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## GREECE RECEIVES EMERGENCY EU AID FOR REFUGEES

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The European Commission on Monday said it would provide funding of [ ] for aid projects in Greece to help get refugees out of camps and to provide them with regular cash assistance. Humanitarian aid commissioner Christos Stylianides announced the move when he met with Greek prime minister Alexis Tsipras in Athens. The cash is planned to reach 45,000 people, while 27,000 homes will be rented by 2018.

This follows the comments of Turkey's firebrand president Recep Tayyip Erdogan who had earlier threatened to "Ottoman slap" US forces fighting alongside the Kurds against ISIS in Syria.

Last week, (26 March) in Varna, Bulgaria, president Erdogan together with a string of other Turkish officials met their EU counterparts in an attempt to heal relations.

Nothing came out of the summit. While, the leaders were shaking hands, Turkey announced that it would lay the foundation stone of a \$20bn ( [ ]) nuclear power plant being built by Russia's state atomic energy corporation (Rosatom) in southern Turkey.

Meanwhile, the US, Canada, Australia and 14 EU countries including Germany and France expelled Russian spies following the chemical weapon poisoning of Sergei Skripal in Salisbury, England.

But Turkey refused to do likewise. It took Ankara three weeks to whisper a condemnation. This, despite Turkish and British officials describing their ties as a "strategic partnership".

Time to face facts, Turkey's ties with the West are no longer strategic. When Europe goes hither, Turkey deliberately goes thither.

### Iran

Take Iran, for example.

In December last year it was revealed that Turkey helped Tehran to bypass the Iran Sanctions Act in a scheme that involved a Turkish state owned bank to weave a complex web for the trade of Iranian gas for Turkish gold. The key witness alleged that not only was the then Turkish economy minister involved, but the process was ordered on the behest of Erdogan himself.

Another example is Russia.

Not only has Moscow intervened in Ukraine and occupies the Crimea, but Russia also distributes fake news and propaganda against the West, violates the airspace and exclusive economic zones of European nations, murdered Russian nationals living in the United Kingdom, and involved itself in the lawlessness and chaos in Syria by propping up the Assad regime and sanctioning Iranian involvement.

### **What does Ankara do?**

It joins talks over the future of Syria with Iran and Russia, legitimising their nefarious involvement. Turkish ministers schedule multiple meetings with their Russian counterparts. Turkey pledges to boost bilateral trade with Russia to reach \$100bn and continues with its plans to purchase S400s, the Russian surface-to-air missiles completely incompatible with NATO hardware.

ISIS is another significant threat to Europe.

Not only has the terror group had a destabilising effect on Syria and Iraq, but there is also the threat of returning recruits to European nations.

But Turkey has done little to help. Ankara allowed Turkish territory to be used by Jihadists traveling to Syria. It turned a blind eye to oil and weapons smuggling across its border. When Ankara did wake up to the ISIS threat, it was, let's face it, too little too late.

Even Turkey's position on Syrian refugees is practically blackmail. Europe pays six billion euros or Turkey threatens to open the floodgates. Hardly strategic cooperation. "Don't keep delaying it; give us the money", Erdogan recently warned.

What is more, Ankara used its might against the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) which Ankara claims is affiliated with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). But the YPG is an undeniable asset in the West's fight against ISIS.

### **No real basis for alliance**

And here lies the core of the problem. Turkey's strategic threats are different to those of the West.

Ankara is concerned with the activities of the Gulen movement, which Ankara blames for the 2016 attempted coup.

But this organisation poses no real threat to the West. Ankara is also in an all-out war against the PKK. But although considered a terrorist group by Europe and the US, the PKK doesn't attack Western targets.

In other words, there is no real basis for Turkey and the West to maintain a strategic alliance.

Shared values are also not a factor. Ankara has ignored the EU's concerns about Turkey's human rights record including its democratic deficiencies, the erosion of checks and balances, the politicisation of the judiciary, the continued state of emergency and severe restrictions on the media.

At the Varna Summit, Erdogan told Europe to stop "rambling" on about human rights.

So, if Europe's relations with Turkey are not about shared values and are not of a strategic nature, all that is really left is trade.

Fine. Let's buy and sell stuff to each other.

NATO bases in Turkey can be relocated, military cooperation can be limited and intelligence sharing can be scaled down. With a little bit of planning and foresight, it is unlikely that this will have much long or medium-term impact. At least the charade will end and the sides will know where they stand.

Surely this is better than the maintaining the unproductive status quo?

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