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WHAT WILL RUSSIA DO IN RESPONSE TO THE REVISIONIST MILITARIZATION OF THE DODECANESE BY GREECE?

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The Dodecanese (twelve islands) consist of large islands such as Rhodes, Kos (İstanköy), and small islands such as Castellorizo/Meis, which are very close to the south and southwest coasts of Turkey. As it was explained in our previous analysis on 7 October 2020, titled Consequences of Material Breach of The Lausanne Peace Treaty, Turkey renounced in favor of Italy all rights and titles over the Dodecanese Islands of which were occupied by Italy after the outbreak of the war between Ottoman Empire and Italy over Libya in early 1912 in line with Article 15 of the Lausanne Peace Treaty.[1] After the Second World War, the Dodecanese were ceded to Greece with Article 14 of the 1947 Paris Treaty of Peace between the Allied Powers and Italy on the explicit condition that they must remain demilitarized. [2] Article 14(2) of the Treaty explicitly stipulates that These islands shall be and shall remain demilitarized. Greece has militarized these islands, including the Meis (Castellorizzo), which is only a Nautical Mile away from Turkeys southern coast, in contravention of the clear demilitarization provision of the 1947 Paris Treaty. This treaty is still in force and thus binding upon Greece. Greece states that Turkey is not a party to the Paris Treaty, continues to militarize these islands, openly violates an important Treaty that ended the Second World War, and announces this violation loudly and with shameful pride to the world public opinion.

In another analysis on 14 March 2022, titled Greek Foreign Minister Dendias Concedes the Demilitarized Status of the Eastern Aegean Islands and the Dodecanese, we gave information on the visit of Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikos Dendias to Moscow on 18 February 2022 on the eve of the military operation of the Russian Federation against Ukraine.[3] Russian Federation Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov and Dendias held a joint press conference during this visit. At this press conference, as explained in our referenced analysis (footnote 3), in response to an unrelated question by an unidentified journalist about Turkey's questioning of Greek sovereignty over the Eastern Aegean Islands, Dendias gave a remarkable answer regarding the demilitarized status of the Dodecanese. The relevant portion of Dendias answer regarding the Dodecanese is quoted below for ease of reference:

> Therefore, I think Turkish claims are utterly pretextual. And since I am here in Moscow, Mr. Lavrov will allow me to make a remark. The agreement on the

> demilitarization of the Dodecanese was not related to Turkey, but to the concerns of the then Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was the beneficiary of the demilitarization, Turkey is not a signatory to the Treaty, and therefore derives no rights from it; apart from anything else. Thank you very much.

As explained in our referenced analysis, the Soviet Union demanded the demilitarized status of the Dodecanese in the Paris Peace Treaty negotiations since the Dodecanese was situated in a region near the Black Sea, and the demilitarized status of these islands was also relevant to Russias security.

Five months after Dendias' visit to the Russian Federation and his statements at the press conference, the Russian Federation recently included Greece in the list of unfriendly countries. It is reported by the press that the corresponding order was signed on 20 July 2022 to implement the decree of the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin of April 23, 2021, titled "On the application of measures of counteraction to unfriendly actions of foreign states."[4] Furthermore, in the news in question, it is stated that Andrey Maslov, Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Athens, made the following statement on July 26, 2022:

> Since the end of February, our bilateral relations have been completely destroyed, they no longer exist. In a word, literally in a matter of days, all the developments, the entire rich array of bilateral relations that had been accumulated over many decades, were nullified. There is no cooperation or contact with the Greek establishment.

According to Greek press reports, the Russian Ambassador also pointed out that for the first time in 200 years, Greece has brought matters to the present level through its actions, even though there has been no negative action by Russia against Greece.[5] In this context, it is useful to remember that a Russian-flagged oil tanker carrying a crew of 19 Russians was temporarily seized by Greek authorities in April of this year which later on changed its flag to an Iranian one to avoid being sanctioned by Greece. A Greek media outlet reported in this respect that the US asked Greek judicial authorities to order a seizure of the cargo and an investigation.[6] It should be noted that such extreme behaviors of Greece pushed the relations between the two countries to even lower levels.

Greece increasingly pursues a revisionist policy in the Eastern Mediterranean region and the Aegean and breaches not only the crucial Lausanne Peace Treaty, which ended the problems created by the First World War but also the 1947 Paris Peace Treaty, which played a key role in ending the Second World War. Moreover, Greece not only breaches the International Treaties but also does not hesitate to announce this breach by playing the drums and horns as Dendias did at the press conference in Moscow. We will now have to wait and see how Russia will react to a flagrant violation by an "unfriendly country" of the provisions of an international treaty to which it is a party. The attitude of the Russian Federation in this matter will serve as a litmus test on whether it is sensitive to the complete implementation of the provisions of the international treaties to which it is a party.

**Photo: TRT World*

[1] Teoman Ertuğrul Tulun, Consequences of Material Breach of the Lausanne Peace Treaty, *Center For Eurasian Studies Analysis Series* 2020, no. 28 (October 7, 2020): 8, https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/a23vw , https://avim.org.tr/en/Analiz/CONSEQUENCES-OF-MATERIAL-BREACH-OF-THE-LAUSANNE-PEACE-TREATY.

[2] 1947 Paris Treaty, SECTION V-GREECE (Special Clause), Article 14 :

1.Italy hereby cedes to Greece in full sovereignty the Dodecanese Islands indicated hereafter, namely Stampalia (Astropalia), Rhodes (Rhodos), Calki (Kharki), Scarpanto, Casos (Casso), Piscopis (Tilos), Misiros (Nisyros), Calimnos (Kalymnos), Leros, Patmos, Lipsos (Lipso), Simi (Sym), Cos (Kos) and Castellorizo, as well as the adjacent islets.

2. These islands shall be and shall remain demilitarized.

3. The procedure and the technical conditions governing the transfer of these islands to Greece will be determined by agreement between the Governments of the United Kingdom and Greece and arrangements shall be made for the withdrawal of foreign troops not later than 90 days from the coming into force of the present Treaty. UN Nations, Treaty of Peace with Italy. Signed at Paris, on 10 February 1947 (United Nations, February 10, 1947), Volume 49 1950 No 747, https://treaties.un.org/doc/publication/unts/volume%2049/v49.pdf.

[3] Teoman Ertuğrul Tulun, Greek Foreign Minister Dendias Concedes The Demilitarized Status Of The Eastern Aegean Islands And The Dodecanese, *Center For Eurasian Studies (AVİM)* 2022, no. 4 (March 14, 2022): 6, https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/5w63h , https://avim.org.tr/en/Analiz/GREEK-FOREIGN-MINISTER-DENDIAS-CONCEDES-THE-DEMILITARIZED-STATUS-OF-THE-EASTERN-AEGEAN-ISLANDS-AND-THE-DODECANESE.

[4] Посол Р Ф в Греции указал на обнуление двустороннего сотрудничества (The Russian Ambassador to Greece pointed to the nullification of bilateral cooperation), *Izvestia*, July 26, 2022, https://iz.ru/1370362/2022-07-26/posol-rf-v-gretcii-ukazal-na-obnulenie-dvustoronnego-sotrudnichestva.

[5] Athens Bureau, Russian Ambassador Maslov: Russian-Greek Relations Have Reset, *Greek City Times*, July 27, 2022, sec. Greek NEWS, https://greekcitytimes.com/2022/07/27/ambassador-maslov-russian-reset/.

[6] Eleni Stamatoukou, Russian Tanker Stuck in Greece Switches Flag to Avoid Sanctions, *Balkan Insight*, May 11, 2022, sec. News, https://balkaninsight.com/2022/05/11/russian-oil-tanker-stuck-in-greece-switch-flag-amid-sanctions/.

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