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Facts & Logic About the Middle East

October 20, 2020



Time to crack down on Erdogan's Turkey, now more an opponent than an ally

Dear Friend of FLAME:

The Republic of Turkey used to be known as a bridge between East and West, a shining example of a Muslim-majority liberal democracy. It is a member of NATO, was considered a candidate for European Union ascension and an important partner because of its geostrategic location.

However, since the election of Recep Tayyip Erdogan as Prime Minister in 2003, Turkey has abandoned its secular democratic underpinnings and is now seen less as a solution in the region than one of its most threatening problems, along with Iran.

The U.S., the EU and the West in general have been extremely patient with Erdogan's Turkey, despite its purging of the judiciary, media and military, long considered reliable barriers against creeping Islamism.

Nevertheless, Turkey's recent actions demonstrate that it is no longer a friend or an ally but is pursuing what a former senior member of Erdogan's inner circle called "Neo-Ottomanism"—a return to its imperial and regional ambitions.

These moves are sufficiently contrary to U.S. and Western security interests that it's time to call Turkey to account.

Turkey's political closeness to Russia is a major worry for NATO. Its decision to take delivery of the next generation Russian S-400 missile-defense systems is considered a slap in the face of NATO, especially when Western systems were on offer. Many warned against the purchase, saying the systems could gravely compromise NATO defenses by giving Russian technicians access to vital information on the latest American and European fighter aircraft.

Moreover, Turkey has pursued what Cyprus, a European Union member, called "illegal expansionist plans" in the east Mediterranean by continually attempting to drill for gas in waters where Cyprus has exclusive economic rights. On many occasions, these exploration vessels were accompanied by warships. Experts have called these activities "acts of piracy" and contrary to international law.

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YOU DESERVE TO KNOW THE TRUTH...

What's Stopping a Palestinian State?

Over 72 years, Israel has offered land for peace and a Palestinian state. The Palestinians have rejected all offers. How much longer should the world wait?

What are the facts?

Only a tiny fraction of the world's national groups have nation states. Both Kadhafi and Chavez agree to establish, despite the threat of US military intervention, the rule of law and national institutions. Thus, the failure of the Palestinians to achieve nationhood is not accidental. Creation of a state requires powerful strategy, unity and leadership. Sadly, these qualities have eluded the Palestinians, preventing them from seizing multiple opportunities for statehood.

Palestinians embrace a "two-state" strategy. As a result of the 1981 Charter of the PLO, the Palestinian people are divided into the "State of Palestine" and "State of Israel." The Charter states that the "final status of the occupied territories" will be determined by negotiations between the PLO and Israel. The Charter also states that the PLO has never been a government, and that the PLO's only purpose is to establish a fully sovereign state in accordance with the UN Charter. The PLO has never been a government, and that the PLO's only purpose is to establish a fully sovereign state in accordance with the UN Charter.

Palestinians lack political unity. Palestinian leaders and their people are not united in a single vision. While both the political and the religious leadership of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Fatah have been active in the West Bank, they have not been able to establish a unified leadership. The PLO's political and financial institutions are fragmented, and its leadership is divided. The PLO's political and financial institutions are fragmented, and its leadership is divided.

How can we begin to see the world for the Palestinians?

Like most people who care for the state and nation state, the Palestinians have failed to receive a viable strategy, national unity, or leadership. It has been the failure of the Palestinians to receive a viable strategy, national unity, or leadership.

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Despite long illegally occupying the northern part of Cyprus and violently oppressing its own Kurdish population, Turkey has become increasingly involved in the Syrian civil war in recent years. It has long provided military and diplomatic support for Al-Qaeda affiliate the Nusra Front, which has caused untold atrocities and considered a terrorist organization by many across the world. While ostensibly claiming it was conducting operations against the ISIS, the Turkish military has repeatedly entered and shelled parts of Syria controlled by Kurds, who fought against Syria's Bashar Assad alongside Western forces. One U.S. Senator on the Senate Armed Services Committee said last year that the Turkish offensive against Kurds in northern Syria is "on the cusp of genocide."

Erdogan has increasingly become open about his relations with terrorist organizations. He recently and publicly met with Hamas' leader Ismail Haniyeh and deputy leader Saleh al-Arouri, both of whom have a \$5 million bounty on their heads after being designated as terrorists by the U.S. "President Erdogan's continued outreach to this terrorist organization only serves to isolate Turkey from the international community, harms the interests of the Palestinian people, and undercuts global efforts to prevent terrorist attacks launched from Gaza," the U.S. State Department said in a statement. This comes on the heels of reports that some of the 12 senior Hamas members who are located in Turkey had received Turkish citizenship.

In July, Erdogan formally converted Istanbul's sixth-century iconic Orthodox Christian cathedral Hagia Sophia into a mosque and declared the UNESCO world heritage site open to Muslim worship, hours after a high court annulled a 1934 decision that had turned it into a museum. This despite repeated calls from international officials and Christian leaders not to take this controversial and explosive step.

One of the most glaring examples of Turkey's about face to the West and its interests is in its rapidly deteriorating relationship with Israel, which used to be considered an axle of stability and security in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Over the years, Erdogan and his supporters have engaged in anti-Semitic incitement, directly supported the IHH, a terrorist organization responsible for the violent flotillas to Gaza and has attacked Israel in international forums. He has been branded an anti-Semite not infrequently by Israeli officials and organizations like the Simon Wiesenthal Center. Erdogan recently claimed that Jerusalem "is our city" and said that the conversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque is a first step into "liberating" the Temple Mount, Judaism's holiest site.

These are just some of many examples of Turkey's turn away from the West, and its place as a pillar of stability and security in the region. Some, like former President Barack Obama, believed Erdogan was a loyal partner, regarding him as "a man of principle, and also a man of action." However, even Obama was disillusioned with him by the end of his presidential tenure.

However, few have attempted to exert pressure on Turkey to change direction. They have been worried that by pushing too hard, they will completely lose and alienate it. They are also worried about Turkey's threat to allow for more Middle Eastern refugees to use it as a transit nation to gain access illegally to the EU. This is a hollow threat, because it has barely acted on this issue up until now, and if anything continues to allow access in the other direction, allowing terrorist

editorial hasbarah messages placed in media nationwide every month: The dire threats from Iran, Hamas and Hizbollah, the injustice of BDS, Palestinian anti-Semitism and more. If you support a bold voice that tells the truth about Israel in American media, please donate now.

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sympathizers from Europe to use it as an access point to join with terrorist groups in Syria and Iraq.

Nevertheless, in recent years, Erdogan's Turkey has completely recalibrated its position vis-à-vis the West, and even if its former partners in the region.

Thus, it is incumbent on the U.S., members of NATO and other interested nations to exert pressure economically, geostrategically and diplomatically to convince Erdogan that he has more to lose than gain from his behavior. They must show that they will not be bowed by threats from Turkey and its role in conflicts, such as in Libya, to gain leverage.

Turkey is vulnerable because of its dire economic situation. The EU buys more than half of Turkey's exports and owns more than two-thirds of its foreign direct investment. Late last year, President Donald Trump signed an executive order sanctioning Turkish officials, hiking tariffs on Turkish steel up to 50% and "immediately" halting trade negotiations with the country. It now dangles the possibility of a free trade deal with Turkey.

Turkey's allies, Russia, China and Iran, simple cannot compete with this reality, and Erdogan knows it.

Please point out to your friends, family, colleagues, newspaper editors and elected representatives that the EU and the U.S. must condition their assistance, trade and alliance on Turkey's changing its behavior. It has largely only seen the carrot—if it continues its misdeeds, Erdogan must also feel the stick.

I hope you'll also take a minute, while you have this material front and center, to forward this message to friends, visit FLAME's lively [Facebook page](#) and review the P.S. immediately below. It describes FLAME's new hasbarah campaign—which exposes the outrageous, false accusation that Israel is an "apartheid state."

Best regards,

Jim Sinkinson

President, Facts and Logic About the Middle East (FLAME)

P.S. Every year, dozens of major American colleges and universities host Israel Apartheid Week, sponsored by radical pro-Palestinian groups like Students for Justice in Palestine. In addition, critics of Israel also assert that Israel is or will soon become an apartheid state. As you know, nothing is further from the truth. Israel guarantees equal rights to all its citizens and its laws bear zero resemblance to any of the hateful rules of apartheid South Africa, where the term was invented. To clarify this point, FLAME has created a new *hasbarah* message called "[The Israel Apartheid Lie](#)." I hope you'll review this convincing, fact-based paid editorial, which will run in *USA Today*, the *Washington Post*, and other media nationwide. It spells out specific tenets of apartheid and refutes the apartheid calumny against Israel point by point. This piece will also be sent to all members of Congress, Vice President Pence and President Trump. If you agree that this kind of public relations effort on Israel's behalf is critical, I urge you to support us. Remember: FLAME's powerful ability to influence public opinion—and U.S. support of Israel

—comes from individuals like you, one by one. I hope you'll consider [giving a donation now](#), as you're able—with \$500, \$250, \$100, or even \$18. (Remember, your donation to FLAME is tax deductible.) To donate online, just go to [donate](#) now. Now, more than ever, we need your support to ensure that the American people, the U.S. Congress and President Trump stay committed to realistic policies in relation to Israel, Iran and the entire Middle East.

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The logo for FLAME, featuring the word "FLAME" in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The letter "A" is stylized with a white flame shape above it.

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