

After 200 years, Greek revolution still influences Athens-Ankara ties

Thu, 2021-03-25 (All day)

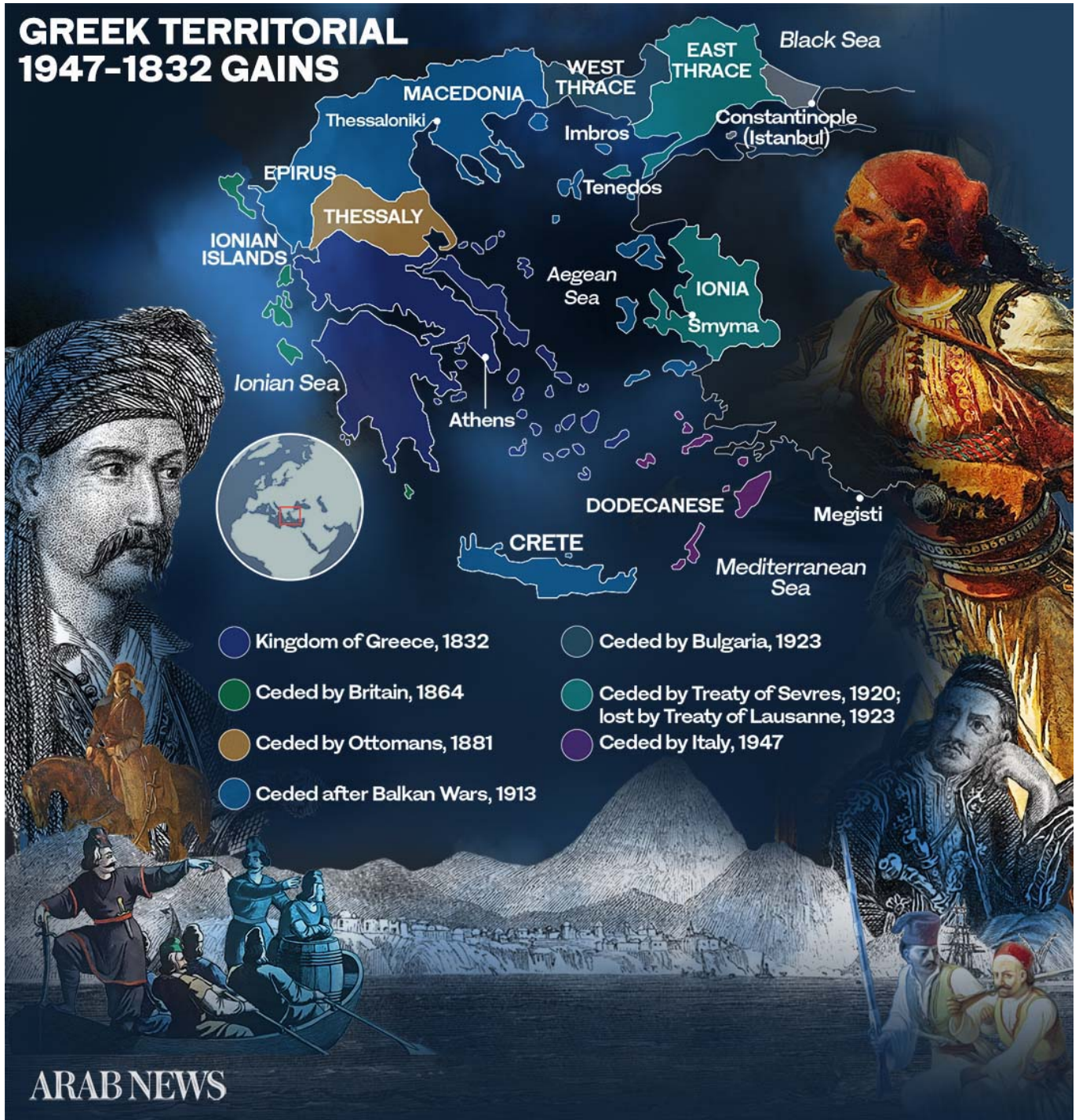
WASHINGTON: This year is one of great symbolism for Greece. The country is celebrating the 200th anniversary marking the beginning of a nine-year campaign that led to the establishment of the modern Greek state in 1830.

Hundreds of events are planned mainly under the auspices of the Greece 2021 Committee set up for the occasion.

It aims to shed light on different aspects of the nation's re-birth and the successful campaign to determine its affairs independent of the Ottoman Empire. What was the Greek War of Independence, and how have Greek-Turkish relations been affected by its emergence?

To start with, it is important to stress that the nine-year process that led to the Greek state's modern formation was not a war of independence as conventionally understood. It is more accurate to depict it as a rebellion, indeed a revolution, since the rebels were far from constituting an organized army.

GREEK TERRITORIAL 1947-1832 GAINS



Moreover, no Greek state existed at the time, capable of fighting a conventional armed conflict against the organized Ottoman army and navy. Lastly, the revolution had multiple starting points because Greeks were dispersed in a large geographic area inside and outside of the Ottoman Empire.

To illustrate this point, the start of the Greek Revolution occurred in February 1821, when Alexandros Ypsilantis published a manifesto for a call to arms in today's Romania. He argued that the time had come for Greeks, wherever they were, to fight "for Faith and Homeland."

Ypsilantis was the head of the Friendly Society (Filiki Eteria), an organization set up by members of the Greek diaspora in Odessa in 1814, that became a focal point to aid the revolution through financial, logistical and

political support.

The rebellion Ypsilantis envisioned was suppressed pretty quickly, as the revolutionaries were inadequately prepared and thus easily defeated after the czar's intervention and support of the central government of the Ottomans.

Yet the torch was carried on by rebels further south, in Peloponnesus, as the revolution was eventually crowned with success in 1830 when the full independence of the Greek state was recognized by the then great powers of the UK, France and Russia. In contrast with 1821, Europe's powers realized that Greek autonomy and its eventual independence served their interests better than open suppression.



Greek War of Independence 1821 – 1829, Turkish general Ibrahim Pasha in front of his tent, wood engraving after drawing by Jeanron, circa 1827. (Alamy)

Further, a great wave of sympathy among Western public opinion towards the revolutionaries became widespread by 1825-1826. It had religious connotations as Christians were fighting Muslims (at least in some theaters of conflict), yet was mostly the result of the successful attempt to link ancient Greece's image in the eyes of the west with the modern-day struggle of its successors on the ground.

The link was flimsy in ways more than one, but that counted for little. Philhellenism became a powerful force that ultimately allowed the revolutionaries to reach their cherished objective. By 1832, the Ottoman Empire also accepted the inevitable that Greece was now a member of the community of nations.

Its struggle became a rallying cry for other populations in 19th-century Europe. Poles, Hungarians and many others rightly saw in the Greek Revolution the passionate expression of the ideals of the French and American Revolutions and proceeded with the formation of their own states over time.

The Greek Revolution of 1821 is therefore a momentous event in world history, far bigger in consequences than the small state that was formed. For the revolutionaries and the political class of the emerging state, however, their priorities were more immediate: How to make sure Greece would get bigger and bring under its jurisdiction the majority of Greeks still subject to Ottoman rule.

To do so, they needed to fight the Ottomans, not once but many times over until the boundaries of the country were firmly set in 1947 and after the Dodecanese Islands became part of the state. Two decades earlier, the Lausanne Treaty of 1923 ended the war between Greece and Turkey, setting the boundaries of the latter country.

Turkish leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his comrades-in-arms had earlier rejected the failed Ottoman Empire. Importantly, the nationalist fervor that led to military victory and a new set of diplomatic accords with Greece and other European powers had been originally inspired by the same nationalist zeal that had engulfed their Greek counterparts a century earlier.

Modern observers of Greek-Turkish relations often have difficulty in understanding the intensity of their present-day disputes, unaware of the centrality of the “other” in the historical process that led the two states to come into being.

As I have argued elsewhere, it is precisely their historical state formation, including identity formation and the setup of national consciousness in opposition to the other side (rather than on its own terms) that accounts for the emotional outbursts and limited rationality in sustainable conflict resolution mechanisms characterizing a large part of their conflict-ridden relationship.

How so?



Museum employees unwrap an artwork depicting Greek revolution heroine, Laskarina Boukoulina in the new museum dedicated to the Philhellene foreign volunteers who fought and died for Greece on March 12, 2021. (AFP/File Photo)

From the 1820s and for an entire century, one side's victory in the battlefield (or, more often, the diplomatic decision-making circles of the great powers, on which the Greek state was clever enough to rely) was the other side's loss. Starting from 1830 and until the Treaty of Lausanne was

signed, generations of Greeks were determined, if not always battle-ready, to liberate “enslaved Hellenism” from Turkish rule, or Tourkokratia.

In the process, they also managed to incorporate other parts of today’s Greece from countries such as the UK (such as the Ionian Islands in 1863). The next step followed in 1881, when again the great powers convinced the Ottomans to cede Thessaly and a part of Epirus to Greece. By the early 20th century the Ottoman Empire’s decline had accelerated and Greece used that to its advantage.

The Balkans Wars of 1912-13 pitted Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria against the Ottomans, as well as each other, over Macedonia and parts of Epirus. The union of Crete with Greece was also completed at that time.

Greece had managed to enlarge its territory by more than 60 percent and its desire to liberate the “enslaved brethren” appeared close to success by 1921. The crumbling Ottoman Empire, combined with the diligent policies pursued by Greek Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos, allowed Greece to reach its peak by 1921.

Yet 10 years of continuous war had taken its toll and the irredentism manifested in the Greek army’s march deep into central Anatolia came to a crashing halt once Ataturk launched a devastating counterattack. Lausanne put an end to hostilities but not before Greece and Turkey embarked on a population exchange, with religion the main criterion for the exchange.



Greek Prime Minister Constantin Caramanlis (L) and Turkish Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel (R) talk during the first Greek-Turkish summit since the

Cyprus war ended at Palais d'Egmont in Brussels, Belgium, on May 31, 1975, to find a solution between the two countries mainly on the Cyprus problem.
(AFP/File Photo)

Vestiges of Hellenism remained in the new Turkish Republic, as the patriarchate was allowed to remain in Istanbul, and a sizable Greek minority with it, too. In the years that followed and once the war was over, Greek-Turkish relations have been met with ebbs and flows.

Tensions have been high more often than not, especially over Cyprus, which remains divided to this day and overshadows attempts for a normalization of relations. However, it is also important to stress, given the centuries of coexistence between the two peoples, that their relations have also gone through periods of accord and mutual respect.

Immediately after the war, Ataturk and Venizelos established cordial relations, not least due to their genuine desire for lasting peace and Ataturk's revolutionary reforms. In 1934, Venizelos even proposed that the Nobel Peace Prize be given to Ataturk.

Friendly relations turned sour after the passing of the two leaders and did not return until the late 1990s with another period of rapprochement. The long shadow of history, with 1821 at its heart, continues to affect Greek-Turkish relations in multiple ways.

*** *Dimitris Tsarouhas is a professor of international relations, specializing in Greek politics, Greece-Turkey relations, EU-Turkey relations and EU affairs. Twitter: [@dimitsar](https://twitter.com/dimitsar)***





TIMELINE OF MODERN GREECE



1821-1831
Greece wins independence from the Ottoman Empire.



1912-1913
First Balkan War: Greece gains Epirus, Macedonia, Crete and the North Aegean Islands from the Ottomans. **Second Balkan War:** Greece gains West Thrace from Bulgaria.



2021
March 25
Greece marks 200 years of independence.



1914-1918
World War I: Greece joins the Allies, Ottomans join Central Powers. Ethnic cleansing of Greeks in Anatolia.



2020-2021
Greco-Turkish tensions flare over Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean maritime zones.



1919-23
Greco-Turkish War: Greek invasion of Asia Minor defeated by Turkish forces. Greece and Turkey exchange populations.



2010-present
Eurozone debt crisis: Greece granted loans and bailouts in exchange for harsh austerity.



1936
General Ioannis Metaxas establishes dictatorship.



1996
Greece and Turkey in military standoff over Aegean islet Imia/Kardak.



1940-1944
World War II: Fascist Italy launches failed invasion. Nazi Germany occupies Greece. Famine kills tens of thousands. British and Greek forces defeat Nazis.



1981
Greece joins EU.



1952
Greece and Turkey join **NATO**.



1975
New constitution declares Greece a parliamentary republic.



1967
Colonel George Papadopoulos seizes power in military coup.



1974
Turkey invades northern Cyprus after Greek-backed coup. Ioannidis government falls.



1973
Brigadier-General Demetrios Ioannidis overthrows Papadopoulos.

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How preservation of Greek culture made the 1821 revolution inevitableHow the Greek diaspora rallied to defend the 1821 War of Independence

[Gunmen kill wanted Libyan commander in new sign of instability](#)

Wed, 2021-03-24 21:18

TRIPOLI: Gunmen assassinated an eastern Libyan commander wanted for war crimes on Wednesday, medics said, underscoring the risks of violent escalation on the ground that poses the biggest challenge to Libya's new unity government.

Mahmoud Al-Werfalli was shot from a car outside a hospital in Benghazi alongside two of his bodyguards, military sources said, amid growing friction between rival factions in eastern Libya.

Werfalli was a commander in an elite unit attached to Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA), a coalition of forces that has dominated eastern Libya in recent years.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague has indicted Werfalli twice for the suspected killing of more than 40 captives, including in a 2018 incident in which photographs appeared to show him shooting 10 blindfolded prisoners.

This month he was shown in a widely circulated video raiding a car showroom in Benghazi alongside his uniformed men, smashing up furniture and computers as they brandished weapons.

Friction between rival factions in eastern Libya has been escalating for some time and could further degenerate into a series of retaliatory attacks, said Tarek Megerisi of the European Council on Foreign Relations.

"I think this is going to be the first major challenge for the (Government of National Unity) GNU," he said.

The GNU was sworn into office this month, taking over from the two rival administrations in east and west that have run Libya for years, as part of a UN-facilitated peace effort.

The eastern administration, backed for years by the LNA, handed over its powers to the GNU on Tuesday at a ceremony in Benghazi.

Besides the challenge of merging Libya's divided state institutions and preparing for elections in December, the GNU needs also to tackle a dire security situation with power held by myriad factions.

On Wednesday, UN Special Envoy Jan Kubis told the Security Council: "Various

armed groups continue to operate without hindrance, human rights violations continue with almost total impunity.”

Last week, GNU Prime Minister Abdelhamid Dbeibeh said his government would open an investigation after the discovery of bodies in Benghazi.



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UN Libya envoy: Broad support for holding December elections
Italian envoy meets with Libyan officials

[Diab rules out reforming resigned Lebanese government](#)

Author:

Wed, 2021-03-24 21:06

BEIRUT: Lebanon's caretaker Prime Minister Hassan Diab has ruled out the possibility of reinstating the government he led until its resignation on August 10, 2020.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, Diab said: "Defining the powers of a caretaker government and the role of the resigned Cabinet requires a

constitutional interpretation, which is the exclusive right of parliament.”

Diab was, indirectly, responding to an invitation issued by Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah a few days ago to reactivate the resigned government, as President Michel Aoun and Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri remain in deadlock over the formation of a new government for the crises-stricken country.

Diab continued his statement by saying that eight months after his cabinet resigned in the aftermath of August’s devastating Beirut Port explosion, “efforts have not succeeded in forming a government that would save Lebanon from its current crisis. Things have even gone beyond logic and the government’s formation has become a national crisis, which has exacerbated the suffering of the Lebanese. Forming a new government remains a priority.”

The formation of a new government remains fraught with difficulty, however, given the vast political gulf between the two sides. Aoun is reportedly insisting that he and his allies be granted a third of cabinet portfolios, effectively handing them the power of veto over any major government decision. His demand has the indirect support of Hezbollah, which is calling for a “techno-political government,” while other parties are backing a government consisting of independent ministers with no party or bloc enjoying a ‘blocking third.’

Aoun met with the ambassadors of France and Saudi Arabia on Tuesday to try and clarify his position. The Lebanese media described those meetings as “an attempt to be granted clearance and to hold Saad Hariri responsible for the delay.” However, the Saudi ambassador’s statement from the presidential palace about respecting Lebanon’s sovereignty, not interfering in others’ affairs and committing to the Taif Agreement suggested that attempt failed.

Saudi Arabia’s Ambassador Walid bin Abdullah Bukhari tweeted on Wednesday that his visit to Aoun “came after three persistent and recurrent invitations from the presidential palace.”

Bukhari also met the Ambassadors of France, Anne Grillo; the US, Dorothy Shea; and Kuwait, Abdel-Aal Al-Qenaie on Wednesday. According to sources with knowledge of their meeting, the ambassadors expressed “discontent at the Lebanese officials’ performance regarding the governmental issue.”

Former lawmaker Fares Souaid told Arab News, “The constitution is suspended and neither Saudi Arabia nor France is controlling (Lebanon’s) internal affairs. The reason behind the constitution’s suspension is Hezbollah.”

After meeting with the Maronite Patriarch Bechara Al-Rai, former Interior Minister Nohad Machnouk said, “Lebanon has become a state whose legitimacy and policy are occupied,” adding that the only viable option at this point is “to support Al-Rai’s neutrality initiative to liberate Lebanon from Iranian political occupation.”

Pressure on officials to expedite the formation of a salvation government mounted on Wednesday as the economic commissions and Labor Union held a

meeting to discuss “the disaster that is about to hit the Lebanese if a government is not formed soon.”

Civil society is also exerting pressure on merchants controlling the price of food in the country. A campaign has been launched on social media urging the Lebanese to boycott eggs and chicken for a week, after the price of a carton of eggs hit 40,000 pounds (\$26.20) and a kilogram of raw chicken 30,000 pounds.

Elsewhere, Hezbollah-appointed Minister of Health for the caretaker government Hamad Hassan visited his Syrian counterpart Hassan Al-Ghobash in Damascus on Wednesday.

Hassan thanked Syrian President Bashar Assad for “the decision to provide Lebanon with 75 tons of emergency supplies of oxygen to assist patients on respirators.”

Hassan said the agreement with the Syrian ministry was “a brotherly, verbal (one) that has medical and humanitarian dimensions.”

Lebanon is currently avoiding any official dealings with the Syrian government to avoid the sanctions of the Caesar Act.



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Lebanon’s caretaker Prime Minister Diab threatens to ‘refrain’ from exercising his duties
Lebanon stalemate continues after 18th Aoun-Hariri

Syria to send Lebanon emergency oxygen supply for hospitals

Wed, 2021-03-24 21:10

BEIRUT: The government of war-torn Syria said Wednesday it will send emergency oxygen supplies to neighboring Lebanon, which has experienced shortages amid a surge of coronavirus infections in both countries. The gesture comes as the health care sectors of the neighboring countries face serious challenges compounded by the pandemic and unprecedented economic woes.

Lebanon Health Minister Hamad Hassan told Lebanon's al-Manar TV the oxygen was a "direct gift" from Syrian President Bashar Assad, who responded to Lebanon's humanitarian request for the oxygen.

Syria's health care infrastructure has been battered by a 10-year war and dependency on foreign aid as Assad's government faces growing Western sanctions.

For Lebanon, Syria's gesture comes at a time of political deadlock among rival groups who are deeply divided over Syria. Hassan is allied with the Iran-backed Hezbollah group, which has been a main backer of Assad.

Syrian Health Minister Hassan Ghabbash said his visiting Lebanese counterpart would depart Damascus with the first batch of oxygen from Syrian plants. The amount going to Lebanon, reported to be 75 tons by Syrian media, won't impact needs in Syria, he said.

Lebanon's health minister Hassan said oxygen supplies would last only through Wednesday. The supplies from Syria would avert the loss of "thousands of lives," he said.

"There are currently a thousand patients in Lebanon on ventilators. The amount of oxygen we have is sufficient for today," Hassan said.

The situation in Syria is also critical. World Health Organization officials said hospital beds are at full capacity in the capital Damascus, and infection cases are at their highest amid a dearth of testing capabilities. Syria has recorded more than 17,000 infections and 1,175 deaths. The country is in a deep economic crisis, with more than 80% of the population living in poverty.

Both countries are witnessing an unprecedented crash of their local currencies.

Lebanon has been struggling with a surge of infections since the start of 2021 and a weeks-long lockdown has only brought the numbers down slightly. WHO said intensive care-unit beds are more than 85% full in the small country of 6 million people, including over 1 million Syrian refugees.

Since last year, Lebanon has recorded nearly 445,000 infections and 5,850 deaths.

A vaccination campaign began in Lebanon last month, with over 970,000 people

registered to be vaccinated and some 156,000 doses already administered. Syria said it has received some vaccines but it has yet to launch a national vaccination campaign. WHO announced Tuesday it will oversee a vaccination campaign in Syria expected to start in April with the aim of inoculating 20% of the population by the end of 2021.



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Tue, 2021-03-23 23:19

US and Iraq will hold strategic dialogue in April , the White House said.

Developing...



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rockets target Iraq base housing US troops: security source