

Peace in the Mediterranean rests on the outcome of the US Presidential Election

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US leadership is needed if tensions are to ease in the Eastern Mediterranean, reveals new report from LSE IDEAS, The London School of Economics' foreign policy think tank.

According to the report, authored by Alexandros Zachariades from The London School of Economics, no other nation has the clout to ease tensions and provide a long-term solution to the historic rivalry between Turkey and Greece.

In recent months, confrontation has manifested itself in the Eastern Mediterranean, with naval forces from both nations entering into a stand-off Aegean Sea. This is just one example of the longstanding tension that has existed between Greece and Turkey.

According to Zachariades within the report, President Trump enjoys a great personal relationship with President Erdogan of Turkey, while Greece, especially with the present administration, views the US as a strategic ally. With these strengths in mind, the US must be the one to talk both nations down and secure long-term diplomacy.

However, the task at hand is by no means any easy one, the report reveals. Greco-Turkish matters are considered 'national issues' on both sides of the Aegean building on deeply rooted nationalist sentiments and a troubled history spanning centuries.

The current situation is also much more complicated since it is not simply a dispute between Greece and Turkey but the latest episode of a region-wide confrontation in the Eastern Mediterranean that encompasses additional, extra-regional powers, including France and the UAE.

According to the report, the key question now is whether the US will act. America currently hamstrung by the effects of the pandemic at home, caught up in persistent internal strife, and diplomatically limited by the foreign policy whims of President Trump.

Zachariades notes that, if the US is to secure peace, it must act now. A tragedy in the Eastern Mediterranean now might cause damage that even a Biden victory in the US Presidential Election and a return to normality won't be able to fix.

Alexandros Zachariades, author of the report and PhD candidate at the London School of Economics, says: "The renewed tensions since the report was released illustrate the inability of the EU to offer that all-important mediating role while highlighting the need for a stronger US presence in the region which this report advocates."

Link to: 'All Hands on Deck: the Crisis in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Need for US Leadership' (<https://www.lse.ac.uk/ideas/publications/updates/all-hands-on-deck>)

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