

# national hellenic FREE PRESS

VOL. 43

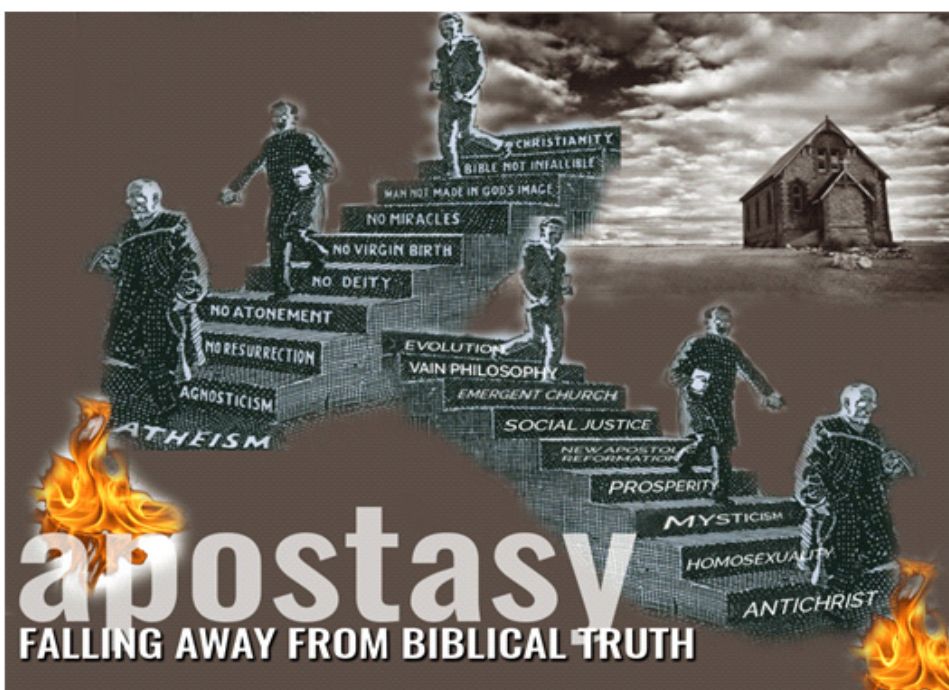
NO. 410

CHICAGO, IL.

JUNE, 2020

## Apostasy

Louis A. Palivos



In the New Testament, St. Paul prophesied that before the Lord Jesus returns there would be *The Apostasy*, Gk. *Apostasia*, Αποστασία. What is the apostasy? How was this apostasy understood when St. Paul wrote his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians? How is this apostasy to be understood by the generation that will experience this prophecy?

**Apostasy** means a defection, revolt, and as used in the New Testament, it refers to religious defection. “Thou teaches apostasy from Moses,” literally to forsake Moses’ teaching.<sup>1</sup>

but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise *their* children nor to walk according to the customs. Acts 21:21

**Also, “the apostasy shall come first”.**

Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away (apostasy) comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition. 2 Thes. 2:3

*The Apostasy* refers to a falling away from the faith, afterwards the Antichrist shall appear. The Greeks at Thessalonika were keen on when would Jesus Christ return, His Parousia, and when would Believers be gathered to meet him. St. Paul gives the Thessalonians two key signs. The first would be a revolt or defection from the Christian Faith, and the second, the Antichrist would be revealed.

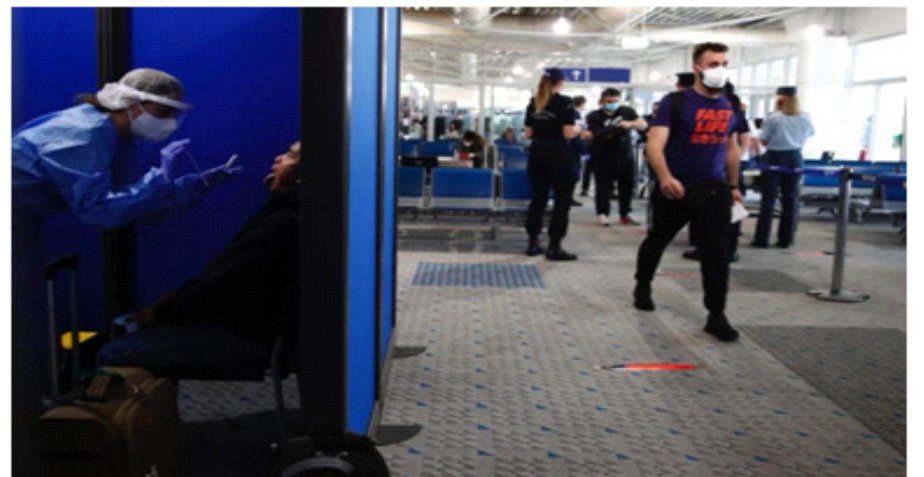
**Let’s look at the apostasy closer.** St. Paul seems to underscore that it would be “*the*” apostasy. This apostasy would dwarf past apostasies. The apostasy would be all encompassing, an avalanche of lawlessness and lesser and lesser of God’s uncreated grace. So eloquently written by Father Seraphem Rose, “it is the loss of grace of God which follows on the loss of savor of Christianity.”<sup>2</sup>

Human and spiritual enemies will attack the Christian Church to pull, seduce and deceive Christians from the Lord Jesus Christ and the True Church. These enemies gain ground wherever there are persons of little faith, lukewarm faith, indifferent faith, or no faith.

The apostasy shall not appear suddenly but the result of humanity waxing and waning more and more toward unbelief and unfaithfulness; reaching its crescendo before the Lord’s Jesus’s Christ’s Parousia and the appearance of the Antichrist.

(Continue p. 2)

## Greece welcomes foreign visitors, restarts summer tourism



Greece reopened its main airports to more international flights on Monday, hoping to kick-start its vital tourism sector after three months in lockdown.

Tourism employs about 700,000 people and accounts for some 20% of Greece’s economic output, so how the sector fares is significant for the country’s recovery. Greece emerged from a decade-long debt crisis two years ago. “Well it’s great, it’s like freedom,” US tourist Chris Saye said, speaking through a mask at Athens’ main airport after arriving from Paris with his wife. Passengers arriving from airports deemed high-risk by the European Union’s aviation safety agency, including airports in the Paris region, are tested for the coronavirus on arrival and quarantined up to 14 days, depending on the result.

Arrivals from other airports are randomly tested. People are still barred from flying in from Britain and Turkey.

Seasonal hotels and museums also opened on Monday.

Restrictions on movement imposed in March helped Greece contain the spread of Covid-19 infections to just above 3,000 cases, a relatively low number compared with other EU countries. But it brought the economy to a standstill.

The conservative government now faces the tough task of opening the country to foreign visitors while allaying public concerns about a new virus outbreak.

From the picturesque island of Santorini, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis told reporters on Saturday that his priority is to make Greece the safest destination in Europe. “You can come to Greece, you will have a fantastic experience, you can sit on a veranda with this wonderful view, have your nice Assyrtiko wine, enjoy the beach,” Mitsotakis said, with a stunning sunset in the background.

“But we don’t want you crowded in a beach bar... There are a few things that we won’t allow this summer.” About 33 million tourists visited the Mediterranean nation last year, generating revenues of 19 billion euros.



NATIONAL HELLENIC  
FREE PRESS

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- 4.To encourage all worthy Community causes
- 5 To assist all the Greek-American fraternal, cultural patriotic and religious organizations
- 6.To install Americanism in the Greek-American community
- 7.To advance the just causes of Hellenism.
- 8. To promote the ideals Greece has given to humanity.

Apostasy

Louis A. Palivos

(From page 1)

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! 2 Tim. 3:1-5

Again, St. Paul states that at the last days persons shall depart from the faith, Gk. apostisonte, αποστησονται.

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. 1 Tim 4: 1-5 St. Paul warns that in the last days persons would listen to “deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.” So, who are these persons who would listen to such deceptions and seductions? St. Cyril of Jerusalem wrote apostates would accept heresies and false doctrines.<sup>3</sup> Does ecumenism invite heresies and sects? Does the notion that all religions contain some truth invite heresies and sects?

The worldwide culture is shifting toward self-satisfaction and self-deification of the passions of the human soul and of the human body. Foods, music, social media, human interactions will promote man and more human satisfaction and make fun of Christian ideas of fasting, denying yourself, and caring your cross! Who shall repent when people are busy in self-centeredness and in self-satisfaction? As the song says, “I can’t get no satisfaction.” This is the absolute death of both the spiritual life and the task of acquiring the Kingdom of God.

Has meditation, yoga, physic pursuits, fashion, crept into the Christian Churches? Have the pillars of Swami Vivekandas’ and Taihard de Chardin’s been implemented by the Religious Leaders for a Universal Religion based on:

- 1. Must be scientific.
- 2. Must have its foundations on evolution.
- 3. Must be founded on eternal principles.
- 4. Must satisfy the spiritual needs of man and of woman of diverse types. And,
- 5. The final destination is the same for all, that is, the Omega Point or the Om.<sup>4</sup>

It seems apostasy shall manifest against God, against the Law and against the Christian Faith.

Apostasy shall be lead, in part, by Christian Hierarchs and Priests . This category is especially troubling. Why are Christian Bishops and Priests into TM, Zen, yoga, wellness, fads, meditation for inner peace, putting Jesus Christ on the same level as other Religious Leaders and having ecumenical prayers? Refusing to mention The Gospel! Don’t they know that such participation verges on inviting demons, as Israel did in Canaan.

They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons. Ps. 106:37

Apostasy is being pushed by universities and high schools. Consider the leading problems in high school in America during the 1940s: 1. Talking in class. 2. Chewing gum. 3. Making noise. 4. Running in the halls. 5.Cutting in the line. 6. Dress code violations. 7. Littering.

Now, Consider the present leading problems: 1. Drug abuse. 2. Alcohol abuse. 3. Pregnancy . 4.Suicide. 5. Rape. 6.Robbery. 7. Assault.

Since 1993, have high schools and universities improved or become more intolerant? What about shutting down conservative view points? What about school shootings?

“Fear not, little flock, for it is you Fathers’ good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.” Lk. 12:32. “When the son of man comes shall be find faith?.” Lk. 18:8

Consider abortion, the breakdown of the traditional family, pan sexuality, marijuana and drugs, prayer censorship, tearing down public display of Christian symbols, the New Age, mysticism, avatar, goddess worship, pantheism, Gaia worship, sorcery, as in the movie, *Dr. Strange* and witchcraft, as in the movie, *Harry Potter*?

And Jesus answered and said to them: ”Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. Mt. 24:4-5

So, who is an apostate? They are False Christs and False Prophets who knowingly reject Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior; and those who claim to be Christians but have departed from the Faith. Clearly, the Lord Jesus Christ warns the True Believers to be on guard, because; they would be mislead by “False Christ’s,” “False Prophets,” and “signs and wonders.” If possible, these False Christs, False Prophets and the signs and wonders would manifest to mislead even the “elect”.

Unequivocally, the Lord Jesus suggests, as St. Paul and the Holy Fathers, that the deception and seduction would not only be from outside the Christian Church but also from within the Christian Church!

Learn the Holy Scripture and apply the Holy Scripture. Seek purification, illumination and Theosis. Have fellowship with True Believers and in a True Church that is obedient to the Holy Scripture and to the Holy Tradition.

- 1. W.E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of the Old and New Testament Words*, World Bible Publishers, Iowa Falls, Iowa, 1981.
- 2. Fr. Seraphim Rose, *Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future*, Saint Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2013.
- 3. Haralambos D. Vasilopoulos, *The Antichrist*, Orthodox Press. Athens, Greece, 1990.
- 4. Ibid. Fr. Seraphim Rose, *Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future*.
- 5. Dave Hunt, *The Berean Call*, August 1993.

Sun's surface seen in remarkable new detail



Behold the Sun's convulsing surface at a level of detail never seen before. This is remarkable when set against the scale of our star, which has a diameter of about 1.4 million km (870,000 miles) and is 149 million km from Earth. The cell-like structures are roughly the size of the US state of Texas. They are convecting masses of hot, excited gas, or plasma.

The bright centres are where this solar material is rising; the surrounding dark lanes are where plasma is cooling and sinking.

Its 4m (13.1ft) primary mirror is the world's largest for a solar telescope. The observatory will be used to study the workings of the Sun. Scientists want fresh insights on its dynamic behaviour in the hope that they can forecast better its energetic outbursts - what is often referred to as "space weather".

"On Earth, we can predict if it is going to rain pretty much anywhere in the world very accurately, and space weather just isn't there yet," said Matt Mountain, president of the Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy, which manages the DKIST.

"Our predictions lag behind terrestrial weather by 50 years, if not more. What we need is to grasp the underlying physics behind space weather, and this starts at the Sun, which is what the Inouye Solar Telescope will study over the next decades."

DKIST is a superb complement to the Solar Orbiter (SolO) space observatory which is being launched next week from Cape Canaveral in Florida.

This joint European-US probe will take pictures of the Sun from the closest ever vantage point - from just 42 million km from the surface. This is nearer to our star than even the planet Mercury.

Solo will see features as small as 70km across, but will sense a much broader swathe of wavelengths than DKIST and sample more levels through the Sun's atmosphere. The probe will also fly a path that gives it an unprecedented view of the polar regions.



# Mitsotakis says Greece is safe travel destination

Greece is opening its borders to mass tourism in stages, starting mid-June, hoping its success in containing the COVID-19 pandemic will attract visitors from abroad.

Greece is prepared for a huge drop in visitors from last year’s 33 million, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis acknowledged Saturday.

“We don’t know the real impact of (a truncated tourist season) on GDP,” Mitsotakis said, addressing foreign media at the end of a day-long visit to the island of Santorini, one of Greece’s prime tourist destinations. “A lot will depend on whether people feel comfortable to travel and whether we can project Greece as a safe destination.”



Speaking against the impressive backdrop of Santorini’s caldera, the lagoon formed after the last immense eruption of the island’s dormant volcano, some 3,600 years ago, Mitsotakis went on a full sales pitch, touting everything from local products to the possibilities of year-round tourism

in Greece. Asked if opening the country to visitors might jeopardize the government’s efforts to contain the coronavirus pandemic, Mitsotakis said that “there is no risk-free approach...we are doing the best we can” and emphasized that the economy will operate under “very robust guidelines” enforcing social distancing and other measures, such as mandatory wearing of masks in transport as well as by all catering personnel.

“I believe the worst (of the pandemic) is over and I don’t think a full lockdown will be necessary...in case of a localized outbreak, we have the medical and civil protection infrastructure in place to tackle it safely and efficiently,” Mitsotakis said. Greece has so far had 3,112 confirmed COVID-19 cases, with 183 fatalities. During the past four days, in the Athens International Airport, the only one in the country open to international travel, some 4,000 tests were conducted on all arriving passengers and only two tested positive, both asymptomatic. From Monday, the Thessaloniki Airport will also open in Greece’s second largest city and testing will vary depending on the profile of the country of origin. Passengers arriving from relatively safe destinations will be tested randomly, while, in other flights, all passengers will be tested.

Tourism is especially important for Greece: some 350,000 jobs depend directly on it, and about double that number indirectly, Tourism Minister Haris Theoharis told the Associated Press a week ago.

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ALEXIS PAPACHELAS

# Avoiding the trap



Ankara is not being secretive about what it wants, putting all its claims on the table and increasing its activities in the Aegean. What we once saw as excessive has become routine. Overflights above big Greek islands, for example, did not used to be part of the Turkish repertory

but now they are a common occurrence.

Here in Athens, we try every so often to guess at what is happening. Media-tors, parallel channels of negotiation, and initiatives by other countries gener-ate hope that the situation can be defused, but only briefly. When Athens sends a message seeking to restart exploratory talks, for example, it doesn't even get an answer from the other side. Key people Greece could once talk to have all but disappeared from the Turkish stage and no longer have access to the Palace.

Turkey's tactic is to increase the psychological pressure on Greece and impose faits accomplis, where it can get away with it. There is enough evidence to suggest that it is seeking to create tension, even perhaps some kind of incident. The ultimate goal is talks, perhaps after some incident or when the tension reaches such a point that an incident becomes likely. Ankara has been waiting patiently to achieve just this since the spring of 1974.

It invested in its defense and acquired relative independence from the United States and other powers. As time went by, it kept bringing new claims to the negotiation table. Its so-called "gray zones" of sovereignty in the Aegean are a typical example.

But we can't turn back time. Whether an agreement and recourse to The Hague over the unsolved issues 30 or 45 years ago would have been better than what we have now is a question for future historians. Today we need to deal with an unstable international arena and a Turkey that feels like a regional superpower while also facing a massive economic crisis. And, of course, Presi-dent Recep Tayyip Erdogan is no longer the same man past Greek prime minis-ters had met and spoken with.

But no matter how much the other side baits us, Greece needs to avoid fall-ing into the trap of uncontrollable tension. There are, of course, certain red lines that were drawn several years ago with the consent of the country's po-litical leadership that are non-negotiable. Greece made its determination clear in Evros earlier this year, taking action instead of sending a message devoid of substance.

# Athens anticipates grants of at least 8-10 billion euros from French-Ger-man recovery plan



The government is expecting a growth boost to the tune of 1.5-2% of gross domestic product for the next three years through the EU Recovery Fund, if it is approved, based on a proposal the European Commission will submit on Wednesday.

This is the biggest post-lockdown weapon aiding the re-turn to growth, with Greece an-ticipating at least 8-10 billion

euros, while the amount due could be far higher. Sources say Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis has already spoken with Commission President Ursula von der Leyen ahead of the submission of the Commission's proposal, formed on the basis of a French-German agreement for a 500-million fund.

Athens is particularly pleased by the fact that the assistance, according to the proposal, will be granted in the form of grants and not loans that would add an additional burden to Greece's national debt. Of course this would need to be approved by Austria, which voiced its opposition from the start, but also by Sweden, Denmark, Finland and The Netherlands.

Another plus for Greece is a provision that the assistance will be allocated on the basis of the damage suffered by each country's economy as a result of the coronavirus. Given that Brussels said in its spring forecasts that Greece will experience the biggest GDP reduction in the European Union, it should also get the most support, in proportional terms.

There is a question as to whether the impact on national health systems will be factored in, which would be relatively small for Greece. However, Bloomberg reported recently that Greece would definitely be among the EU states to ben-efit most.

The fund's resources will allow the government to finance growth-minded policies that have been pushed aside at this point, such as the reduction of so-cial security contributions. Kathimerini understands that the government plans to provide for the immediate reduction of taxes and contributions on labor.

Other tax breaks are also due, Finance Ministry officials assure, for when the bridge program announced last week expires.



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# NEWS FROM GREECE

## Greece committed to further strengthening ties with China, says Georgiadis



In the wake of Covid-19 pandemic, the Greek government continues with unfaltering commitment to enhance cooperation with China, Greece's Minister of Development and Investments Adonis Georgiadis said on Thursday.

"We continue even faster and stronger than before to make our ties stronger," the minister said while addressing an online investment forum.

The new unprecedented challenge posed by the pandemic can either lead to conflicts or strengthen the will of the people and nations to move forward, and Greece has chosen to move forward, Georgiadis said.

The message the Greek government aims to convey is that investments will continue, he stressed.

"We are very happy with the Chinese presence in Greece, very proud of our cooperation in Piraeus port. We want to go forward with the master plan" of the upgrade of Greece's largest harbor, said the minister.

The port is considered a flagship successful project under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) launched in 2013.

China's Cosco Shipping acquired a majority stake in Piraeus Port Authority SA in 2016 following an international tender, while its subsidiary Piraeus Container Terminal SA has operated the port's container segment over the past decade, with both posting impressive results.

Greece is one of China's real friends, Georgiadis said, as he invited Chinese investors as well as tourists to his country.

"In this global crisis of the novel coronavirus, we choose as our common response the further strengthening of Greek-Chinese relations and bilateral cooperation, especially in economy and investments. This is the safest way to overcome the crisis as quickly as possible," said the Greek minister.

China and Greece are important BRI partners. After the pandemic, Sino-Greek relationship is bound to become stronger, Zhang Qiyue, Chinese Ambassador to Greece, told the forum.

The two sides have a very strong desire to further strengthen cooperation to bring better results to benefit the peoples of Greece and China, she said.

"This is not the time to stay separate from each other," she stressed, expressing confidence that "bilateral relations will come into full bloom to benefit our two peoples."

## Calling a snap poll would be opportunistic, Tsipras tells Kathimerini

Calling an early election in the midst of the pandemic would be po-

litical "opportunism," leftist opposition leader Alexis Tsipras has said while criticizing the conservative government's economic record and handling of tensions with Turkey.

"I am not afraid of a snap vote," Tsipras told Kathimerini's executive editor Alexis Papachleas in an interview. "But I do believe that... while it is not yet clear if there will be a second wave, it would be irresponsible to trigger political developments that would create even greater insecurity."

Defending the simple proportional representation system for favoring multiparty coalition governments, the former prime minister said that the political and social shifts brought by the pandemic will enable his SYRIZA party to return to power "not as a protest party, but as a creative force."

Tsipras also accused the administration of Kyriakos Mitsotakis of sending Greece back into recession in the first quarter of 2020 and of failing to lure foreign investment, while chastising the conservatives for their "dramatic" handling of the migration issue.

"In Moria, the number of migrants rose from 6,000 to 26,000, while the attempt to create new closed centers turned into a fiasco," he said, referring to the notoriously overcrowded camp in the eastern Aegean island of Lesbos.

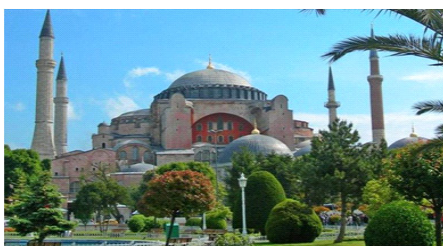
While acknowledging the government's success in containing the spread of Covid-19, the opposition leader said he would have done more to bolster the National Health System with permanent hirings and more infrastructure.

Asked about the recent incident on the Evros border, Tsipras accused the government of seeking to downplay the issue, while criticizing the absence of a clear "strategy" as Turkey raises the stakes with mounting provocations against Greece.

"The fear of [assuming] responsibility in the name of a purported patriotic intransigence has often resulted in national defeat," he said, reiterating allegations that Mitsotakis was driven by populism in his opposition to the Prespes name deal with North Macedonia.

"I have decided not to do the same [as Mitsotakis did]. On issues where cross-party consensus is possible, I will be there to grant it," Tsipras said.

## Turkey urged by US to respect Hagia Sophia



In its annual International Religious Freedom Report, the US State Department notes that senior US government officials have continued to publicly and privately express to Turkish officials their view that Hagia Sophia, a former Orthodox Christian cathedral in Istanbul, is a monument of excep-

tional significance that must be preserved in a way that respects its religious history.

The report also said the officials stressed that Hagia Sophia is a symbol of peaceful coexistence, real dialogue and of respect between religions.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and other high-ranking Turkish officials have repeatedly expressed the view that the 6th century monument, currently a museum, must be converted to a mosque.

## Athens-Rome maritime deal a message to Ankara

The signing on Tuesday of a maritime border demarcation agreement between the Greek and Italian foreign ministers, Nikos Dendias and Luigi Di Maio, was seen as a clear message to Ankara regarding Greece's diplomatic clout and its determination to move ahead with its plans on the basis of international law.

The agreement, which is an extension of a 1977 accord, paves the way for Greece and Italy to explore for and exploit marine resources. The agreement must be ratified by both national parliaments.

It came amid mounting tension between Greece, Cyprus and Turkey, and after Ankara signed a contentious accord with the Tripoli-based government in Libya, which it claims gives it rights in parts of the Eastern Mediterranean that overlap Greece's continental shelf.

"The delimitation of maritime zones is accomplished with valid agreements, not with invalid ones like that signed by Turkey and [the Libyan government of Faye] al-Sarraj and with maps unilaterally submitted to the United Nations," said Dendias, who described Tuesday as a "historic day."

For his part, Di Maio also referred to a "historic moment." Diplomatic sources said the two ministers also signed a joint statement expressing their commitment to a balanced and sustainable management of fish resources in the region.

Premier Kyriakos Mitsotakis welcomed the agreement as a "model of good-neighborly relations," noting that it fully complies with international law and the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

His remarks conveyed a sense of satisfaction in Athens and the anticipation that other countries in the region – in particular Egypt – will also delimit their exclusive economic zones with Greece.

More specifically, an agreement to demarcate maritime zones with Cairo would remove any semblance of international legitimacy stemming from Ankara's memorandum with Libya.

Furthermore, an agreement would significantly change the terms of the game in the Eastern Mediterranean and render Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's incendiary rhetoric

concerning Ankara's intention in the region as empty threats.

## Domestic tourism subsidy program tripled

This year the number of social tourism voucher recipients will be more than twice as high as last year in a program that will cost the Manpower Organization (OAED) three times the state's contribution in 2019, allowing employed and unemployed Greeks alike to enjoy low-cost holidays.

Labor Minister Yiannis Vrotsis and OAED director Spyros Protopsaltis presented the new social tourism program on Wednesday and revealed that its total budget is 30 million euros – against 10 million in previous years – which shows the government's determination to support domestic tourism.

The 2020-21 program, expected to begin on August 1, is seen covering 300,000 beneficiaries, up from 140,000 a year earlier. At the same time the vouchers for the 2019-20 season will also be valid up until the end of October, after it was decided that the 113,000 social tourism vouchers that hadn't been used should receive an extension for their utilization.

The new program notably includes a significant subsidy for ferry tickets too, as voucher holders will only have to pay a third of the fare, with the rest being covered by OAED and the ferry companies. For disabled people, the new program provides for a six-night trip instead of five, as well as a reduced contribution by the beneficiary. The maximum amount payable by participants comes to 11.5 per person per night. As for hotels, the new program reduces their mandatory availability rate to 25%.

Vrotsis thanked Protopsaltis and noted that the ferry ticket subsidy is aimed at creating strong incentives for people to choose Greek islands for their vacations, as until last year the vouchers had only subsidized accommodation.

In the same context, the program retains the special framework for social tourism for the islands affected by the migrant influx, while also adding the prefecture of Evros. This framework provides for 10 nights and zero contribution toward accommodation costs by the voucher holders.



Tom Ellis

# Greek-Turkish relations through a different prism



-The maritime border agreement signed between Greece and Italy on Tuesday is proof of the benefits of a constructive spirit of cooperation. It may sound utopian, but this deal could serve as a model in Greece’s dealings with Turkey.

Such an effort would need to start with good intentions. Foreign policy officials in Ankara often say that the disputes between Greece and Turkey should not be allowed to transcend their technical dimensions and be blown out of proportion by emotional and impulsive reactions. They blame this climate on Greek “obsessions” and the media.

It is partly true that much of the baggage in Greek-Turkish relations is emotional, but this is not only the case in Greece. Turkey has often exploited public sentiment over the Aegean and Cyprus to deflect attention away from domestic matters. The present situation, during which Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is coming under increased pressure at home – as also evidenced by opinion polls – is one such example. Many of the disputes brought up by Ankara are based on distortions of international law. One issue that is indeed technical is the delimitation of the continental shelf.

But surely even the most well-intentioned Greek official or respected opinion-maker willing to be as understanding as possible wonders whether Turkey really believes these are technical issues.

If Ankara truly desires to have a technical discussion on such issues, why is it playing the history card and upping the emotional ante? Why does it harp on about the “Blue Homeland” when talking about the exclusive economic zone it seeks, when we all know that the EEZ is about exploitation rights and not sovereignty? Why the violations of Greek airspace over the islands and northern Evros? Why the aggressive statements regarding Hagia Sophia? Why the official statements about “throwing enemies into the sea” and Foreign Ministry announcements about Greece’s “historical complexes”? Are these all figments of the Greek media’s obsessive imagination?

Erdogan appears annoyed by certain Greek actions, but his constant threats don’t help. Such behavior is not limited to the Turkish president, but reflects the intentions of the entire political system in the country, from the far-right nationalists to the Kemalists. Statements concerning the “return” to Turkey of Greek islands are not the product of a few fringe politicians; they come from all sides – and they need to stop.

Some are willing to try a different approach so the two nations are not doomed to a perpetual battle of wills. If both sides sincerely wish for a different relationship, something has to change in terms of communication and perception. Image may not be the essence of the issues, but it does create a climate that shapes how issues evolve and are dealt with.

If we want the tension to ease and the relationship to improve, officials must check their tone and the image they convey. This will help restore some mutual trust so that we can separate the technical from the emotional. There are people on this side of the Aegean who dare to contribute to this end and to serve the truth, rather than a distorted reality. The question is whether such people also exist on the other side.

# Greece, Israel send Turkey joint message

Amid an escalation of tension between Athens and Ankara in the Eastern Mediterranean, Greece and Israel urged respect for the sovereign rights of all states within their continental shelf and exclusive economic zone, in line with international law.

“We strongly oppose attempts to violate these rights in a manner that endangers the stability of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean Sea, violates international law and runs counter to good neighborly relations,” read a joint declaration issued after talks in Jerusalem on Tuesday between Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis and his Israeli counterpart, Benjamin Netanyahu.

Speaking to reporters after their talks, Mitsotakis said that he set out “what I consider our view to be regarding Turkey’s aggressive behavior in the Eastern Mediterranean.” “We consider this activity to be a threat to regional peace and stability,” he said.

For his part, Netanyahu referred in particular to defense cooperation, the tripartite alliance between Greece, Cyprus and Israel, and the EastMed pipeline. The declaration also stressed that both countries share common values of democracy and the rule of law, and that Israel attaches “great importance to its longstanding and important partnership with Greece.” It added that the bilateral cooperation is aimed at maintaining regional stability, prosperity and cooperation. “In this regard, we are also committed to continuing our trilateral cooperation with Cyprus and the 3+1 format with the United States of America with the clear aim of achieving concrete and meaningful results,” it said. The joint declaration made extensive reference to the progress made by both countries since May 21, 1990 after the signing of the relevant joint statement by the governments of the late Konstantinos Mitsotakis (father of Kyriakos) and the late Yitzhak Shamir.

“Our meeting today allowed us to agree on continuing the concerted efforts to intensify cooperation in all fields: foreign affairs, defense, innovation, cyber, agri-tech, science and academic, energy, health, environment, tourism, infrastructure, culture, sports and commerce and investment,” the statement read.

In the field of defense, it was agreed that the two national security advisors of both countries should coordinate more. Meanwhile, Netanyahu also told reporters that Greece and Cyprus will be the first destinations for Israeli tourists once restrictions on travel from Israel are lifted on the target date of August 1.

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# Coronavirus cases linked to Thessaloniki party



Several people have tested positive for coronavirus infection after attending a party in Thessaloniki in northern Greece which broke the country’s restrictions, according to reports Wednesday.

The party was reportedly organized at a luxury villa by a Thessaloniki student studying in London who was celebrating her homecoming and reunion with friends.

Reports said the student, whose name has not been made public, had traveled to Greece by car via Bulgaria. She had been obliged to stay in quarantine upon arrival. Authorities are reportedly trying to contact-trace everyone she has recently interacted with.

Amid concern about an increase in reported infections of Covid-19, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis on Tuesday convened a meeting of some of his ministers to discuss how authorities can enforce the health and safety regulations that have accompanied the gradual lifting of lockdown restrictions more effectively.

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# End Turkey's EU candidacy if it keeps provoking, Cypriot President says



If Turkey does not tone down its aggression in the eastern Mediterranean, it should no longer be considered a candidate for EU membership, Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades said in an interview to Politico Europe.

Anastasiades also noted that Turkey's seismic surveys for oil and natural gas off Cyprus – actions the EU has deemed illegal since they infringe upon the island's Exclusive Economic Zone – are a step too far.

"Either they are compliant with the terms and conditions of any other candidate country, otherwise they could not be either a candidate or accepted," Anastasiades told Politico. He added that although "we are in favour of having Turkey as a member state of the European Union, we prefer to have a European neighbor rather than to have an aggressive state like Turkey is behaving."

Although the EU sanctioned two persons in February over the Turkish drilling, some have criticized the move as soft.

Asked about adding more names to the sanction list, Anastasiades said it "is one of the alternatives available."

Yet "I believe that as the EU we are left with no other option than to address the whole spectrum of EU-Turkey relations." And a decision to formally stop the accession talks is "one of the steps we can take in order to send a strong message to Turkey, although I'd prefer to have a peaceful solution."

In June 2018, EU ministers effectively froze the negotiations, which started in 2005, although Ankara can still access EU pre-accession funds.

In October Turkish Cypriots will go to the polls and, if Mustafa Akinci is re-elected leader, reunification talks between the two sides of the island can "definitely" resume, Anastasiades said.

He added that, as a way to fairly divide revenue from the massive natural gas deposits thought to lie off the coast of Cyprus, and de-escalate tensions with Turkey, he has offered Turkish Cypriots a share of gas revenues if Ankara recognizes Nicosia's energy exploration rights, Politico reported.

"I'm ready to open an escrow account in favor of the Turkish Cypriot community, according to the population ratio," he said. "And if Turkey stops the aggressiveness, and recognises the exclusive economic zone of Cyprus, I'm ready to accept, even without finding a solution to the Cyprus question, to give the right to the Turkish Cypriots to benefit by withdrawing ... any proceeds which might be the result of the exploitation of the natural resources."

Turkey is now also playing a key role in Libya, where it is supporting the U.N.-led government of Prime Minister Fayeze al-Sarraj, but don't be fooled, Anastasiades warned. "On the one hand, they are saying that they are trying to stop the negative situation in Libya, but at the same time they are giving so many headaches to the surrounding countries [by] violating their sovereign rights and international law." He said this included "putting in doubt the sovereign rights of Greece" by planning to expand oil and gas exploration to other areas of the Mediterranean Sea.

Concerning migration pressures, Anastasiades said that "despite our repeated requests for effective solidarity and notwithstanding the measures we have taken at national level, Cyprus remains the top receiving EU member state regarding first-time asylum applications in proportion to its population." With the European Commission about to put forward a new proposal on migration, it "remains to see what the northern partners and friends ... mean by solidarity."

# Netanyahu trial: Israeli prime minister faces Jerusalem court



The trial of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on corruption charges has opened in Jerusalem, days after he began a new term in office. Mr Netanyahu, 70, is the first standing leader to face trial in the country's history. He denies accusations of bribery, fraud and breach of trust.

Arrived at the courthouse for a brief hearing, he said the cases were aimed at "toppling him in any way possible".

He was sworn back into office as head of a rare unity government a week ago.

His political rival, Benny Gantz, agreed to share power following three inconclusive elections in under a year.

He has rejected calls by opponents to step down while he fights

Media caption Watch Benjamin Netanyahu rail against what he sees as an "attempted coup"

The leader of the right-wing Likud party is Israel's longest-serving prime minister, having been in power continuously since 2009. He also served a term in office from 1996-1999.

## What happened at the court?

As he arrived at the Jerusalem District Court on Sunday, he told reporters: "I'm here with a straight back and my head held high."

"When you need to take me down, a strong prime minister from the right, everything is possible," he added.

At the start of the hearing, which lasted about an hour, Mr Netanyahu told the judges: "I read and I understand the indictment."

He stood in a face mask and refused to sit down on the defendants' bench until the reporters left the room, local media say.

His lawyers say they need several months to prepare their defence. The date for the next hearing has been set for 19 July.

## What is Benjamin Netanyahu accused of?

Mr Netanyahu has been indicted in three cases, known as 1,000, 2,000 and 4,000: Case 1,000 - Fraud and breach of trust: he is accused of receiving gifts - mainly cigars and bottles of champagne - from powerful businessmen in exchange for favours Case 2,000 - Fraud and breach of trust: Mr Netanyahu is accused of offering to help improve the circulation of Israeli newspaper Yediot Ahronot in exchange for positive coverage Case 4,000 - Bribery, fraud and breach of trust: as PM and minister of communications at the time of the alleged offence, Mr Netanyahu is accused of promoting regulatory decisions favourable to the controlling shareholder in the Bezeq telecom giant, Shaul Elovitch, in exchange for positive coverage by Mr Elovitch's Walla news site

Mr Netanyahu has strongly denied all the charges against him, branding them a "witch-hunt" by political opponents, and has vowed to clear his name.

## How can the prime minister serve and stand trial at the same time?

According to Israeli law, a leader charged with a crime is not required to resign. But there is no precedent. A former prime minister, Ehud Olmert, stepped down as party leader when he was under investigation for corruption in 2008 but technically remained prime minister until elections the following year - polls which brought Benjamin Netanyahu to power.

Under the power-sharing deal with Benny Gantz, a new role of "alternate prime minister" was created, which means when the two men switch positions in 18 months' time, Mr Netanyahu will still occupy a prime ministerial office and stay on as Mr Gantz's deputy.

## What does the trial mean for the country?

In short, a serving prime minister occupying the most powerful office in the land simultaneously trying to clear his name and avoid jail-time. Opposition leader Yair Lapid called it "an embarrassment" and "horrible for the spirit of the nation" though it is not expected to affect government policy. Mr Netanyahu is still likely to press ahead with plans to annex Jewish settlements and the Jordan Valley - territory in the occupied West Bank - in the coming months, a move certain to infuriate the Palestinians.

Opinion in Israel as to whether he should carry on as prime minister is split: critics say the spectacle of a trial makes Mr Netanyahu's job untenable, but his supporters - including his party - say he has been democratically elected and should not be forced out.

Even if he is convicted, Mr Netanyahu will not be required to resign unless and until any appeals are exhausted - which could, in theory, be many months or years into the future. In Ehud Olmert's case, the former prime minister went on trial in 2009 and after he was convicted only began serving his sentence in 2016 due to the long legal process.