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SHORT COMMENTS

The Establishment of a National Security Council

by the Republic of Cyprus

By Georgios Koukakis, Research Associate of “HERMES” I.I.A.S.GE

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The Establishment of a National Security Council by the Republic of Cyprus

By Georgios Koukakis, Research Associate of “HERMES” I.I.A.S.GE

In early April, 2023 Nikos Christodoulides – the newly elected President of the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) – presented his plan to establish a National Security Council (NSC) by submitting an official request to the National Council (NC) asking for its comments regarding the potential structure, function and goals of the new institution. According to several sources, as soon as the President receives the necessary feedback, he will evaluate it and proceed to the formation of the NSC by a decision from the Council of Ministers (CoM); an action that he had announced during his pre-election campaign.

The CoM - according to *Article 46* of the Constitution of the RoC – ensures the ability of the President and Vice-President of the Republic to exercise the executive power, while *Article 54* provides that the CoM shall exercise executive power in all other matters other than those which, under the express provisions of the RoC Constitution, are within the competence of a Communal Chamber, including the following:

- ✓ The general direction and control of the government of the RoC and the direction of general policy,
- ✓ Foreign affairs,
- ✓ Defence and security,
- ✓ The co-ordination and supervision of all public services,
- ✓ The supervision and disposition of property belonging to the RoC,
- ✓ Consideration of Bills to be introduced to the House of Representatives (HoR) by a Minister,
- ✓ Making of any Order or Regulation for the carrying into effect of any law as provided by such law, and
- ✓ Consideration of the Budget of the RoC to be introduced to the HoR.

The members of the CoM are designated by the President and Vice-President of the RoC and appointed by a decree signed by both. The CoM is currently composed of the following governmental officials:

- ✓ The Minister of Foreign Affairs,
- ✓ The Minister of Finance,
- ✓ The Minister of Interior,
- ✓ The Minister of Defence,
- ✓ The Minister of Education, Sport and Youth,
- ✓ The Minister of Transport, Communications and Works,
- ✓ The Minister of Energy, Commerce and Industry,
- ✓ The Minister of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment,
- ✓ The Minister of Labour and Social Insurance,
- ✓ The Minister of Justice and Public Order,
- ✓ The Minister of Health,
- ✓ The Deputy Minister to the President,
- ✓ The Deputy Minister of Shipping,
- ✓ The Deputy Minister of Tourism,
- ✓ The Deputy Minister of Research, Innovation, and Digital Policy,
- ✓ The Deputy Minister of Social Welfare,
- ✓ The Deputy Minister of Culture,
- ✓ The Government Spokesman,
- ✓ The Deputy Government Spokeswoman, and
- ✓ The Secretary of the Council of Ministers.

Contrary to the CoM which is a governmental body under the provisions of the Constitution of the RoC related to the executive power, the NC is an informal institution that was founded by President Makarios in 1975 – shortly after the Turkish invasion of Cyprus - in order to provide advice regarding the “Cyprus issue.” Although the composition of the NC has been changed several times in the past, it usually includes party leaders whose parties are represented in the House of Representatives, as well as the former Presidents of the RoC.

On April 10th, 2023 Konstantinos Letymbiotis - the Spokesman of the Government of the ROC - stated that *“I think we are possibly the only country in the EU and in the region that we do not have a National Security Council, which is an advisory body, a body that will monitor foreign policy and defense issues, but also a body that can advise the National*

Council on issues that relate to negotiations.” He also stated that the composition of the NSC is going to include the following members:

- ✓ The President of the Republic of Cyprus (as President of the NSC),
- ✓ The Minister of Foreign Affairs,
- ✓ The Minister of Defense,
- ✓ The Minister of Justice and Public Order,
- ✓ The National Security Adviser,
- ✓ The Commander of the National Intelligence Service (NIS) of the ROC,
- ✓ The Chief of the Armed Forces General Staff of the ROC, and
- ✓ The Chief of the Police.

According to governmental sources, the official document submitted by the President of the RoC to the NC states that the establishment of a National Security Council was a long-standing need in order to coordinate all public services involved in national security issues, including defense and foreign policy. The NSC is going to:

- ✓ Advise the President and the NC on national security matters,
- ✓ Issue upon approval of the CoM the National Security Strategy (NSS),
- ✓ Monitor the implementation of the NSS,
- ✓ Coordinate all state services/departments/authorities regarding national security issues,
- ✓ Submit observations, suggestions or alternative proposals to the President on the national security matters, and
- ✓ Develop cooperative relations with similar bodies of other states.

At this point it is important to underline that the first country to establish a NSC was the United States, an action that took place in 1947 under the provisions of the National Security Act during the Presidency of Harry Truman. Since then, many states have established a similar body, such as the National Security Council of Turkey in 1962, the Security Council of the Russian Federation in 1992, the Defense and National Security Council of the Republic of France in 2009, the National Security Council of the United Kingdom in 2010, and the Central National Security Committee of the Public’s Republic of China in 2014.

The NSC is an inter-agency/inter-department governmental body led by the Head of State (that is President or Prime Minister depending on the political system of the state) comprised by several Ministers, mainly the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Defense, and the Minister of Interior/Public Order along with other governmental officials such as the Chief of the Armed Forces General Staff and the Commander of the National Intelligence Service or the Director of the Intelligence Community. The NSC facilitates the decision making process as far as major national security matters are concerned, acts as an information hub in order to assess the level of national security threats and risks, conducts long term (strategic) planning by issuing the state's NSS, monitors its implementation and coordinates the actions of all public services.

As far as the NSC of the RoC is concerned, the official document submitted by President Christodoulides notes that the NC needs valid intelligence and assessments regarding major national security issues such as the ongoing negotiations regarding the "Cyprus issue." This is probably the reason why - according to the Government's Spokesman statements - the Commander of the NIS is going to be appointed as the National Security Adviser, at least at the early stages of the functioning of the NSC. The dual role of the Commander of NIS can be considered as an effective temporary measure in order to ensure the provision and exploitation of all necessary information to the NSC, a vital capacity for every NSC.

In conclusion, it must be stressed that most analysts state that the establishment of a NSC by the RoC is an action that should have been taken a long time ago, especially due to the aggressive foreign policy implemented by the Turkish Republic in the Eastern Mediterranean. Its proper function will definitely enhance the Government's ability to address national security matters in a more coordinated way, by aligning the efforts of all public services in order to achieve specified goals and protect the national interests of the RoC (that should be) described in its National Security Strategy.

The RoC should also closely examine the overlapping or conflict of jurisdiction between the NSC and the CoM, especially as far as the co-ordination and supervision of all public services is concerned, a matter than can mainly affect the operation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense. Past experience in other states has shown that the absence of clear jurisdiction can bring the opposite results, leading to the ineffectiveness of the

governmental apparatus. Finally, an action that can help the proper functioning of the NSC of the RoC is the implementation of a national security educational campaign among all public services personnel that will gradually develop a solid national security culture.



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Georgios has graduated from the Hellenic Military Academy and holds a Master of Arts in “Government, Development and Security in the Mediterranean” from the Department of Mediterranean Studies of the University of the Aegean. His Master thesis focused on the Hellenic National Security Council. He is currently a member of the Hellenic Institute of Strategic Studies (HEL.I.S.S.), a member of the global network of Greeks and friends of Greece for solidarity in the professional field (ALLILONnet) and a Senior Researcher in the Center for International Strategic Analyses (KEDISA). During his military career, Georgios has served in Kosovo (KFOR) and in Cyprus Republic. He has attended several seminars and conferences regarding international relations and more specifically in the field of Defense and Security. His research interests focus on national security, foreign policy, national defense, strategy, energy security and international law (UNCLOS). He speaks excellent English, Greek (native language), Turkish (elementary level) and Italian (elementary level). Many of his research papers, analyses and articles have been published in several Greek and foreign websites such as Geopolitics & Daily News, Huffpost Greece and Foreign Affairs-The Hellenic Edition. He is the co-author of the book “National Security: Myths and Reality” (in Greek) which was published in April, 2023.

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