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Greece-UAE deplore Turkey's destabilizing behavior in region

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Greece and the United Arab Emirates on Wednesday slammed Turkey's destabilizing behavior in the Eastern Mediterranean region.

In a joint statement issued during Greek Prime Minister Mitsotakis' visit to Abu Dhabi for talks with Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the two sides condemned Turkish violations of the territorial integrity and the sovereign rights of Greece and Cyprus, as well as Ankara's aggressive behavior in the Middle East, the Southeastern Mediterranean and the South Caucasus region, describing it as a blatant violation of international law.

The two sides urged Turkey to abide with international law and put an immediate end to its illegal and provocative actions.

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Egypt-France: Naval forces conduct drills in Mediterranean

monitoring.bbc.co.uk

Egyptian and French naval forces have conducted joint drills in the Mediterranean, for the second time in a month, the official news agency MENA reported.

"The drills included different sailing formations to conduct different combat missions and achieve operational alignment between the Egyptian and French warships," the news agency said on 17 November.

The agency highlighted that the drills are the second training of its kind with the French navy over a short period, "a matter which shows the importance of such joint drills in boosting bilateral military cooperation and maintains maritime security and stability in the region".

The drills also come a day after Egyptian and Russian naval forces conducted similar training exercises in the Black Sea which saw Egyptian ships passing through Turkish-controlled waters, according to a video posted on the Facebook page of the Egyptian army spokesman.

[...]

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Turkey-NATO: Opinion: With Turkey, 'no matter what'

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Commentaire de l'auteur

Stefanos Manos is a Greek politician, a former MP and a former government minister.

It would be prudent to temper our expectations that the US under a new president will be able to effectively control Turkey's expansionist dreams. It is true, some hope, that with Joe Biden there will be a shift to a values-driven foreign policy. Be that as it may, let's face it, America is like a supertanker – it changes direction very slowly.

Just over weeks ago, on November 1 in a Kathimerini article, I argued that Turkey has no place in NATO. Because it flagrantly violates all the principles and values on which NATO is based. Freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. These principles and values must be embraced by NATO members. I cited Turkey's involvement and behavior in Syria, Libya, Nagorno-Karabakh, vis-à-vis the Kurds and journalists, the S-400, the threat of casus belli against Greece, women and other human rights issues in Turkey. None of the above are even remotely compatible with NATO's founding principles, values and ideals.

In the Economist's Democracy Index 2019, among 167 countries, Turkey is ranked 110th, lower than Pakistan and Nigeria but marginally better than Algeria.

With all the above facts in mind, I confess I was annoyed by the statement in Thessaloniki by the US ambassador to Greece, Geoffrey Pyatt, quoted in the National Herald of New York on November 5: The top priority for the US, for Germany and for all of Greece's European Union partners is the revival of the exploratory talks, and the American government is "working very hard" to support Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis in this, Pyatt underlined. "I don't think there are any two NATO allies who are more strongly aligned than Greece and the United States on the principle that, no matter what, we have to keep Turkey anchored in the West."

No matter what! A really difficult requirement to digest.

I do not know how the US formulates and evaluates its strategic interests. Nor do I know if and to what extent it considers that its own interests in the region parallel ours. As far as I can understand, the Americans view Russia and China as the main threat. We are facing one threat, Turkey. Because we participate in the NATO alliance, together with the Americans, we often, out of solidarity, define our choices in ways that would not necessarily coincide with the choices we would have made outside NATO. For example, we do not buy excellent Russian weapons that are cheaper and we do not let the Chinese install 5G networks, which are also cheaper and possibly better. We embrace without much debate the broader US-defined strategic goals of NATO, aware of our relative weakness to influence choices within the Alliance. Let me remind you that in August 1974, NATO decided that Article 5 of the Treaty (an attack on one would be considered an attack on all) only concerns attacks on one member from a non-member. This paradoxical interpretation is still supported today by NATO, which refuses to warn Turkey that any attack on Greece will activate Article 5 of the Treaty against it. How do you, dear reader, interpret Pyatt's "no matter what"?

The North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 does not provide for the expulsion of a member. But, where there's a will, there's a way. I expect that most Europeans (except perhaps France), despite their doubts about Turkey, will try to sweep the violations of NATO principles under the rug, they will turn a blind eye. The answer to this shortsighted, ostrich posturing is the awakening of public opinion. Public opinion in NATO member-states should be informed about Turkey's violations of NATO values and principles and demand the expulsion of a member-state that flagrantly and dangerously violates the founding principles and values of the Alliance. They should demand the expulsion of a country that is no longer democratic.

On November 9, 2009 in Berlin, NATO's then secretary-general, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, had this to say: "NATO stood firmly in defense of the fundamental principles shared by all allies: freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Our principles form the bedrock of our Alliance. They are what have kept NATO indispensable for over 60 years. And they stem from a simple idea. That all people should be allowed to achieve their natural potential as human beings. And that no group, creed, or government should stop a person from reaching their potential. We have a word for this. And that is freedom. Freedom lies at the heart of our principles, along with democracy, human rights and the rule of law. These principles make us who we are. They are essential to our way of life. And that is why they must be protected."

It is conceivable that the US has strategic interests in Turkey that I cannot appreciate. Nothing prevents the United States from concluding bilateral agreements with Turkey without forcing NATO to swallow its original principles and its members to have to deal with a so-called ally that systematically and increasingly violates all the rules and values of the Alliance.

In conclusion, it is not Greece's job to keep Turkey anchored in the West. Turkey must want to stay in the West with all the obligations that this choice entails. For Greece, the immediate priority is to arm itself to better repel Turkish expansion.

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EU Delegation: EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REPORT – NOVEMBER 17, 2020

- GMAIL_DELEGATION_SUBSCRIPTIONS_ECA_ASIA_AFRICA_MENA_EN

HIGHLIGHTS

French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian and his German counterpart Heiko Maas have penned an opinion piece for the Washington Post, analyzing Joe Biden's victory in the U.S. presidential elections. "We will have to address Turkey's problematic behaviour in the eastern Mediterranean and beyond. And we must work together to fight terrorism and radicalization that threaten our security and our societies on both sides of the Atlantic," they said.

The U.S. administration and Europe need to work jointly on addressing actions led by Turkey in the Middle East over the past few months, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo told French daily newspaper Le Figaro.

In addition to drilling operations in the Black Sea, two seismic survey vessels and one drill ship are currently carrying out their activities within the continental shelf area in the Eastern Med, Anadolu Agency said.

France's representative to the European Union said that Paris is considering a new push for sanctions against Turkey for what it says are aggressive actions taken against Europe.

Following a decision by PM Kyriakos Mitsotakis to purchase 18 twin-engine French Rafale fighter jets (six new and 12 slightly used), Greece officially asked Washington for the immediate purchase of the fifth-generation American F-35 fighter jet. The official letter of request (LOR) letter from the Defence Department was sent to the US government on Nov. 6.

Greece again attacked boats carrying dozens of migrants including children in the Aegean Sea, the Turkish Defence Ministry said. The statement said the Greek Coast Guard's actions had been recorded one by one.

"The EU is fully committed to unification within the framework of the UN and along the lines of the founding principles of the EU, on the basis of a federation with a comprehensive solution to the Cyprus problem and bi-zonal, bi-communal political equality," HR/VP Josep Borrell said. Borrell stressed that there should be no action on the status of Varosha that is not in line with the relevant UN resolutions, and that Turkey should take the responsibility to create an environment to help negotiations and make concrete contributions.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Hami Aksoy said Borrell's statement revealed how disconnected the EU is from the realities on the Island.

Devlet Bahçeli, leader of the MHP, said, Were we to prompt the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policies Borrell, who expressed his anguish, to have a picnic in Varosha after it had remained locked up for 46 years? Are we to take seriously or acquiesce to this person saying, "There is no alternative to a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem other than on the basis of relevant UN Security Council Resolutions"? I'm sorry, I misspoke. Let me off the hook this one time. Should we give voice to his cowardice?

Greek Cypriot Foreign Minister Nicos Christodoulides said that President Recep Tayyip Erdogan might annex the north of the island within two years, the Cyprus Mail reported.

338 Greek Cypriots have filed requests to be compensated for property they own in the Varosha district, despite Greece and Greek Southern Cyprus' objections [to reopening the region], Yeni Safak reported.

Daily Turkiye s lead story, No obstacle left. Friendly countries will recognize TRNC , said, As the 30-year occupation in Karabakh has ended and Azerbaijan s way to recognize the TRNC is cleared. Pakistan and Libya are also ready. TRNC president Ersin Tatar will go on recognition visits in the coming days with the support of Ankara.

The security of the TRNC is necessary to ensure prosperity, says Defense Minister Akar. Akar stated that the research vessels continue their technical and scientific studies in the Eastern Mediterranean. He said, "These ships continue their work, we ensure their safety, we accompany them. We're determined to do that, he said.

Libya s PM Fayez al-Sarraj said in a statement that he welcomed setting the date for elections on Dec. 24, 2021 and the country s electoral commission would allocate funds for carrying them out.

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Turkey: Highlights from Turkish press commentaries 18 Nov 20

Commentaire de l'auteur

The following is a selection of highlights from Turkish commentaries published in the 18 November 2020 edition of Turkish newspapers and news websites available to BBC Monitoring

Reform talks

Hurriyet (pro-government mainstream) "The president's promise for reform has been strongly supported by the markets. The climate has begun to change immediately. Rhetoric, check. Taking action is next... It was understood once again during this period that economy is not only about economy. Law is as important as economy. But, what is more important is the outlook of the country." (Commentary by Abdulkadir Selvi)

Yenicag (nationalist opposition): "Do you believe that this government will make reform? Do you have absolute confidence whether it would be realistic and it could maintain what it does even if it says 'I did it'. This is the real issue... Here is the fall at the first hurdle. The launch of an investigation into the Istanbul mayor [Ekrem Imamoglu] on the grounds that Canal Istanbul (waterway project) is 'a state project'." (Commentary by Ahmet Gursoy)

Covid-19 pandemic

Sozcu (nationalist opposition): "On this issue [the Covid-19 pandemic], it is only the health ministry that should be making necessary decisions and it is the Science Committee that should be giving compelling advice. However, the Science Committee is completely ineffective. That is why our esteemed professors who are aware of this use the media on an individual basis... That means the government took over the authorities of the committee and the decisions taken are in a political direction. If you ask about the health minister, people do not trust him anymore." (Commentary by Emin Colasan)

Sabah (pro-government): "Members of the Science Committee have recently been pumping fear from TV screens: They say there might be some restrictions regarding 'arbitrary curfew' and it was not much right for people 'to go out if they do not have things to do'. They do not have scientific evidence to prove that a lockdown prevents the spread of the pandemic. By saying 'the government makes the decision on bans' and 'we only give advice', they put the individual and social costs caused by strict isolation measures on politics." (Commentary by Melih Altinok)

Probe into Istanbul mayor's campaign

Aksam (pro-government): Some media organs claim that an investigation was launched into Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu for opposing the Canal Istanbul project... it is a big lie! There cannot be such a thing. Yes, there is an investigation but it is about Imamoglu's unlawful actions. It is about him trying to obstruct public projects by using public sources. You see how everything is being distorted! How the politics became dirty and polluted!" (Commentary by Emin Pazarci)

Korkusuz (nationalist opposition): "On the other hand, you would surely remember news reports about almost all the land on the route of the highly-profitable Canal Istanbul being sold out to pro-government circles, primarily to the mother of the Qatari emir and rich Saudis... However, it is also obvious that Istanbul Mayor Imamoglu has been against Canal Istanbul since the very beginning, on the grounds that it would bring 'major disaster'... Under these circumstances, it is being whispered behind the scenes that this investigation is wanted to be used as a 'cover' to dismiss Imamoglu from the office." (Commentary by Umit Zileli)

