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Weekly **wire**

'The MENA Region: Shared Insecurity in the Era of Multipolarity Taskforce'



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September 25, 2020

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Eastern Mediterranean

Germany Considers the Exploratory Talks as a Positive Signal in the Eastern Mediterranean Dispute

The spokesperson of the German government Steffen Seibert, in his last press statement, claimed that they were happy the exploratory talks between Greece and Turkey are going well. He also added that this is an important signal to show the disputes in the Mediterranean are going to be solved via international law and dialogue. When asked about the sanctions against Turkey, Seibert said that it wouldn't be appropriate to answer this question before the EU Council meeting.

Turkish President Erdoğan Had A Phone Call with France's Macron

On Tuesday 22nd, the French President Emmanuel Macron and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan had a phone call upon the French leader's request. According to the press release of the Turkish government, the phone call covered the Turkish-French and Turkey-EU relations, primarily on the Eastern Mediterranean, with other regional issues. After the heated statements from both leaders last week, the phone call is considered as a positive development. In the phone call, President Erdoğan highlighted that Turkey wants to solve all the problems via negotiations without waiving any of its sovereign rights. On the other hand, Macron asked for prudence and a constructive approach from Turkey to avoid unilateral moves that create uncertainty.

President Erdoğan Held A Video Conference with European Leaders

President Erdoğan conducted a video conference meeting with German chancellor Angela Merkel and the head of the EU council Charles Michel. In the meeting, Erdoğan appreciated the German mediation and called for a conference that includes Turkish Cypriots and all other relevant parties to boost the peace talks. Moreover, he underlined that the steps taken by the Greek authorities would be critical in the route of these peace talks. In addition to these, the EU called for negotiations between the parties and claimed it would further discuss the conflict and the EU-Turkish relations in the extraordinary summit in Brussels.

Israel Proposed the EastMed Gas Forum to Include the UAE

Israel's Energy Minister Yuval Steinitz has stated that Israel has proposed the EastMed Gas Forum have the UAE in the Forum. He also claimed that the members of the Forum said they would consider the suggestion.

Egyptian and Turkish Intelligence Officials Continue Their Talks

The Turkish-Egyptian negotiations on the Mediterranean is a pretty hot topic. Many analysts forecast that an agreement could be agreed upon soon as it would benefit both sides. With the possible deal, Turkey would gain the first important ally in the Eastern Mediterranean after the Government of National Accord in Libya. On the other hand, the agreement is essential for Egypt to free itself from the pressure of the Gulf States, namely Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

The Libyan Crisis

The Libyan State Oil Company Reopens a New Port

The Libyan state oil company has reopened another port, to resume work in less than a week, as the political truce continues in the civil war between the OPEC members. Additionally, the National Oil Corporation allowed the resumption of exports a few days ago from Hariga and Brega stations. The three eastern ports have been closed since January as part of a wider blockade. Including four other ports which are still closed. The blockade has resulted in more than \$9.8bn in lost revenue, exacerbating electricity and fuel shortages.

Khalifa Haftar Holds Talks with Egypt's Sisi

Khalifa Haftar has arrived in Egypt Tuesday on an unannounced visit. Egypt's Sisi held talks with Libyan officials in Cairo. Aguila Saleh, speaker of the east Libya-based parliament, and Egyptian spy chief Abbas Kamel, were also present at the meeting.

"During the meeting, Sisi was informed of developments in Libya and the efforts of all parties to implement a cease-fire and advance the peace process under the supervision of the UN," the Egyptian presidency said in a statement.

Armed Non-State Actors

Kurdish parties meet up for unity talks in Syria

The Kurdish National Council (KNC) and the Democratic Union Party (PYD) have been negotiating for a joint administration in northeast Syria since November 2019. Unity talks backed by the USA seem to be reached to a certain level, yet various problems are coming from the past. James Jeffrey, US Special Envoy for Syria, met with delegations from both sides in his recent visit to Northeast Syria. The United States plays a conciliating role between the KNC and PYD and has presented a proposal based on the Duhok agreement signed in 2014. However, the KNC and the PYD have many problems waiting to be solved to reach a comprehensive deal. While the KNC blames the PYD for capitalizing on power and threatening its members if they cross into, the PYD accuses the KNC of being linked to Turkey. Moreover, elements that insist on following the PKK leadership within the PYD consider the ongoing negotiations as a threat as the USA is trying to convince the PYD to break ties with the PKK.

The situation in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq is getting more complicated

Turkey's expanding military operation in Iraq is leaving the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) in a difficult situation since the KRI tries to maintain its relations both with Ankara and Baghdad. While Turkey considers its military operations and presence in Iraq as legitimate, Baghdad complains about the military assaults. The Peshmerga officials state that local communities living in border areas suffer as the armed conflict occurs between the Turkish military and PKK. Officials also call on the Iraqi central government to take action against the PKK's presence, especially in Qandil Mountains and Mount Sinjar.

Pro-Iran armed factions can benefit from the withdrawal of the US troops from Iraq

Pro-Iranian armed groups consider the US decision to decrease its military presence in Iraq as a grave victory. Iran's proxies seek to take root more after the United States leaves Iraq. Since the assassination of Qasem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, pro-Iranian groups have targeted US military bases and Western presence in Iraq. The Popular Mobilization Forces, founded by the

fatwa of Ayatollah Ali Sistani in 2014, is an umbrella group composed of various armed factions that played a crucial role in defeating ISIS in Iraq. The PMU reflects tensions and divisions among different factions. Iran linked groups have a significant impact on the PMU and Iraq's domestic policy. However, Sistani's support for Prime Minister Kadhimi's efforts to take action against outlawed militias, sectarian crimes, and corruption can limit pro-Iranian groups' maneuvers in the coming period.

Regimes in Transition

Lebanon

US Sanctions on Hezbollah Related Persons and Firms

The US Treasury Department has imposed new sanctions on a Hezbollah official and two Lebanese companies it associates with Hezbollah. The sanctions have become the main political leverage for the USA to put pressure on Hezbollah, especially in a time when it faces severe economic hardships.

Hezbollah Arms Depot Exploded in South Lebanon

A weapon and arms depot of Hezbollah has blasted in the village of Ein Qana, South of Lebanon. That said, no casualty has been reported. According to Hezbollah officials, the blast was caused by a "technical error." The blast comes amidst increased popular discontent with Hezbollah, especially after the Beirut port explosion and the political and economic turmoil shaking the country.

Tunisia

Ennahda's Ghannouchi responds to a petition issued by 100 members of his party

A petition signed by 100 leading members of Ennahda and demanded Rashid Ghannouchi to vow not to amend the internal guidelines of the party in order to run for a third term as president of the party. Ghannouchi condemned this demand and described it as an exclusionary precondition that aims to overstep the electoral and democratic procedures.

Sudan

Sudanese Officials Met with UAE and USA

According to the state media, high profile Sudanese leaders visited the UAE to conduct separate talks with Emirati and US officials. It is said that the meeting is related to the new normalization process with Israel. With the normalization process, Sudan expects the USA to remove it from the list of “State Sponsors of terrorism” and unlock economic aid for the reconstruction of the country after the devastating floods.

Algeria

A New Committee Has Been Formed to Review Electoral Law

The Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune has formed a new committee to review and reform the electoral law. The main aim of the committee is to build transparent and just elections that would genuinely reflect the demands of the people.



ABOUT AL SHARQ STRATEGIC RESEARCH

A think tank that looks to undertake impartial, rigorous research to promote the ideals of democratic participation, an informed citizenry, multi-stakeholder dialogue and social justice.

Address: Istanbul Vizyon Park A1 Plaza Floor:6 No:68 Postal Code: 34197
Bahçelievler/ Istanbul / Turkey

Telephone: +902126031815

Fax: +902126031665

Email: info@sharqforum.org