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Editor
The Hill
1625 K ST NW
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Dear Editor,

The opinion piece “The US should mediate the maritime dispute between Turkey and Greece-Cyprus” (August 8, 2022) by Nicholas Saidel makes many salient points, but requires additional clarification in certain respects.

The author is correct in arguing that the Eastern Mediterranean is a “geo-strategic location” that requires additional engagement from the Biden Administration. Furthermore, the author is right in stating that “Turkey is unreliable, deceptive and cooperates with our adversaries, including Russia.”

However, the author is wrong when he states Greece’s militarization of the Aegean islands is “destabilizing.” Greece has no ambitions or irredentist claims on Turkish territory. Turkey seeks to impose a fundamentalist Islamic and neo-Ottoman hegemony over the Aegean Sea, Eastern Mediterranean, Middle East, and Central Asia. Greece must defend its sovereign territory as it has the right to do under the UN Charter and international law.

The article misconstrues the term “mediation” when it states that the United States should “mediate the dispute between Turkey and Greece-Cyprus” and that the United States should help negotiate a “maritime accord.” One definition of mediation, according to an Oxford Public International Law encyclopedia, is “a method for the peaceful settlement of international disputes involving the participation of a third party with the aim of helping the parties to the dispute agree to a solution.” The objective of mediation is not to decide an issue but rather to provide a context in which the parties can compromise to resolve their differences. Mediation works only if there exists a good faith dispute between the parties. President Erdogan is an extreme religio-nationalist. He will not abide by the traditional mediation process. Turkey claims almost half of the Aegean Sea which claim is not based on principle and international law but rather on pure power. The sovereignty of Greece over the Aegean islands derives from the Treaties of Lausanne, Montreux, and Paris and international law. There cannot be any compromise on what is already settled and beyond dispute.

Moreover, the United States is not an impartial mediator. It has its own interests in the Eastern Mediterranean. Even if traditional mediation were possible, the United States will always be seen as pursuing its own interests within the context of mediation. It is for this reason that previous attempts at mediation by the United States over the decades have failed.

Lastly, the author suggests that the US should mediate the “maritime dispute” between Turkey and “Greece-Cyprus”. Greece and the Republic of Cyprus (ROC) are two separate sovereign nations. Greece and Cyprus cannot be treated as a single unit. Turkey confronts each of them with forms of aggression which differ in scope and substance. Turkey threatens the sovereignty of Greece. By contrast, Turkey unlawfully occupied 38% of the territory of the Republic of Cyprus and has created an unincorporated association to administer the occupied territory. The occupation raises issues which are far more serious than simple “maritime disputes.”

Sincerely,

Nick Larigakis
President
American Hellenic Institute (AHI)