

Answer to Question

## Turkey-Greece Conflict in the Eastern Mediterranean

(Translated)

### Question:

On 8/10/2020, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu revealed that he had reached a new agreement between his country and Greece. The minister said in his statements, according to Turkey Now website: ["That he agreed with his Greek counterpart Nikos Dendias to conduct exploratory talks between the two countries. This came in statements following his meeting with Dendias on the sidelines of his participation in the Bratislava Global Security Forum in Slovakia. He explained that Turkey will host the talks, while Greece submits proposals for its deadlines." (Turkey Now website, 8/10/2020)]. Previously, Turkey had greatly worsened its relations with Greece and challenged it by sending Turkish exploration ships with escort warships ... What is the reality of this crisis between Turkey and Greece? What is the reality of international positions on this crisis? Is America behind it or is Turkey acting alone? And what is the explanation for the great tension that was at the beginning and ended with agreement to the negotiation? Thank you.

### Answer:

The Turkish-Greek crisis must be viewed in terms of its causes and domestic repercussions in Turkey, as well as its economic and international dimensions ...to find out, the following matters must be reviewed, starting with the Treaty of Lausanne in the first quarter of the last century:

#### **First: The Treaty of Lausanne:**

1- Turkey has the longest coast on the Aegean Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean, but the Treaty of Lausanne signed on 24/7/1923 by representatives of the era's criminal, Mustafa Kemal, on behalf of the government of the Turkish Grand National Assembly in Ankara that split from the Khilafah (Caliphate) in Istanbul, is what confined Turkey to the Aegean Sea, hardly departing from its shores, as the islands within the Aegean Sea have all or mostly become the property of Greece! That was when Mustafa Kemal sent his representatives to Lausanne in Switzerland, proposing to the Allies that his government in Ankara, which had broken away from the Khilafah (Caliphate) in Istanbul, could sign with them, the allies, the treaty they wanted! Thus, the Treaty of Lausanne was signed in Switzerland between representatives of Britain, France and other countries with representatives of Mustafa Kemal, headed by Ismet İnönü on behalf of the government of the Grand National Assembly in Ankara...

2- Shocking matters were detailed in the treaty were agreed upon by Mustafa Kemal and his representatives, including what came in Article 12, where all or most of the Aegean islands became the property of Greece, although some of them are 600km away from the Greek mainland, while they meet the Turkish mainland at a distance of two kilometers sometimes, as in the case of the island of Meis, which belongs to Greece which they call Kastellorizo, off the city of Kaş in the state of Antalya. It is this treaty that gives Greece (legitimacy) to demand Turkey not to excavate off the Turkish coasts because it is the exclusive right of Greece under the Treaty of Lausanne! And Article 15 states that Turkey should relinquish, in favour of Italy, all rights and ownership over the following islands: Stampalia (Astypalaia), Rhodes (Rhodes), Halki (Kharke) ... etc., as well as Article 20: that Turkey recognizes the annexation of Cyprus to the British government declared by Britain in November 1914. Also, what is stated in Article 23 which states that the (High) Contracting Parties have agreed to recognize and declare the principle of freedom of passage and navigation, by sea and air, in time of peace as well as in time of war, in the Dardanelles, the Sea of Marmara and the Bosphorus! Thus, Turkey has become, with the longest

coastline in the eastern Mediterranean, losing freedom of movement around the islands in these seas, which Erdogan remembered today as “his stolen Blue Homeland”!

He complains about it while the picture of the era’s criminal Mustafa Kemal hangs above his head, who approved these concessions in Lausanne. Despite all this and that he does not dare to mention Mustafa with an insulting word!! Rather, he tickles the emotions of the Turkish people by naming the exploration ships after the great Ottoman leaders, Muhammad Al-Fatih and al-Qanuni, despite his distance in all his policies from these great leaders! He declares, “Everyone realizes that Turkey is politically, economically and militarily capable of “tearing apart unjust documents and maps based on immorality and quarrels against it.” He added, “that his country is ready to clarify this by going through painful experiences, whether at the negotiating table or in the field.” Al Jazeera, 5/9/2020), but he stops at this and thinks that he did well! Perhaps the Turkish people saw that Greece, which hardly has an influential army, sent its soldiers to the island of Meis, noting that the Treaty of Lausanne stipulates that it is demilitarized, and yet it did not confront Greece with the force it deserves!

3- Although this Treaty was a treacherous deal that Mustafa Kemal concluded with the allies, but he concluded it in the name of the government of the Grand National Assembly in Ankara. Britain was not satisfied with that, but rather wanted him to complete the conditions set for him, most notably the abolition of the Khilafah (Caliphate) completely and the establishment of the secular state. Mustafa Kemal obeyed, this was done on the morning of the third of March 1924, when the Khilafah was declared abolished and religion separated from the state. On the same night, Mustafa Kemal sent an order to the governor of Istanbul stipulating that the Caliph Abdul-Majid should leave Turkey before dawn the next day, so he went with a garrison of policemen and the army to the Caliph’s palace in the middle of the night, and there he forced the Caliph to take a car carrying him across the border in the direction of Switzerland. After two days, Mustafa Kemal gathered all the crown princes and princesses and deported them outside the country. All religious positions were abolished, the Muslim endowments became the property of the state, religious schools were transformed into civil schools, and they became under the supervision of the Ministry of Education.

With this, Mustafa Kemal fulfilled the four conditions that Curzon demanded of him, namely: the complete abolition of the Khilafah, the expulsion of the caliph outside the borders, the confiscation of his funds, and the declaration of secularism of the state. Thus, the Treaty of Lausanne that was concluded before the abolition of the Khilafah was confirmed and implemented after the abolition of the Khilafah! Thus, the Treaty of Lausanne culminated in the abolition of the Khilafah states recognized Turkey's independence, and the English withdrew from Istanbul and the straits. As a result, one of the British members of Parliament protested against Curzon in the House of Commons for his recognition of Turkey's independence. Curzon answered him saying: "The situation now is that Turkey is dead and will never rise again, because we have destroyed its moral strength, the Caliphate and Islam." Thus, the English had eliminated the Khilafah and Islam by Mustafa Kemal, despite the objection of Muslims throughout the earth in general, and despite the rejection of Muslims in Turkey in particular. Thus, the ruling by what Allah (swt) has revealed was removed from all parts of the earth, and the rule by other than what Allah (swt) has revealed, the rule of disbelief/Kufr remained, and the rule of the Taghoot (disbelief) alone remained, which controls all people, and is applied all over the world!

**Second:** This treaty signed by Mustafa Kemal’s representatives in the Swiss city of Lausanne, whereby Turkey was restricted in the Aegean Sea, its islands and beaches were given to Greece, and Turkey was prevented from excavating it! This situation that Turkey was subjected to continued for about a hundred years, so what has moved Turkey now? The one who follows the course of affairs finds out that there are two factors behind this crisis: Internally because of Turkey's economic conditions, and externally, that the United States of America stands behind it:

## **1- Internal factors:**

a- Turkey is an energy-consuming and non-producing country, and recently its oil production has reached 53 thousand barrels per day (Anadolu Agency, 25/7/2020), which is a very small number compared to its consumption of one million barrels of oil daily (Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, 22/4/2020). It produces about 475 million cubic meters of gas and imports more than 45 billion cubic meters of it (Al-Jazeera Net, 31/8/2020). Thus, Turkey is facing an exorbitant bill for the oil and gas it imports, which amounted to \$41 billion in 2019, down from 43 billion for the year 2018 due to the relatively low price of energy globally (Turkish Sabah Daily Newspaper, 27/2/2020). This is a factor that greatly strains the Turkish economy.

b- And because Turkey is located between the oil-producing countries in the Arab region, Iran and Azerbaijan, and between the countries that consume oil, that is, European countries, it has built many of its energy strategies on the basis of being a "corridor country", and the Turkish port of Ceyhan has become a port for the export of Azerbaijani oil and a network of pipelines has been established in it and through it. Not the last of which is the Turkish Torrent pipeline to transport Russian gas to western Turkey and from there to Europe, which was inaugurated on 8/1/2020. Despite the fees that Turkey collects as an energy corridor, the oil and gas bill is still very expensive for its economy.

c- Since the year 2009, the Jewish entity and international companies have been issuing new announcements about the discovery of substantial quantities of gas in the eastern Mediterranean. In the Tamar field 80 km west of Haifa, 9 trillion cubic feet of extractable gas was discovered, then, several months later, the Dalit field was discovered in the west of central occupied Palestine amounted to 500 billion cubic feet. In 2010 quantities exceeded imagination were discovered in the Jonathan field in western Palestine by 16 trillion cubic feet, the American Foreign Policy Magazine said at the time, "It is the largest natural gas discovery in the world in a decade."

d- Therefore, Turkey has taken the initiative to seize and purchase a modern and large exploration vessel from South Korea, Al-Fatih vessel, which sailed for the first time in 2011 and the exploration for oil and gas began. Then followed a series of crises between it and Cyprus and Greece on the claim that Turkey was drilling in the exclusive maritime areas of Cyprus, and Turkey's pretext was the Turkish Cypriots and their rights. However, in recent months, Turkey has increased the pace of exploration work after buying another exploration vessel (offshore drilling) from Britain, to have a reasonable fleet of marine drilling and geological survey vessels capable of searching and exploring simultaneously in the Black Sea, western Turkish shores and southern Cyprus in the eastern Mediterranean.

e- Thus, Turkey needed to reform its economic situation by exploring oil and gas ... Perhaps it should also be mentioned that the Turkish economy is subjected to major blows, the pain of which appeared in the continuous decline of the Turkish currency, the lira, which prompted President Erdogan to increase the pace of gas exploration in the hope that he finds a glimmer of hope for this economy, that he can maintain its declining popularity due to the fall of the lira and the rebellion of leaders of his party against him and the formation of opposition parties that are eating away Erdogan's popularity. So the Turkish exploration work was comprehensive to the Black Sea and not limited to the disputed areas with Greece in the Mediterranean.

## **2- External factors:**

a- The United States supports the launch of these Turkish efforts, from two angles: The first is local: that its man in Turkey, Erdogan, will be in a better position if he manages to remove the economic restraints, increase his popularity and bring it back to high levels as they were before 2014, and this facilitates his implementation of the American policies, as in his intervention in Libya, where he can spend on his regional interventions in favour of America. And the second: America, at a time when it does not want Europe to be under the political influence of Russian gas, it does not want it either to be independent in the issue of gas. Greece and Cyprus are members

in the European Union and pipelines extend from them to Europe, all of this does not appeal to America, this is why it supports the threat of European independence in the issue of gas via Turkey. In the sense that Turkish President Erdogan is threatening Greece and exploring what it considers its exclusive maritime areas without an agreement with it with hidden American support. Therefore, US military ships participated in the Turkish military exercises. The Turkish Ministry of Defense announced the participation of the USS Washington warship in those exercises (Turkey Now Newspaper, 26/8/2020),

All this despite the American embarrassment to support a country within its NATO alliance against a European country, which is also within NATO, and that was in return for the participation of France, which is also from the NATO countries, in the Greek military maneuvers, those maneuvers and some of the military build-up and the tone of defiance ... all of this created a dangerous situation in the eastern Mediterranean that threatened to erupt into military confrontations between NATO countries, that is, between Turkey, which is supported by America from behind a curtain, and Greece, which is overtly supported by France, had this matter not been controlled later.

b- From another angle, America's permission for a major conflict to occur that nearly evolved into military actions between two member states of the NATO alliance that it leads without throwing its heavy weight to solve the crisis indicates its preoccupation with its internal problems such as the Coronavirus and the elections ... and that it is currently entrusting this action towards Europe, especially Greece, to Erdogan with its support for him in ways that take into account the American embarrassment that Turkey and Greece are members of the NATO led by America, and therefore America participated with Turkey in the military maneuvers as support for it in these circumstances. This is on the one hand, and on the other hand Pompeo paid a quick visit to Greece, RT reported "Pompeo called on Turkey to withdraw its forces from the Eastern Mediterranean, where a Turkish expeditionary ship supported by military frigates is operating." (RT, 13/9/2020). Meaning that America, which supports Turkey, found itself in front of great embarrassment from its European allies, and was forced to ask Turkish President Erdogan to withdraw the exploration ship, which is what happened, and then to enter dialogue and negotiations with Greece, because Greece stipulated the condition for the dialogue is the withdrawal of the Turkish drilling ship.

### **Third: Positions of Other Countries:**

1- France's position was the strongest European position, as it announced from the first moment that it stood by Greece, and moved unilaterally; its President Macron said: ["I decided to temporarily strengthen the French military presence in the eastern Mediterranean in the coming days in cooperation with European partners, including Greece." (Turkish Anadolu Agency, 13/8/2020)], and it carried out joint naval maneuvers with Greece with the participation of the Rafale planes that it deployed in Cyprus, and then carried out other maneuvers on 26/8/2020.

It involved Italy, in addition to Greece and Cyprus, it carried out all of that even though it has no influence in the region! All of this indicates that it is trying to build significant influence for itself again. As its military maneuvers with Greece at a time when America is participating in maneuvers with Turkey, that carries an implicit challenge to America, and its involvement of Italy with it indicates that it is recruiting European countries with it against Turkey, as well as the meeting that it held for some European Mediterranean countries (Italy, Malta and Spain in addition to Greece and Cyprus), and its pressure within the European Union and NATO to take strict positions against Turkey. [and the French President said: "We as Europeans have to be clear and firm with the government of President Erdogan, which today is carrying out unacceptable behaviour ... and he saw that "Turkey is no longer a partner in this region." (France 24, 10/9/2020)]. Also (French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said that the next European Council meeting is dedicated to punishing Turkey. He indicated that the Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, is continuing to

escalate with Greece to cover up his country's difficult economic situation." (The Independent Arabia, 7/9/2020).

In spite of the boldness of the French anti-Turkey stance and its attempt to break the bone of the Turkish president, and despite the fact that Turkish President Erdogan is not the "Al-Fatih" or "Qanuni" whose names are used to name his ships, and that he did not teach France a lesson in the Mediterranean and did not sink any of their ship at least, in punishment of the thousands of miles that the ships and planes travelled to break his bone in the courtyard of his house ... Despite all that, French policies remain improvisational and lacked depth, as Malta rushed to disavow its alliance with France. Malta's Foreign Minister Evarist Bartolo said during a press conference he held with his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu [The European Union should view its relations with Turkey from a strategic perspective. Bartolo added: I think the time has come for the European Union to deal seriously with Turkey, especially in trade, human rights, and the fight against terrorism." (Turkish Anadolu Agency, 12/9/2020)].

2- As for Britain, it did not comment on the tension in the eastern Mediterranean, which increased France's fears. Rather, since Brexit, France has looked suspiciously at the British role, and sometimes it clashes with it, as in Algeria. And if the huge financial markets in London give Britain a place in the oil and gas markets, especially in pricing due to its association with Brent crude and the subsequent pricing for other types of oil, and even natural gas as well, France, which sees Britain leaving the European Union, is looking for a place in this international vital sector for itself. That is why it decided to establish itself in Greece, perhaps it would help it to be an actor, not a consumer only in energy matters.

On the other hand, Britain, while looking at what looks like a punitive policy of the European Union against it due to its exit from the European Union, is making its way and drawing its policy for itself, and perhaps it was afraid of the sudden rise of tension in the eastern Mediterranean, so it did not take anti-Turkish positions, as Greece is worth nothing to Britain compared to its Turkish interests. And only a blind fanatic like France rides the Greek wave! By analogy with Britain and Germany, France lacks any foresight, which causes it to come back empty-handed after the arduous political actions that it undertakes. For all of this, the Turkish president attacked him strongly, saying: "Mr. Macron, you will have more problems with me personally." He added: "You do not have historical information. And you are ignorant of the history of France, so do not become preoccupied with Turkey and its people"... (Al-Quds Al-Arabi, 12/9/2020).

3- As for Germany, it also did not slip behind the French position against Turkey, and offered mediation, while some interpreted it as playing a role that Washington should have played. It kept distancing itself from the French position, mediating and calling for dialogue, and its most prominent stances against Turkey was what the German Foreign Minister, Heiko Maas, said during a visit to Athens ["Regarding Turkish exploration in the Eastern Mediterranean, we have a very clear position ... International law must be respected. Therefore, progress in the European Union's relations with Turkey will be possible only if Ankara stops provocations in the Eastern Mediterranean...The Turkish exploration off the coast of Cyprus must stop" (France 24, 22/7/2020)].

4- As for Russia, it has offered to use its good relations with Turkey to mediate between the two parties, but as usual it is unable to take any self-action, even if it announced military maneuvers in the eastern Mediterranean in response to the French maneuvers, and perhaps it wants to remind itself, [Russia is scheduled to start Military naval exercises with live ammunition in the Mediterranean Sea next Tuesday, extending until September 22, and another from 17 to 25 September, according to Bloomberg Agency, quoting the Turkish Navy, and Russian Navy spokesman Igor Dygalo said, "We have strong economic and defense relations with Turkey. But our policy is to avoid supporting either side." The Russian maneuvers followed other military exercises carried out by France in the region, in which they deployed military aircraft and a

warship to support Greece and Cyprus in the conflict.” (Independent Al-Arabiya, 7/9/2020)]. That is, the Russian position remains marginal, awaiting a signal from behind the ocean, but it reminds of its strength.

**Fourth:** For all of the above, the Turkish-Greek crisis, if prolonged, would cause a deep rift in international relations. As for relations on the Atlantic side, European countries want to see their place in a world that America withdraws from its leadership towards its focus on China and its growing internal problems. These countries are looking for a role isolated from America. America under the Trump administration does not back down from threatening European interests using others, as the roles of Russia and Turkey in Libya today. The European countries are strongly afraid that the eastern Mediterranean crisis will result in ruining their dreams of a safe source of natural gas if Turkey takes control of a large part of it. And because Turkey is supported behind the scenes by Washington, the French policy in the eastern Mediterranean is trying to reject the roles that are being drawn in Washington for Turkey as well as for Russia.

This transatlantic dispute is no less than another dispute within Europe itself. The German position is what prevented France from pushing Europe to punish Turkey, that is, it did not succeed in finding a consensus within the European Union against Turkey, so it went and gathered the Mediterranean countries of Europe! Germany thinks a lot about its interests, and indeed its history with Turkey, as Germany and the Ottoman State fought side by side against the allies in World War I, and German relations remained strong with Turkey, only tainted by President Erdogan's (provocations) driven by American policies in many cases. This is in addition to the large Turkish community in Germany.

**Fifth: As for whether the crisis has ended or not,** Turkey has announced an important discovery of gas in the Black Sea, amounting to 320 billion cubic meters, and this pushes it to further exploration in the Black Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean. Turkey's efforts to reduce its economic burdens are continuing, and the American support for it is continuous, to harass and pressurize Europe, especially France, so that it does not go far in contradicting and disturbing the American policy in the region!

But it is really painful that during the last hundred years after the demise of the Khilafah (Caliphate), the true state of Islam and the source of the glory of the Muslims, these countries became at the tail of the nations, their destinies manipulated by the kaffir colonialists with their tools, rulers in Muslim countries!! Nevertheless, the dawn is born after the darkness of the night, especially since Hizb ut Tahrir is working to restore it as it was crowned with glory, victory and light, Allah willing.

﴿إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا نَذْرٌ لِّلْعَالَمِينَ \* وَلَتَعْلَمَنَّ نَبَأَهُ بَعْدَ حِينٍ﴾

“It is but a reminder to the worlds \* And you will surely know [the truth of] its information after a time.” [Sad: 87-88]

**24 Safar Al-Khair 1442 AH**

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