

Uprooting: Turkey, Greece, Cyprus and American Nuclear Weapons

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Marble sculpture depicting a Greek mother currying her child on her back running away from a pogrom in Turkey. The woman is bending over an ancient Greek column, also broken. Greek inscription, ΞΕΠΙΖΩΜΟΣ, UPROOTING. Nikaia, near Piraeus, Greece. Photo: Evaggelos Vallianatos

From the early beginnings of NATO, when America recruited Greece and Turkey, American leaders insisted that Greeks and Turks shake hands. NATO was too important. But it was impossible for the political leaders of Greece to shake hands with the leaders of Turkey whose hands were stained in Greek blood. Turkey is an alien country that practiced slavery and genocide for centuries, a country of ceaseless hostility towards Greece.

The crude secularist-militarist model Turkey proclaimed in the twentieth century had been baked in the West. Its core doctrines had their own racist theories. Ziya Gokalp, a Turkish writer, advocated a fake ideology, that the Turks were supposedly the global archetype of morals. Turkish history, he said, was an exemplar of moral virtues. Atatürk, who organized modern Turkey, grasped this racist illusion to enforce his Turkification policies. The non-Moslems, however, could not be wished away. In the early 1900s, the Turks had used genocide against Greeks and Armenians living in Turkey but did not have enough time to finish them off completely.

Obliterating Kurds and non-Muslims

The Kurds revolted in 1925, demanding independence or autonomy. This disrupted Turkey's war against its Christian minorities, so it responded to Kurdish aspirations with a ton of bricks. Turkish armies spent a good deal of the twentieth century fighting the Kurds. They destroyed some 4,000 Kurdish villages, employing murder and death squads, and scorched-earth policies with devastating effects. The remaining non-Muslim minorities in Turkey – Greeks, Armenians, and Jews – had shrunk to insignificance as a result of the racist, nationalist, and repressive policies that sought to obliterate them in the last days of the crumbling Ottoman empire and during the life of the Turkish state since 1923.^[1]

Mechanism of catastrophe

Speros Vryonis, late professor of medieval Greek history at the University of California, Los Angeles, said that Turkey looked at those surviving non-Muslims in Istanbul and the nearby region with suspicion. Turkish policy towards them had been “one of grudging and limited acceptance, heavily vitiated by calculated acts of state terror and repression, aided and abetted by significant portions of the area's dominant Muslim population.” In 2005, he published a book on the crime of the Turkish government against the Greeks living in Istanbul. *The Mechanism of Catastrophe* detailed the pogrom of September 6-7, 1955 and how that organized violence annihilated the Greeks of Istanbul.

Roots of genocides: Turkey and Britain

Thanks to divisions and hatred between the Christian states of Europe, Mongol Turks captured Greece in 1453. The Greeks revolted in the 1820s and won their independence. But thousands of Greeks remained in Turkey. The Turks wanted them dead. When murder would not do, exile and taxes would and did inflict crippling damage among non-Muslims. In the period between the world wars, the Greeks living in Turkey were proscribed from practicing law and medicine; they could not sell insurance and real estate; and 30 trades, including those of tailor and photographer, were beyond their reach. Those who could not pay discriminatory taxes, including many Greeks after the Greek-Turkish war of 1920s, were drafted into labor battalions that, in most instances, meant death. Their properties were appropriated and sold to Muslims.

The Greek island of Cyprus added to the hostility between Greeks and Turks. In 1878, England purchased Cyprus from the Turks. England in the 19th century behaved like an empire. It decorated its museums and the houses of the wealthy with looted Greek treasures. It grabbed the Greek Ionian islands from the French. England thought the Greeks should be grateful to her, but how could they? England occupied Greek territory, and, with the exception of British Philhellenes, the British government never supported the Greek revolutionaries. Britain did not want to see an independent Greece. In fact, Britain funded the assassination of Ioannes Kapodistrias, the first President of independent Greece. He had served as the foreign minister of Russia and was a genius in diplomacy.

The Greeks of the Ionian islands revolted against British rule, winning their union with Greece in 1864. Cypriot Greeks did the same thing in the 1950s. England was so angry with the successful Cypriot revolutionaries, that it took revenge. It brought Turkey back to Cyprus.

Despite the persistent record of hostile policies towards the Greeks in Turkey, the Turkish minister of foreign affairs Mehmet Fuat Koprulu denied that Turkey had vital interests in Cyprus. On the eve of the 1955 pogrom, he said the Greek rebellion against the British in Cyprus was the business of Britain and Greece. Turkey had nothing to do with it. Koprulu, however, spoke too fast. Prime Minister Menderes replaced him with Fatin Rustu Zorlu who supported an aggressive Turkish policy towards Cyprus. The British had won him over. A few days after the September 1955 pogrom, Koprulu accused Menderes of complicity with those who carried out the vandalism of the Greek community in Istanbul.

Collusion of Britain and Turkey

British diplomats brought Menderes on board for tying Turkish anti-Greek policies at home to the crisis in Cyprus. Vryonis speaks of England “dragging” Turkey into a “violent” intervention during the London conference on Cyprus in late August to early September 1955 between Britain, Turkey, and Greece. The collusion of Britain and Turkey in this conference was part and parcel of Turkey’s unleashing of the pogrom against the Greeks of Istanbul. The two events, the Cyprus conference and the pogrom became indistinguishable. Britain triggered much more than she bargained. By the fall of 1955, British diplomats counted on some “riots”

in Turkey against the Greeks doing good to British interests in Turkey and Cyprus. The Turkish government also reached the same conclusion, but the prize for the Turks was not Cyprus but the affluent if crippled Greek community of Istanbul. The Menderes administration exploded dynamite at its own consulate in Thessalonike, Greek megalopolis in the north of the country, in order to inflame the Turks at home and prepare the grounds for the real violence in Istanbul. Meanwhile, its diplomats met in London with British and Greek diplomats about Cyprus.

The wrecking crews

During 1954-1955, Menderes co-opted civil society organizations, including funding committees for spreading his propaganda for Turkish claims in Cyprus. The administration of the pogrom depended on the leadership of Menderes and his ministers, extending the command and control down to the governor of Istanbul, the police, armed forces, the political parties, labor unions, and student groups. This statewide involvement in the pogrom was necessary because the task was huge, aiming at the destruction of the property and institutions of 85,000 Greeks living in an area of some 45 square kilometers all the way from the Black Sea to the Sea of Marmara. Tens of thousands of Turks, working in pitched fervor and violence, spent 9 hours in their vandalism. Their barbarian mission succeeded beyond measure. The pogromists did their deadly jobs in the early hours of September 7, 1955. They left the Greek community in ruins, never to recover. KTC or Cyprus Is Turkish Association, an instrument of the Menderes Democratic Party, was the gut of the pogrom. It had some 200,000 members, some 10,000 to 20,000 of whom were part of the wrecking crew. These were pogromists with a mission.

On the eve of the pogrom, KTC activists marked the Greek homes and properties for destruction. They had learned a lesson from the 1572 Saint Bartholomew Day massacre in France. Vryonis says that KTC was also “a cover for the [Turkish] government and its covert policies on Cyprus.” But, once the pogrom was over, KTC nearly disappeared. It had succeeded in its mission. It provided the Turkish government a fig leaf for the utter destruction of the Greeks of Istanbul. KTC and the Democratic Party merged and worked together in the planning and execution of their monstrous project. They employed some 100,000 to 300,000 men from all sectors of the Turkish government and society, including thugs. They even imported pogromists from the provinces, thousands, and thousands of them. They divided them into groups of forty to fifty, arming them with the weapons of vandalism and arson (crowbars, clubs, pickaxes, spades, acetylene torches, dynamite, and gasoline), sending them out with specific instructions for the destruction of everything Greek. Since government forces led the pogrom, the Greek consulate and the Patriarchate did not suffer damage in the Istanbul-wide savage attack against Greek homes and stores in Istanbul.



The Christian Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople emerging from the ruined church of the holy virgin at the Belgrade Gate, Istanbul, Turkey, Pogrom, September 6-7, 1955. Picture from Dimitrios Kaloumenos, *The Crucifixion of Christianity*, 48th edition, Athens, 2001. Courtesy Leonidas Chrysanthopoulos.

Once the Turkish government declared its fake martial law, the very police, and soldiers, who had participated and coordinated the looting and destruction of Greek property or had been passive witness to the pogrom frenzy, intervened and restored order to Istanbul. Of course, the declaration of martial law in the early hours of September 7, 1955, coincided with the end of the complete smashing of the Greek homes and businesses in Istanbul.

Vandalism and hatred

Vryonis says the pogrom was the result of the “continuity of hatred, suspicion, and envy with which a significant segment of the Turkish people viewed the Greek minority among them.” And once the Turkish government bought the enticing British offer to demand its part of Cyprus, the Turkish hate and envy of the Greeks became a “national hysteria,” which, by late 1954 and late spring 1955, culminated in nationalistic, religious, and racist outbursts against the Greeks that paved the path to the pogrom and set the foundations for an aggressive policy towards Cyprus. The Menderes administration spread false rumors that the Greeks of Cyprus planned to massacre the Turkish Cypriots on August 28, 1955 and, when the pogrom time approached, Turkish officials bombed their own consulate in Thessalonike.

Religious fanaticism

Vryonis sees the pogrom as an expression of “the depth of the inherited, historical hatred of much of Turkish Islam for everything non-Muslim.” That’s why religious fanaticism was “at the core of the pogrom’s fury.” This invested the pogromists with limitless violence. Their destruction of Greek property, and household and livelihood, what the Greeks call *noikokirio*, was “the most extensive and intensively organized” in the 500 years since Constantinople fell to the Ottomans in 1453. The Turks destroyed more than 4,000 to 4,500 businesses and 3,500 homes; they wrecked about 90 percent of the Greek churches, showing off their “fervid chauvinism” and “profound religious fanaticism,” desecrating icons, defecating, and urinating on altars. They mocked, beat, and circumcised clerics. They exhumed and knifed the dead in the cemeteries, behaving like savage barbarians.

Shock, outrage and fear

The costs of this destruction were enormous, which the Turkish government refused to pay. But the moral costs of the pogrom, the violation of the well-being of the Greeks of Istanbul, the terror of the experience and the elimination of their security, were more brutal and devastating than the economic costs. The pogrom was “a crime of the state.” But it was also, “first and foremost, a project of terror.” It came down on the Greeks like a thunderbolt. Its “organized ferocity” and “the brazen nature of the attacks” filled the Greeks of Istanbul with shock, outrage, and fear. In a few hours of vandalism, the Turks wiped out the Greeks’ savings and hopes, abolishing their *noikokirio*, including the dowries they had been accumulating for their daughters. Suddenly, the affluent Greeks of Istanbul had nothing but the clothes on their back. The Turks had also violated the Greeks’ homes, smashing their furniture, stealing all valuables, and making the houses uninhabitable; they killed more than 30 Greeks and raped about 200 Greek girls and women; they insulted the Greeks’ religion, humiliating them, and trampling on their human rights and dignity.

On the aftermath of such a catastrophe, Greek-Turkish relations took the form of a non-shooting war. Greece kept sending Turkey one memorandum after another, reminding Menderes of his responsibility to compensate the injured Greeks of Istanbul while punishing those who destroyed the Greek community. Menderes ignored the pleas of the Greek

government but kept making the life of the Greeks in Turkey unbearable. Finally, on May 27, 1960, a military coup brought down the Menderes government, putting to death Menderes and his two closest associates. But the generals continued Menderes' policies. Their "neo-Ottoman imperialism" armed Turkey to the teeth, crashing the Kurds.

American nuclear weapons in Turkey and the 1974 Turkish conquest of northern Cyprus

In 1974, Turkey invaded and occupied forty percent of Cyprus where they put into practice the cleansing policies Menderes tested in 1955 against the Greeks of Istanbul. The Turks, embolden by the tacit approval of the US, which has been funding their armaments, violated Greek air space, an aggression they started in 1964 when President Lyndon Johnson forced Greece to withdraw its army from Cyprus, thus paving the way for the 1974 invasion of Cyprus by Turkey.

On August 27, 2024, Bret Stephens of the New York Times objected to the American embrace of Turkey, funding its military and even stationing about 50 nuclear bombs in the Incirlik air force base in Turkey. There's a silence in America about this potential horror, a Gordian Knot since 1959 when President Dwight Eisenhower sent the nuclear weapons to Turkey. Didn't Eisenhower and other policy makers learn anything from the 1955 Turkish pogrom in Istanbul? They felt it was proper to reward the pogromists with nuclear weapons, only four years after the horror they inflicted on 85,000 innocent Greeks? And what about NATO? Did France and Italy and Spain also approve of the Turkish pogrom? England certainly did. It was in bed with Turkey.

The 1950s was an era of darkness. American leaders contemplated nuclear war (and the certain destruction of civilization) in order to keep the communism of the Soviet Union / Russia from leaking to Western Europe. Fear of the Soviet Union brought nuclear bombs to Turkey, thus making Turkey an unofficial nuclear power. This unnerved a few thinking Americans. "Members of Congress," says the National Security Archive at George Washington University, "worried in 1960 that leaders of a coup "might seize control" of [the nuclear] weapons [in Turkey]. Other U.S. officials feared risks of accidental war or overreaction to local [Turkish] crises. During mid-1960s Turkish officials were interested in producing an "Atomic Bomb."

They still are. Erdogan wants his own nuclear bombs. Presidents Trump and Biden admitted that, yes, US had nuclear weapons in Turkey. They did not like it, but what could they do? They refused to say. Trusting a fanatical Islamic state, Turkey, with nuclear bombs is mind-boggling. No Cold War could justify such a folly. American government and politicians are silent, and unlikely to be able to cut this explosive Gordian Knot anytime soon. They probably are afraid of Erdogan. He is a neo-Ottoman imperialist who acts like a Sultan. He is manipulating history. He envisions the entire world under his control. In August 2024, he made this extraordinary statement: "Turkey," he said, "remains at the epicenter of our

thinking, but our vision covers the entire world. Where we have an expatriate from the Adriatic to the steppes of Asia, then his case is our case. It's the same thing with our brothers from the Caucasus to Africa. Their cases are our cases."

Like other Turkish leaders since 1959, Erdogan is drunk with the power of nuclear bombs. He has convinced himself that the American nuclear bombs are his nuclear bombs. The mighty weapons inspire and empower him so much, in fact, that he is threatening the existence of his neighbor, Greece. But neither Greece, nor the US, nor the EU seem to take Erdogan seriously. Or, rather, they are fearful of what he could do. For all intents and purposes, he controls American nuclear weapons in his country. The State Department pretends Turkey is not occupying Cyprus. "Privately," the reporter Michael Rubin admits, "American officials say the State Department's reluctance to call Turkey's presence in Cyprus an occupation stems from continued fear of antagonizing Turkey."

Stephens expressed uneasiness about American nukes in Turkey but offered no suggestions for taking the weapons out of Turkey. He had no opinion about jihadist Erdogan, theoretically at least, armed with American nuclear weapons. "Turkey," he said, "[is] on paper a secular democracy and a NATO ally. In reality, it's an illiberal state run for decades by Recep Tayyip Erdogan." True, Erdogan is waging a war against Kurds in Turkey, Syria and Iraq. He occupies land in both Iraq and Syria. Moreover, he wants to capture the entire island of Cyprus as a prelude to attacking Greece. He wants to expand the cleansing and the expulsion of the Greeks from the island of Aphrodite. The Turkish occupiers since 1974 have made the history of Cyprus dismal.

In 1992, Cyprus was "a cruelly divided economic slum. Such is the dirty legacy of "ethnic cleansing." Cyprus won its independence from England in 1960. However, the British and Americans agreed that Turkey should be rewarded for staying in NATO with a large section of the island. The 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus brought about "a brutal population exchange that displaced 160,000 Greek Cypriots and 45,000 Turkish Cypriots." The Turkish leaders practiced colonization in northern Cyprus. Even the indifferent EU noticed that the Turks were duplicating the worst conditions of colonization in Cyprus. "Since the *de facto* partition of Cyprus in 1974," reported in May 2, 2003, Jaakko Laakso of the Council of Europe, "the demographic structure of the island has been continuously modified as a result of the deliberate policies of the Turkish Cypriot administration... Turkish nationals have been systematically arriving in the northern part of the island... Turkey should use its influence on the Turkish Cypriot administration with a view to stopping the process of colonisation."

The political power of nuclear bombs

American nuclear weapons in Turkey probably explain the otherwise insane and imperial neo-Ottoman aspirations and strategies of Turkey. Erdogan reads clearly the cowardliness or fear of Brussels and Washington. Here was England and America that donated northern Cyprus to Turkey. So, Erdogan must be saying to himself, why not the rest of Cyprus and all

of Greece? Americans are too busy funding and serving wars in Ukraine and Israel. They would not mind, Erdogan is saying to himself, if I grabbed the Greek islands and the Aegean. After all, Turkey is a large country and has to expand its borders.

Erdogan has put these nightmare delusions into a strategy for intimidating Greece. The timidity / cowardliness of the Greek Prime Minister, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, encourages him. He practices in the open an operation full of advertising lies about peace and security while digging the grave of his opponents. He convinced the frightened Mitsotakis to have neighborly talks while his army is practicing the invasion of the Aegean islands. He sent his warships to interrupt the work of the Greek government in its own exclusive economic zone in the Cyclades islands until the Greek government negotiated in secret something that pleased him, most likely giving away some measure of Greek sovereignty to the Turks. So, Erdogan's warships might move freely in Greek waters. Erdogan is telling the EU and the US and Greece that the Aegean is his blue homeland. No one in NATO, including Greece, is reacting to this open aggression. Perhaps America's nuclear weapons in a Turkish military base, are powerful hostages that project power for Erdogan. And America remains silent.

Greece and EU wake up

Greece should wake up – soon. Erdogan is not joking. Greeks must elect a new government of unity and national defense. Strengthen the Greek armed forces. Deport all illegal Moslems from the country. Start manufacturing weapons at home. Ally with Armenia, the Kurds, Israel, and any other state or power threatened by Turkey. When Turkey practices invasion of the Greek Aegean islands, and the Greek government has reliable data on forthcoming attack, sink the Turkish fleet. Don't permit Turkish warships or fishing boats in Greek waters. Sink the military boats and arrest the fishing vessels. Don't give in to influence and become the conduit for EU-Turkey discussion like that of the EU foreign ministers with the Turkish foreign Minister Hakan Fidan.

A Greek non-profit and non-governmental organization, "I Participate for National Sovereignty and Cyprus," issued an open letter to the Greek people and to the EU embassies in Athens in which it expressed its fears that the EU invitation to Fidan was evidence of Turkish victory over Greece and the EU. After all, Turkey is occupying northern Cyprus, an island state that is a member of the EU. Turkey sends its warships in Greek waters in the Aegean to regulate Greek activities in Greece's own sovereign exclusive economic zone. These aggressive actions of Turkey should also offend the EU because Turkey is threatening two EU countries, Cyprus and Greece. The second major problem Turkey poses to EU is undermining its social cohesion with the steady stream of migrants it sends to the Greek islands and other EU countries. "Ankara," says the open letter, "methodically foments the Islamic refusal of European values and legal order throughout the EU member-states. Moreover, Ankara actively subverts the loyalty of Muslims to the state authorities in the EU and constantly strives to elevate Turkey to the rank of legitimate

protector and political representative of all Muslims residing in Europe. The whole issue amounts to a hallmark case of foreign intrusion and infringement to EU's internal order and affairs."

One hopes the EU also wakes up. It must protect its member states from Turkish influence and threats to the sovereignty of the continent. Fundamentally, the EU must demand that Turkish troops have to get out of Cyprus, an EU state. Turkish refusal to remove its 40,000 troops from Cyprus ought to result in severe EU sanctions of Turkey, expulsion from NATO, and finally threaten potential war of the EU against Turkey in order to tech Erdogan to keep his ambitions solely to Turkey. The alternative to EU war against Turkey could be that EU helps Greece and Cyprus to better defend themselves against Turkish aggression. And, of course, it would help if America removed its nuclear bombs from Turkey immediately. As for Greece, she should join Cyprus in a common strategy of defense and for the liberation of northern Cyprus from Turkish occupation.

NOTES

1. Tessa Hofmann, et al eds., *The Genocide of the Ottoman Greeks* (Scarsdale, New York: Aristide D. Caratzas, 2011). ↑