



Interview with Brigadier General Dr. Andreas P. Charalambous, Cypriot National Guard, holder of a Ph.D. in the Department of History, Politics and International Studies of Neapolis University Pafos and the University of Peloponnese (Greece), 2023 graduate

- **What motivated you to do a Ph.D. in Neapolis University Pafos?**

"The whole thing has a little story, which I have to mention: Encouragement, in order to undertake this project, but also in the choice of this particular topic, was provided to me by Prof. Athanasopoulos, former President of the Law School of Neapolis University Pafos, my Professor at the School of National Defence, and Associate Professor George Maris, whom I must thank warmly. Collaborating with them has been a privilege and an expression of deep appreciation for me.

By nature, I am motivated by a spirit of dedication, experience, and knowledge. The enhancement and development of my academic and professional qualifications and skills were provided as an opportunity through Neapolis University Pafos, which I immediately took advantage of."

- **What is the focus of your PhD research and why did you choose it?**

"The subject of my doctoral research is "History and International Relations", entitled "National Sovereignty, National Armed Forces and Military Formations of Common Defence, the case of Greece (NATO and EU Member State)."

The main reason for undertaking the specific topic of the research effort arises through my academic and professional training, with regard to the field of study of International Relations Theory, a topic that has been dealt with in detail during my Postgraduate Studies at the Supreme Joint War College [(SJWC), 2002-2003] and at the School of National Defence [(SND), 2015-2016]. My involvement in the field of international relations studies at the graduate level provided me with the necessary research tools and skills to understand the international environment as a process in constant motion and interdependent on many factors. Therefore, qualitatively I fulfilled the necessary requirements of the scientific-academic background in order to understand international reality in contemporary terms.

The post-Cold War period has put demographic, social, economic, and geopolitical realities on a new basis and turned them upside down.

We are in the third decade of the 21st century, where future international challenges hold for countries threats and challenges, but also opportunities, especially in the geopolitical system, an arc that stretches from the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Eastern Mediterranean, the Middle East, Africa, and beyond. A broad region characterised by hotspots, organised crime, illegal migration, and weapons of mass destruction.

Above all, after the exit from the CW, the constant increase in challenges, and the emergence of new forms of threats, where non-state actors are playing an increasingly important role, it became imperative that the EU, in addition to being a political and economic power, should also acquire military power and become a security provider for its member states, which even today, despite the progress achieved, has not been accomplished.

We live in a world of globalisation, where rapidly changing international conditions create new conditions for states in the strategic approach to international law issues.

Both Greece and Cyprus are trapped in this regime, where it is called upon to face any challenges and difficulties, but at the same time to take advantage of any opportunities presented to it as a member state of NATO and the EU."

- **What motivated you to pursue a PhD in the field of study "History and International Relations"?**

"As I mentioned above, the main reason for undertaking the research effort arises through my academic and professional training with regard to the field of study of International Relations Theory, a topic with which I had dealt extensively during my Postgraduate Studies at the Supreme Joint War College and the School of National Defence.

The subject, becomes very relevant today, where the new global geopolitical environment, forming a broad arc starting from the Balkan Peninsula, heading towards the Caucasus, Eastern Mediterranean - Middle East and Africa, is characterized by rapid, changing and significant developments in the fields of security, defence, energy, as well as in the bilateral relations of regional states, but also the involvement - interference of various international actors in the internal affairs of states for their own reasons or interests.

At this point, it is appropriate to mention that, simultaneously with the preparation for my PhD Research, I attended for one year the 15th CSDP High-Level Course on Common Security and Defence Policy of the European Security and Defence College (ESDC), which provided me with important resources, knowledge and experience, which I relied on in my research effort."

- **Could you share some key findings or insights from your research that have the potential to impact your sector or society?**

"The main purpose of this qualitative Ph.D. Research is:

- To study and analyse in-depth, initially each pillar separately "National Sovereignty, National Armed Forces and Military Formations of Common Defence", but also the components that influence and affect them either positively or negatively.

- To evaluate the framework of their connection, interaction and interdependence, in order to understand how and in which way this relation is implemented at the national level, but also under which limitations and conditions it can be implemented or applied in the context of geopolitical complexes of international and regional actors, through the theory of international relations, but also under the current regional and international geopolitical developments through formations (or coalitions or alliances) of common defence.

- To highlight its scientific and theoretical views, to identify the key problems that it entails in its practical application, and finally, through the investigation of the concept of the nation-state, the state sovereignty through formations of common defence in the era of globalisation, to delineate an intermediate theoretical space as a stimulus for further ontological and epistemological reflection.

The role of the nation-state remains particularly strong even today, both in the European and in the international system. The state, despite the ceding of part of its national sovereignty in the context of European integration/unification and despite the consequences of globalisation, continues even today to shape the international socio-political environment in relation to national sovereignty, bilateral or multilateral treaties, European and international organisations.

The objectives of the research also include the possible enrichment of the relevant literature on related issues of National Sovereignty, National Armed Forces and Military Formations of Common Defence.

Regarding the contribution of this Research to the production of new knowledge or even supplementation of existing knowledge on the relevant thematic fields, it is estimated that it is possible to thoroughly investigate a series of questions and the resulting problems, with the expectation of new approaches to the basic concepts of the Doctoral Thesis. Even with the rebuttal of any views, the relevant interest of other Researchers -Students for further research of relevant thematic fields is strengthened.

It is reasonable that there may be disagreements, questions, and objections, but these concern the academic discussion and dialogue that arise and must follow any scientific research. They do not concern the basic, fundamental standards that research, in this case, this Ph.D. thesis, must meet."

- **What were the main challenges you faced during your PhD studies and how did you overcome them?**

"Pursuing a PhD-level thesis is sometimes a challenge, although it is an arduous and demanding ordeal. The researcher, in an effort to meet the high demands of the task at hand, is forced to isolate him/herself from activities and people in order to remain unaffected by external factors and influences. Personally, in this difficult journey, I have had fellow companions who have supported me and contributed to the completion of my Ph.D. Research. It would be a great omission on my part not to mention them and in this way to express my appreciation and respect for them, but at the same time to thank them for their contribution and help.

Also, as I mentioned earlier I am serving in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Cyprus, a job with a difficult and challenging schedule, as well as my status as a "family man" were not inhibiting factors in undertaking this difficult and demanding, but wonderful undertaking/experience. We have to look at and deal with things in a positive way, with a positive spirit, even if there are obstacles and barriers."

- **How did your experience at Neapolis University Pafos contribute to your personal and professional development?**

"It is not only the pursuit and acquisition of a Ph.D. degree. Undoubtedly, the experience, the knowledge, the participation in seminars, conferences, either as a listener or as a presenter, but also all kinds of activities that the University very often organized and the contact with the Academic Community of Neapolis University Pafos, contributed to my personal and professional development and career, but also to the broadening of my academic and intellectual horizons."

- **Are there any mentors or professors at the university who played an important role in shaping your academic career?**

"As I mentioned earlier, encouragement in order to undertake this project, and in the choice of this particular topic, was provided by Professor Constantinos G. Athanasopoulos, former President of the School of Law of Neapolis University Pafos, my Professor at the School of National Defence, Associate Professor George Maris, Professor Pantelis Sklias, Rector of Neapolis University Pafos and Professor Efstathios Fakiolas of the University of Peloponnese (Greece), whom I must thank. It has been a privilege to work with them and an expression of deep appreciation for me."

- **What are your future goals and ambitions?**

"At this stage, my professional career does not allow me to be actively involved in the academic sector. I appreciate that, at a later time, I will do so. At this point, I would like to mention that, as part of my writing activity, I have published articles in academic and scientific journals relevant to my Research. Here, I would like to stress that I have published two books (one of which is a collective volume)."

- **What would be your message to young people who are just starting their studies?**

"Gain the skills, knowledge, and experience to be able to move forward, look to the future with optimism, be competitive, assertive, and demanding. Don't settle for a 'cushion' that provides you with a living. Undoubtedly, at some point, the 'excellent and the capable' will have to stand out."

- **Finally, is there anything else you would like to share with our readers about your journey, your research, and your experience at the University?**

"I would agree with you that, my research and experience at the University has been a journey, difficult and demanding, with challenges and obstacles, sometimes with frustrations, in that the undertaking was not a simple one. However, fortunately, I had people (Academic and non-academic) by my side, who supported me, provided me with valuable observations and comments, sound guidance and reflections, and immediate response in order to help me with anything that arose during my Ph.D. study, as well as for their methodical support and valuable contribution, which they generously provided throughout my research effort. I am truly impressed !!!"



Neapolis University Pafos
Alumni Office

Tel.: +357 26 843500 / 3360

alumni@nup.ac.cy