

Greece's Renewed Relations with Syria Further Isolates Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean

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Global Research, May 08, 2020

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On Tuesday, the [Greek Foreign Ministry finally announced](#) a restoration of relations between Greece and Syria and assigned former ambassador to Syria and Russia, Tasia Athanassiou, as a Special Envoy of Greece's Foreign Ministry for Syria. Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias confirmed this from [his Twitter](#). The appointment of Athanassiou is extremely strategic as she was Greece's ambassador to Damascus from 2009 to 2012, meaning she is already familiar with Syria and their authorities.

The Greek Foreign Ministry said that contacts will be made for the "international aspects of Syria and related humanitarian action, as well as coordination of actions in view of the ongoing efforts to rebuild Syria."

Although the Foreign Ministry claims that the suspension of diplomatic relations "was dictated by the security conditions," we know it was ordered by former Greek Prime Minister Antonis Samaras in December 2012 under orders from NATO and the European Union who were, and in some instances, still backing jihadists against the secular government of President Bashar al-Assad.

Greece became a country ruled by European banker, EU, and NATO puppets from 2010 onwards when on May 2 of that year, the so-called socialist government of George Papandreou signed the first of three bailout packages with the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the IMF. This caused a 25% contraction of the Greek economy, an unemployment rate of 27% and skyrocketed poverty. Any semblance of Greek independence in domestic and foreign policy was lost.

However, moving to 2020, the economic and geopolitical situation in Greece and its surrounding region has drastically changed. Diplomatic sources quoted by [Kathemirini](#), one of Greece's oldest and most respected newspaper, said that the decision to appoint a Special Envoy for Syria is part of Greece's steady activity in the Eastern Mediterranean and the wider region. According to the sources, Greece's increased desire in contributing to efforts in resolving the Syrian crisis was stated by Dendias in his meetings with the UN Special Envoy for Syria, Geir Otto Pedersen.

Therefore, a major reason for the reopening of relations with Syria is to further tilt the balance of power in the East Mediterranean in Greece's favor against Turkey, especially at a time when Ankara does not have a single ally in the region, with the exception of the besieged Muslim Brotherhood government in Libya that is nearly collapsed because of the Libyan National Army's assault.

The reopening of relations between Athens and Damascus comes at a time when Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is making a strong push for a “Blue Homeland” that aims to [annex Greece’s Eastern Aegean islands and maritime space](#). Turkey for nine years attempted to oust Assad from power through various means, including an unsuccessful invasion attempt of Idlib province earlier this year, as well as its continued support for terrorist organisations. In addition, Erdoğan is propping up the Muslim Brotherhood government in Libya by importing jihadists from Syria to the North African country.

Although Erdoğan has failed in all of these endeavours, Turkey still remains a major threat, even at a time when it is facing economic catastrophe with the Turkish lira at a near record low to the U.S. dollar and Turkey’s three largest banks, Garanti, Akbank and İşbank, [on the verge of bankruptcy](#). Even with this looming economic disaster, Turkey still manages to find the funds to violate Greek airspace on a daily basis, send weapons to Libya and fund terrorist organizations in Syria.

As the Eastern Mediterranean becomes a potential major warzone because of Turkey’s aggression, Greece is now renewing relations with old friends. Hafez al-Assad, previous president of Syria and father to Bashar al-Assad, pledged that if Turkey was ever to go to war with Greece, Syria would automatically open a new front in southern Turkey in support of Greece.

Athens however is not completely independent from NATO and the EU. This suggests that although renewing relations with Syria is absolutely critical in protecting its sovereignty, perhaps Greece has gotten approval from the EU and/or NATO to do this. Greece is perhaps the most important of the very few European countries that have maintained or reopened relations with Syria because of its history of friendly relations, as well as thousands of years of religious, cultural, financial and ethnic ties.

It can be suggested that as the war in Syria begins to end, continued only by Turkey’s refusal to stop backing terrorist organizations in Idlib, the EU wants to try and take advantage of lucrative reconstruction contracts that will be on offer and investment opportunities. It is unlikely that European companies will win reconstruction contracts, but the reality is that Assad has survived the near 10-year efforts to have him removed, and is not going anywhere. Greece could be used as an outlet for the EU to open dialogue and relations with Damascus again.

This is only speculative, but what is for certain is that by reopening relations with Syria, Greece is consolidating the emerging East Mediterranean order and opposes Turkish hegemony in the region. Greece will always have close relations with Cyprus, and has also entered a military alliance with Egypt, supports the Libyan National Army against Turkish-backed forces, and has strong military and energy ties with Israel. Relations with Syria has essentially finalized the strangulation of Turkey’s attempted hegemony of the Eastern Mediterranean and made it the most isolated country in the region – despite Athens’ insistence on improving ties with Ankara if it finally abandons its aggressive foreign policy.

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This article was originally published on [InfoBrics](#).

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