

Answer to Question

The Reality of Tension Between Turkey and Greece, Especially the Dispute over the Aegean Sea Islands

(Translated)

Question:

In the final statement issued by the European Union at its summit in Brussels on 23-24/6/2022, under the title "Eastern Mediterranean" regarding Turkey's relationship with Greece, especially the dispute over the Aegean Sea Islands: ["The European Union expresses deep concern over Turkey's statements and actions recently, Turkey should show respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all EU member states..." VOA 24/6/2022)]. On the other hand, Turkey said in a statement published by its Foreign Ministry, ["Attaining a position that is biased, visionless and separate from the reality about our country in the decisions adopted during the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the European Union, it is regrettable, and it is unacceptable for the European Union to try to legitimize extremist propositions that violate international law with regard to the Eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean Sea..." (Anatolia 24/6/2022)]. Does this mean that tension has returned to the relations between Turkey and Greece again? Could this lead to a war between them even though they are both in NATO? Also, what is America's position as it leads this alliance? Can it remove this tension and calm things down, or will this tension continue to escalate?

Answer:

To make the answer clear, let us review the following points:

1- There are about 1,800 small and large islands and rock formations in the Aegean Sea, about 100 of which are inhabited and only 24 islands with an area of more than 100 km². These islands began to come under the sovereignty of Islam and the Muslims' authority along with the countries of Greece since Muhammad Al-Fatih, may Allah have mercy on him, began the conquests in them starting in 1456 CE after the great conquest of Istanbul, the eastern capital of the Romans in 1453 CE. But when weakness began to appear on the Ottoman State as an Islamic State, the Kufir countries took advantage of the situation and began to conspire against the Islamic State, and incited the Greeks to revolt against it.

Rather, Britain, France and Russia directly intervened in a naval war against it to separate Greece from it until this took place in 1830 CE. But sovereignty over many of the islands remained for the Ottoman State, until Italy occupied the Dodecanese Islands in 1912 CE during the war in Libya, which are called the 12 Islands, which were originally 14 islands, in addition to ten small islands and rocky formations.

These islands gained importance because they are adjacent to the Turkish borders after the partition in the Treaty of Lausanne. Some are about 3 km away from the Turkish borders, whereas they are about 500 km from the nearest Greek coast. These islands were granted to Italy in the Treaty of Lausanne, which was signed by the Ankara government headed by Mustafa Kemal through his delegate Ismet Inonu, in which they ceded the vast territories of the Ottoman State and were satisfied with the so-called current Turkey set by the allies led by Britain. Italy won Britain's recognition of its right to the islands in return for entering the First World War on its side against Germany and the Ottoman State. In 1947, a peace agreement was signed in Paris between the Allied Powers and Italy, after the latter's defeat in World War II. The agreement stipulated that Italy hand over the Dodecanese Islands, the 12 Islands, to Greece, on the condition that they become demilitarized. Turkey demands negotiations to determine the fate of many of the disputed islands, and the small islands that are not linked to any country under previous agreements, while Greece claims its right to all the islands of the Aegean Sea, except for some islands that were returned to Turkey under the Treaty of Lausanne only.

Greece is asking to increase its territorial waters from 6 miles to 12 miles. Turkey is still subject to and approves of the Paris Agreement, even though it was not a party to it and did not sign it! Its Foreign Minister Cavusoglu said in an interview with Al-Hurriyat Newspaper on 26/5/2022, "Greece must abide by the peace treaty concluded in 1947, which allows only a small military unit of Greek soldiers to be present on the Dodecanese Islands." "The minister warned that the situation would

escalate if Greece did not abide by the terms of the peace treaty.” The other dimension of the crisis is related to the rights arising from that sovereignty, which are represented in the maritime spheres of influence and the economic zones, and the right to explore for energy resources such as oil and gas near these islands. To this was added the issue of establishing US bases on them, along with European and especially French ambitions in this region.

2- France joined in and blatantly expressed its support for Greece against Turkey. It declared its siding with Greece against Turkey in the summer of 2020, and sent Rafale planes and warships to confront the spread of military ships and Turkish exploration work in the eastern Mediterranean. It signed with Greece a mutual cooperation agreement in September 2021, which stipulated "mutual assistance by all appropriate means if the two countries jointly find that an armed attack is taking place against the territory of one of them." France strengthened that agreement and signed an agreement for joint military cooperation between the two countries in January 2022, stipulating that "the strategic partnership unites the two countries at the military level," according to a statement by the French General Staff. This agreement also allows for "strengthening and structuring defense-military relations in the long term, and the embodiment of the French-Greek bilateral military cooperation at the strategic and operational levels. And that bilateral military cooperation will be expanded." (France Press 22/1/2022). Two days before the signing of this agreement, Greece announced the receipt of 6 Rafale fighters from France out of 18 Rafale combat aircraft that Greece announced its purchase from France last year. In addition to 3 frigates worth 5.5 billion euros, experts were quoted by AFP as saying, "This defense agreement is unprecedented and unusual, because it links two NATO member states and targets Turkey, the other member of the alliance." France influenced with this position the European Union, and its position was pro-Greece against Turkey.

3- America did not remain silent about this French move, so it moved to nullify its effect and directed a first blow to Greece. Cyprus, Greece and the Jewish entity announced on 20/12/2018 their willingness to establish a pipeline project to transport natural gas from the eastern Mediterranean to Europe without Turkey and the Turkish northern part of Cyprus having a contribution to it. This pipeline was supposed to secure about 10 billion cubic meters of natural gas to Europe. But America announced the end of its support for the project. It informed the Jewish entity and Greece on 10/1/2022 that it "will not support the project politically and financially." This was considered a "victory for Turkey, which was isolated from the project" (Al-Sharq Al-Awsat 10/1/2022), and the Greek Military Journal indicated in a report it published on 10/1/2022 to that by saying:

("The Athens' project to increase geopolitical influence to become a center of energy and the historical alliance with 'Israel' which led to the marginalization of Turkey and the achievement of other goals completely collapsed... The same applies to the Manyatis Law, which defines the outer limits of the Greek continental shelf. Both goals collapsed, and Turkey broke the Manyatis Law, which it calls the Blue Home, and it has strengthened its supremacy over the Greek positions with the Turkish-Libyan agreement, and now Washington's position has come to give it the opportunity". It stated, "The Greek Prime Minister Mitsotakis does not want to hold a dialogue with Turkey... just as he did not negotiate with America..." It added that "America worked through Germany to prevent the imposition of sanctions on Turkey over the drilling crisis in the eastern Mediterranean last year." If we look closely into the matter, we see that America wanted to direct a blow to Greece for its cooperation with France and nullify the effect of the French move in the region, and America wanted to link the project with Turkey, its close ally, which revolves in its orbit to confront France.

4- Greece realized that it 'angered' America with its agreement with France and its rapprochement with it, and in order to fix this matter, it agreed to sign an agreement with America that the Greek Parliament had postponed its signature from 14/10/2021 to 13/5/2022, when it was signed. During the vote the Greek Prime Minister Mitsotakis defended the agreement, and said: "The defense cooperation agreement with the United States serves the country's national interests. It is a vote of confidence for Greece, and it is important because **first**: it includes a clear commitment that the American presence in Greece will be renewed every 5 years (instead of one year as before), each party has the right to terminate it if it deems it necessary.

Secondly: This bilateral cooperation with the United States is important because it expands not only in the right time but also in place. At the Souda Naval Base (in Crete), the entire infrastructure is being modernized and the general role of the base is being enhanced. Souda is the only berth on which a US aircraft carrier can dock in the eastern Mediterranean, as well as the firing range at Litochoro and two military camps at Volos and Alexandroupolis. **Thirdly**, the new agreement is

important because it clearly expresses the common will to defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity from any threat, even an armed attack.” (The Seventh Day via news agencies 5/13/2022).

Thus, America subjugated Greece to its will, strengthened its influence in it, and paralyzed its cooperation with France!

5- Afterwards, Greece's statements calmed down, and the Greek Prime Minister said ["It is important to keep the channels of communication open with Turkey, despite the provoking statements that led to an escalation of tension between the two neighbours." (The New Gulf 17/6/2022)]. But this situation has placed the European Union into trouble! Therefore, in order to save face, it contented itself with lenient general declaration towards Turkey while showing support for Greece as a member of the Union: (The final statement issued at his summit in Brussels on 23 and 24/6/2022 under the title "Eastern Mediterranean" stated: The European Union expressed its deep concern over Turkey's recent statements and actions, Turkey should show respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all the EU member states.)

Subsequently, the Greek Prime Minister said: "We stand completely behind what was stated in the final statement of the European Union, which made Turkey accountable with regard to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the members of the European Union and demanded that it reduce tension in accordance with international law. I hope that this time Turkey will heed these calls...because that is the only way to completely reduce the tension that has been escalated by our neighbour in the past two months in the eastern Mediterranean" (Voice of America 24/6/2022).

6- Thus, America was able to reduce the tension between Turkey and Greece, as Turkey revolves in its orbit, and Greece has become held by the defense agreement with America, and the influence of the European Union, especially France, on Greece has decreased, and thus it is unlikely that the island crisis in the Aegean Sea, including the Dodecanese islands, will have any solution in the long run. It will remain in place as they are for dozens of years. Indeed, the Turkish regime has implicitly recognized the granting of the 12 Islands to Greece in the Paris Agreement of 1947. This regime does not have a plan to return them, as well as other islands whose ownership of Greece was not formally decided in agreements. The secular Turkish regime is not expected to take serious action to restore these islands in the Aegean Sea, which are controlled by Greece. Erdogan does nothing but a war of words, and then retreats, as happened in 2020, when he withdrew the drilling ships in the eastern Mediterranean, and the curtain came down on the issue. Therefore, it is not expected that there will be a war between Turkey and Greece, to restore these islands, since the strings of the issue are in the hands of America, and Turkey revolves in its orbit, and Greece after that agreement has seen the American influence rise in it.

7- Finally, the islands of the Aegean Sea, and even Greece, were within the Islamic (Ottoman) State. After the conquest of Constantinople in 1435 CE, to realise the Hadith of the Messenger of Allah (saw): «لَتُفْتَحَنَّ الْقُسْطَنْطِينِيَّةُ فَلَنِعْمَ الْأَمِيرُ أَمِيرُهَا وَلَنِعْمَ الْجَيْشُ ذَلِكَ الْجَيْشُ» **“You will open Constantinople, its Amir is the best Amir, and its army is the best army.”** [Extracted by Ahmad in his Musnad].

After three years, i.e., in 1456 CE, the conquests headed towards Greece and towards those islands, in which the call to prayer (*Allahu Akbar Allahu Akbar*) was raised. It will return, Allah willing, on the day when the believers rejoice in Allah's victory, when the Caliph leads the believers, he rules them by what Allah has revealed, and he leads them in Jihad for the cause of Allah (swt). And he restores the abode of Islam, the origin and branches. The Caliph is the Ummah's shield and protection from its enemies, and the Messenger of Allah (saw), the truthful, said: «إِنَّمَا الْإِمَامُ جُنَّةٌ يُقَاتَلُ مِنْ وَرَائِهِ وَيَنْقَى بِهِ» **“The Imam is but a shield behind him who is fought and is protected by.”** [Muslim].

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