

## Headlines:

- **US Congress Throws Erdogan under the Bus**
- **China is no different to the Colonial West**
- **Turkey-US Military Cooperation continuing despite Dispute**

## Details:

### **US Congress Throws Erdogan under the Bus**

Turkey has filed a complaint with the World Trade Organization (WTO) over the America's tariffs on Turkish steel and aluminium amid increasing tensions with Washington. This comes on the back of recent tensions between the White House and Congress where the Republicans in Congress have worked to undermine Donald Trump after he won the Republican nomination and the presidency. The White House was inaugurating the sale of the fifth-generation fighter jet – the F-35, when Congress introduced a bill which banned the transfer of the jet to Turkey using the incarceration of Pastor Andrew Brunson as a basis for the ban. Whilst the Turkish regime released the pastor from prison and placed him under house arrest in order to help Trump, Trump's hand was forced when the Evangelical community in the US took up the pastor's case and their voice was magnified by Congress. Trump's hand was forced as the evangelical community was a major supporter of Trump when he ran for office. Trump has since signed the defence authorisation bill which contained the ban on transferring the F-35 to Turkey and went further with tariffs on Turkish steel and aluminium. Despite Turkey working with the US in Syria, Iraq and a whole host of regional issues, this meant nothing to the US when its strategic interests were in question. Despite Erdogan's closeness to the US, US Congressmen threw Turkey under the bus when it came to Turkey's critical moment.

### **China is no different to the Colonial West**

Tonga, a small island nation with a population of just 107,000 and GDP of \$426 million is the latest country to fall victim to Chinese loans. The country is heavily indebted to Beijing – its debt is 24% of GDP – and the first payment on a loan it took out a decade ago is due in September. But it's trying to delay the payment as long as possible and to even avoid it completely, by banding together with its South Pacific neighbours to pressure China into forgiving the debt it holds over islands in the region. In 2008 and 2010, Tonga took out loans from China of \$120 million. Since then, it has been avoiding repayment. The first payments on the 2008 loan were due in 2013. At the time, Tonga asked China to convert the loan into a grant, but China refused. \$120 million is a very small amount for China considering its lent into the hundreds of billions but Chinese loans to Tonga are part of a much larger Chinese

strategy to entrap South Pacific nations with debt. Between 2006 and 2016, China lent more than \$2.2 billion to countries in the South Pacific. Letting Tonga off the hook would have set a bad precedent and, more important, eliminated China's leverage – which was the point of the loan in the first place. What this shows is China although not imperial or colonial like the West, its intentions are little different to them, although its style is mainly soft power. Sri Lanka is a case in point where its Hambantota Port based on all feasibility studies would not work as it would not turn out a profit. China still gave Sri Lanka the money it needed to develop the port in the form of loans, and as expected when it could not keep up with repayments Sri Lanka was forced to hand over the port and 15,000 acres of land around it for 99 years.

## **Turkey-US Military Cooperation continuing despite Dispute**

The Middle East Eye (MEE) has reported that despite US-Turkey relations being as bad as they are the American military shared intelligence that helped Ankara target a high-ranking Kurdish militant leader, a Turkish diplomat told Middle East Eye. The strike is evidence of the NATO allies' continuing close military collaboration, which spans from Iraq to Syria, despite a row played out in tariffs and tweets that threatens the foundations of the Turkish economy. Ismail Ozden was killed on 15 August after the Turkish air force conducted two bombing operations against the Sinjar Resistance Units (YBS), an offshoot of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), after the Americans shared information with Turkey, bombs were dropped on Ozden's car in Iraq's northern Sinjar area, near the border with Syria. "We support Turkey's counter-PKK efforts in a variety of ways. We recognise the very real threat that the PKK poses to Turkey's security," Eric Pahon, a Pentagon spokesperson, told MEE. From Manbij in Syria to Sinjar in Iraq, to a new Turkish-Iraqi border crossing in the works, four Turkish diplomats told MEE that military cooperation between the two countries is progressing regardless of the public sparring over imprisoned American pastor Andrew Brunson. "The Pentagon is the one that usually cares about Turkey's concerns, and we will keep our cooperation with them on the ground," said one of the diplomats. The Pentagon also stressed that, despite the tensions, the relationship between Washington and the Turkish military remains strong. "There has been no interruption in our relationship with Turkey at all," Colonel Rob Manning told reporters on 20 August. David Satterfield, the State Department's acting Middle East chief and possibly the next US ambassador to Ankara, also said the row between Turkey and the US had not affected the Manbij agreement. "The proceeding upon the Manbij roadmap by all parties involved has been smooth and extremely encouraging. There has been no consequence or impact that we can discern of the other bilateral issues in play here."