

NATO's Appeasement to Turkey Is Pushing France Out of the Alliance

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*French **President Emmanuel Macron** created a stir last November when he said that NATO is experiencing a “brain death.” This single comment created a flurry of reactions as Member States attempted to justify the existence of NATO. Macron’s comments must be taken seriously when we consider that France in 1959 withdrew its Mediterranean Fleet from NATO command and in 1966 the French military left NATO’s integrated military command and demanded all foreign NATO soldiers to leave France. US **Secretary of State Dean Rusk** attempted to guilt the highly independent French **President Charles de Gaulle** for his decision to kick out foreign soldiers by asking if “the bodies of American soldiers in France’s cemeteries” who died in the two world wars also had to leave.*

It was the Anglo-American hegemony that de Gaulle resisted, and it can be argued that Macron is attempting to re-establish France’s independence after former French **President Nicolas Sarkozy** reintegrated France into NATO in 2009. A clear indicator that Macron is following in the steps of de Gaulle is when he furthered the former president’s famous phrase that Europe stretches “from Lisbon to the Urals” in Russia by saying Europe’s territory stretches all the way to Vladivostok near the Chinese and North Korean borders.

However, Macron’s stinging attacks against NATO did not end with that single comment from November 2019. Last week Macron said that the Franco-Turkish naval incident was “one of the most beautiful demonstrations that there is a brain death” of NATO. A Turkish warship harassed a French navy vessel participating in a NATO mission, prompting France’s defence ministry to say that

“this is an extremely aggressive act that is unacceptable by an ally against a NATO ship. We consider this an extremely grave matter. We cannot accept that an ally behaves this way, that it does this against a NATO ship, under NATO command, carrying out a NATO mission.”

NATO is certainly “brain dead” as it primarily exists to pressurize Russia despite the collapse of the Soviet Union nearly three decades ago. To justify its existence, it has gone on campaigns of aggression by destroying Yugoslavia and Libya, and supporting reactionary forces like jihadist groups in Syria. It is now strongly suggested that France wants to embark on an independent path, especially as a lack of comradery is found within the Alliance.

Turkey, leveraging its large military, geostrategic positioning on the crossroads of Europe and Asia, and controlling the Straits into the Black Sea, is attempting to balance its relations with NATO and Russia to pursue its own ambition to dominant the entire region, including the Eastern Mediterranean. Moscow wants to strengthen relations with Turkey knowing it

will antagonize NATO, while NATO continues to tolerate Turkey's unilateral and aggressive actions. NATO's tolerance to Turkish aggression is so high that it is always silent on Turkey's daily violations of Greek maritime and airspace, despite Greece being a fellow NATO member.

The Turkish aggression against France in the Mediterranean a few weeks ago was one that could not be ignored. As Greece is not as geostrategically important to NATO in comparison to Turkey, aggression against it is always ignored and tolerated by NATO. However, Turkish aggression against a nuclear power like France was never going to be sidelined and ignored. Ankara made a blunder thinking that the same aggression it does against Greece would be tolerated by France.

As Turkey is propping up and protecting the Muslim Brotherhood Government of National Accords based in the Libyan capital of Tripoli and their jihadist allies, France is backing its rival, the Libyan National Army. This has been another cause of division between France and Turkey, prompting Macron to say yesterday:

“I think this is a historic and criminal responsibility for someone who claims to be a member of NATO.”

He made the comments after holding talks with German **Chancellor Angela Merkel**, considered Turkey's closest ally in Europe. He added that Turkey's conduct in Libya is “unacceptable to us” and that Ankara needs to “urgently clarify” its stance.

Macron is not hiding his contempt for the Turkish government and NATO at all. He is also the only major Western leader that is open to friendly relations with Russia. France is now pushing for a “European Army” outside of NATO. As the Alliance continues to tolerate Turkey's aggressive actions in the Mediterranean, this could push France further away from NATO, an interesting turn of events considering the past two years there were endless speculations that it was Turkey being pushed away from NATO over its acquisition of the Russian S-400 missile defense system.

NATO's continued appeasement of Turkish aggression that even threatens Member States could be the very catalyst that will see France once again leave the Alliance. Although a [Pew survey from February](#) found that only 37% of Greeks were favorable towards NATO, the second lowest surveyed, the Greek political elite will continue to be subservient to NATO, counter to Greece's own interests and defense concerns. Therefore, it is extremely unlikely that Greece would leave NATO. The same survey found that only 49% of French people were favorable towards NATO, which surely has dropped even further after Macron's most recent statements and Turkish actions against the French Navy. Effectively, as NATO continues to appease Turkish aggression against even fellow Member States, the Alliance is only pushing France out as Macron sets himself up to be the Charles de Gaulle of the 21st century.

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