

US-Greece-US: Lines Being Drawn by the U.S. in the Eastern Mediterranean, against Turkey and Russia?

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Greek-U.S. relations have entered “a new era” with U.S. Secretary of State stating earlier this month that he has “come to Greece to expand the partnership that’s already at the best level it has ever been.” He followed up this statement in a tweet, saying “A strong and prosperous Greece is good for the Greek people and good for America.”

Why? Well during Pompeo’s trip to Greece, he finalized a new deal with the newly-elected Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis for the U.S. to open 3 new military bases in the Aegean country, but most importantly, a naval presence in the port in Alexandroupolis. The port is [strategically located](#) close to the Turkish-controlled Dardanelles that connects the Aegean/Mediterranean Seas via also the Bosphorus with the Black Sea, and therefore Russia. Therefore, Pompeo is ecstatic as Greece has now been firmly placed in the U.S. camp and has willingly become a NATO stronghold in the eastern Mediterranean.

It is likely that the U.S. is also ‘rewarding’ Greece for its continued and strengthening economic ties with Israel. The Greece-Cyprus-Israel pipeline, GRISCY, has likely pleased Washington, especially as all three states are anti-Turkish and it helps further secure Israel’s place in the region. Andrew Korybko [argues](#) that GRISCY is the U.S.’ key to containing multipolarity in the eastern Mediterranean. He continued to explain that the U.S. could try to thwart TurkStream’s possible expansion to Greece en route to Italy, continue cracking down on oligarchic holdings in Cyprus, and try to weaken the Russian-“Israeli” Strategic Partnership, as well as potentially cut off Moscow’s “Levantine Line” trade route between Crimea, Syria, the Sinai, and Eritrea in the event of a crisis.

With Turkish-Russian relations strengthening, the U.S. has turned to Greece as its [Plan B](#) to blockade the Russian Navy in the Black Sea as the Dardanelles spills open into the northern Aegean Sea, where there are thousands of islands, making it a naval labyrinth with limited manoeuvrability. With Greece having a respectable Navy and backed by a U.S. naval base, if ever Washington needed to illegally blockade the Dardanelles, it would be able to do without a likely amount of success.

This is a major security concern for Moscow, leading to Russian Ambassador to the EU, Vladimir Chizhov, [to warn](#) Greece that the U.S. might abandon it just as it had recently done with the Kurds in Syria, correctly adding that the recent military base deal in Greece was a mistake.

“I think this is wrong, but this is my personal opinion. Of course, you need to ask the Greek side why they made such a decision. But I do not rule out the

possibility that they did so amid tensions between the United States and Turkey. However, this does not mean that this decision is well weighed for the future,” he said.

However, a reason why Greece has done this should be simply known to Chizhov, with Athens on a daily basis reporting [Turkish air violations](#) in its territory, Turkey threatening to invade Cyprus as recently as [August](#), and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan [delivering a speech](#) last month in front of a map that had Greece’s eastern Aegean islands under Turkish control.

When quizzed about the Turkish invasion in northeastern Syria and the US decision to abandon the Kurds, Chizhov commented:

“We had warned the Kurds that the Americans will abandon them. And here, [...] I can personally warn the Greeks about it, that they will have the same fate as the Kurds.”

However, this is an unfair comparison considering Greece is a country with full state functions unlike the stateless Kurds. This prompted the Greek government’s national security adviser, Alexander Diakopoulos, to [state](#) a day later that

“the U.S. bases will not remain in Greece forever. Nowadays, nothing lasts forever.”

Although what he says could be true if a truly anti-American government came to power, something that could be a possibility considering that only 36% of Greeks view the U.S. favourably according to [2018 Pew survey](#), it remains unlikely since every political party that has come into power turned out to be pro-U.S. despite some pre-election rhetoric.

Although the rhetoric by the Russian and Greek officials was friendly in nature, it does demonstrate that sides are being drawn, even if unwillingly in Moscow’s view, between Turkey and Greece and their relations with the Great Powers. Although Turkey is the most important member of the anti-Russian NATO alliance because of its critical strategic position, delicate and impressive diplomacy by Russian President Vladimir Putin has not only meant the strengthening of relations with his Black Sea neighbour, but has returned the question on whether Turkey will or should leave NATO.

Although both officials were disingenuous with their comments, it remains to be seen whether a war of words will erupt between the two Christian Orthodox countries, however it is unlikely in the short term. Although the current Greek government has not expressed any anti-Russian sentiment, Athens continues to pivot closer to Washington as U.S. officials claim they will protect Greek sovereignty.

Greece’s alliance with the U.S. is not anti-Russian in its view, but rather a guarantee of protection in case armed hostilities breakout with Turkey. However, Greece’s constant search for security because of Turkey’s escalated aggression in recent years has provided the perfect opportunity for the U.S. to exact [revenge on Turkey](#) for its purchase of the Russian S-400 system.

The Aegean is becoming increasingly volatile between Greece and Turkey, and the U.S. is leveraging these hostilities to its advantage in a double move to secure a Plan B in strangling the Russian Navy in the Black Sea if needed, and punishing Turkey for its increasing relations with Moscow. Therefore, Russia as the most sensible player has the potential influence to calm the situation between Turkey and Greece, and therefore also secure its sea passages.

With Greece being the original ancient Eurasian civilization and Russia being a giant Eurasian power, commonalities between the two countries can easily be made. Although U.S. military bases are here to stay in the foreseeable future, there is every potential that a new government can emerge in Athens that will expel all U.S. military presence in the country, as indirectly said by Diakopoulos. Therefore, Russia must be ready to take every opportunity that could be opened from this.

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