Our response can no longer be ***whole-of-government*** alone; it must be ***whole-of-society***, built on what we call ***hybrid immunisation***:

the capacity to diagnose early and respond together, nationally and with our allies. No country, however powerful, can face these threats alone. Collective security in cyberspace is now an indisputable element of national deterrence, and trusted intelligence-sharing between partners such as Greece and the United Kingdom is itself an instrument of that deterrence.

Nowhere is that resilience tested more directly than in energy, where geography, economy, and defence meet most visibly. Greece sits at the junction of three continents and has become a gateway for liquefied natural gas, interconnectors and new energy corridors into South-Eastern and Central Europe. That makes our energy infrastructure both a strategic asset and a target. Pipelines, cables, terminals and grids are the arteries of our economies, and protecting them is now a core military task.

The shock in the Gulf this year reminded every European capital that energy security and affordability are not merely economic questions. A state that can be coerced through its energy supply cannot deter with credibility. Diverse sources and protected connectivity are part of deterrence, and so is the fuel our own forces need to operate and to move.

Which brings me to military mobility. ***Forces that cannot rapidly move do not deter.*** Through the Vertical Corridor, running from Alexandroupoli through Bulgaria and Romania towards Moldova and Ukraine, Greece has become a gateway for Allied movement to Europe's eastern flank. We are investing €3.5 billion across thirty-two facilities, deliberately designating military facilities, transport nodes, and industrial capacity as dual-use assets: ***civilian infrastructure in peace, mobilisation infrastructure in crisis.***

All of this requires our armed forces to change, and to change fast. That is the purpose of Agenda 2030, the deepest transformation of the Hellenic Armed Forces in our modern history. It is not merely an acquisition initiative. It is rather a change of mindset: from platforms to networks, from legacy structures to a force driven by technology and data.

Its centrepiece is the *Achilles Shield*, a multi-layered defence against aircraft, ballistic and cruise missiles and drones, integrating the multi-domain concept of land, sea, air, cyber and space. Homer tells us that Hephaestus forged the shield of Achilles in five layers. Ours rests on the same idea: no single layer is enough; together, they hold.

Alongside it, the Hellenic Centre for Defence Innovation connects our General Staffs with research centres, military academies, start-ups and industry, in unmanned and counter-drone systems, cyber defence and sensing. Our Armed Forces have become a real testbed for innovation. We seek technologies that meet 80 per cent of the requirement today, can be tested at once, integrated rapidly and matured in service, with the point being to move from vision to impact.

But technology strengthens military power only when it is embedded in national strategy, governed by command responsibility, and dynamically protected against threats that evolve just as fast. Above all, technology is only as strong as the people who command it. Our true force multiplier is not a platform or an algorithm, but the men and women of the Hellenic Armed Forces: their training, their judgement, their character. No sensor can replace the resolve of a soldier, the composure of a pilot or the seamanship of a crew in a storm. That is why Agenda 2030 invests first in people: in education and training, in better conditions of service, in

their families, and in careers that keep talent in uniform. ***Platforms can be bought. But people must be formed.***

Today, defence and economy become one conversation. In 483 BC, the Athenians struck a rich vein of silver at Laurion. Themistocles persuaded them not to divide it among themselves, but to build a fleet. Three years later, that fleet won at Salamis and secured the freedom on which the Golden Age was built. The lesson holds: ***prosperity funds security, and security protects prosperity.***

Defence spending must leave something behind: industrial capacity, skilled jobs, research, exports, and dual-use technologies that strengthen our energy systems, our hospitals and our digital economy. I believe that European ambition presupposes strong national ecosystems, and that national technological sufficiency is not a luxury but a precondition of security that can help us develop capabilities suited to nations located on Europe's maritime periphery: adaptable, affordable, and interoperable.

So what does it actually mean to redefine UK–Greece relations? Our foundations, from Byron to Crete, run deep. ***It means turning friendship into capability-building.*** Our strong bilateral relations have given us the structure. Now we must fill it: deeper intelligence and information sharing; joint work between our defence innovation ecosystems; more exercises and training together; shared protection of critical maritime infrastructure in the wider region; and stronger ties between our military academies and universities, because the wars of tomorrow will be won in the classrooms and laboratories of today.

The geopolitical window for this transformation is open, but narrowing. The resources exist, and so do the frameworks. What remains

is the sustained will to act with coherence and discipline, and to act together.

Thucydides wrote his history as a possession for all time: «κτῆμα ἐς αἰῶν». If it teaches us anything, it is this: the future belongs not to the strongest, nor to the largest, but to those who see what is coming, stand ready to act, and have the resolve to shape events rather than be shaped by them.

Thank you!