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TO BHMA
International edition

Including articles from
FINANCIAL TIMES
THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Miller and Rubio Form Unlikely Alliance

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

By Alex Leary, Vera Bergengruen and Robbie Gramer, The Wall Street Journal

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

WASHINGTON— Marco Rubio was in Stephen Miller's White House office last Friday when an aide walked in and urged Miller to check his phone.

President Trump had just announced on Truth Social that Miller would become his new chief of staff. Miller turned to Rubio and joked that he was now his boss, and the two men shook hands, according to people familiar with the matter.

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REUTERS/MIKE BLAKE

Migrants wait for some food from an aid worker after gathering between the primary and secondary border fences between Mexico and the United States as they await processing by U.S immigration in San Diego, U.S., September 12, 2023.

FINANCIAL TIMES

The great migration slowdown

By Delphine Strauss

It is seven years since Felipa Cedeño fled gang violence in Venezuela and began the long journey northwards towards the US. She never made it.

Crossing the Darién Gap, the notoriously dangerous stretch of muddy jungle that cuts road routes between South and Central America, she fell and broke her spine in 2023. By the time she had recovered the US border was closed, a result of President Donald Trump's anti-immigration drive.

But Cedeño, now living with a legal residence permit in Mexico City, has few regrets. Her 15-year-old son has a scholarship at a respected private school. She has set up a stall selling empanadas in the east of the city and rents a room nearby. "The plan is to stay here," the 52-year-old says. The US, while extreme, is far from alone in its abrupt tightening of immigration policy.

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TO BHMA International edition

Is Mainland Greece Worth Visiting?

By Maria Paravantes

When one thinks of Greece, the first image that comes to mind is silky-sand beaches with emerald waters and lots of sun on charming white-washed Greek islands. Little do travelers know that mainland Greece offers all that... and so much more.

So is mainland Greece worth visiting, you ask? Absolutely! And this is why.

Welcome to "All About Greece", part of "TO VIMA International Edition Travels Greece With You" series. Here, we answer your questions and introduce you to this wonderful country we call home and you call vacation!

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AP PHOTO/K.M. CHAUDARY

People in Lahore, Pakistan, watch fireworks during celebrations of the signing of a trilateral defense agreement between Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Turkey in Mecca, August 8, 2026.

TO BHMA International edition

Can West Asia Defend Itself Without Outside Powers?

By Yanni Moutsios

As conflict tests old alliances and raises fresh doubts about who can guarantee security in West Asia, former Ambassador Asif Durrani argues that the region may need to look closer to home. A veteran of Pakistan's Foreign Service, Durrani spent 32 years in diplomacy, including postings as ambassador to Iran and the United Arab Emirates, and assignments in India, London, Kabul and New York.

In this interview, Durrani makes the case for the Mecca Pact as a regional deterrent—not an anti-Iran bloc—and questions whether foreign military bases have delivered the security their hosts expected. He assesses the limits of military force against Iran, the pressures awaiting its leadership after the conflict, and Pakistan's role in keeping diplomacy alive. The negotiations ahead, he says, will turn on hard questions: trade, sanctions, frozen assets and Iran's nuclear program.

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A sharp fall in the number of migrants arriving in rich countries adds to the fiscal challenges of rapidly ageing populations

The great migration slowdown



REUTERS/DAMIAN SANCHEZ

Reflections of migrants appear in a puddle as they travel with the "Faith and Hope" (Fe y Esperanza) caravan while seeking migration documents that would allow them to continue their journey toward central and northern Mexico in Tapachula, Chiapas, Mexico, October 20, 2026.

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The result is a change that was hard to imagine in the early years of this decade: a sharp fall in migration to many rich economies over the past two years. If the slowdown is sustained, it will have lasting consequences for the shape of the global economy.

In many countries, migration is now the main source of growth in the working-age population, softening the impact of demographic ageing on public finances. Migrants play an outsized role in essential, albeit low-paid sectors like care and also in some of the world's most innovative, high-tech companies. Policies on visas and integration are increasingly important for productivity as well as the quality of life of new arrivals, the existing population and migrants' families back home.

Data published by the Paris-based OECD this month shows just how broad-based the decline in immigration has been. Permanent migration — inflows of foreign nationals on visas leading to settlement — fell in 25 out of the organisation's 37 countries in 2025. Asylum applications dropped sharply. Inflows of international students are also down.

Politicians today look unlikely to soften policy. Over the past decade, populist backlashes and the rise of far-right, anti-immigration parties have led more and more governments to impose ever-tougher border controls and to narrow legal visa routes for work, study and family. Public opinion has hardened even in countries such as Spain or Canada that have historically been far more open to migration-led population growth.

The economist Alan Manning, a former head of the UK's migration advisory committee, compares the cross-country shift in stance on immigration to the inflection in US policy seen in the 1920s, which choked off inflows for 40 years.

"We are going from a period of thinking, 'We must be open, we must be open, we must be open,' to a different, less positive perspective," Manning says.

'A reversal of the story'

The OECD data shows a sharp reversal of the surge in immigration seen immediately after the pandemic, when labour shortages pushed legal migration to all-time highs, universities ramped up international recruitment to shore up their finances and humanitarian crises, such as the war in Syria, drove a surge in legal and unauthorised arrivals.

A year-on-year drop of 1.6 per cent in permanent migration to the OECD in 2025 marks a second year of slowdown, following a fall of almost 5 per cent in 2024.

Some of the sharpest declines were in countries such as the UK, Germany and Canada that have historically been among the main destinations. Ongoing growth was concentrated in southern European countries — Spain, Portugal and Italy — that have embraced work-related migration to offset population decline. Excluding these, permanent migration to OECD countries fell by 8 per cent last year.

The figures reflect a global slowdown in hiring and greater stability in at least some conflict hotspots. But they are also a reflection of sweeping new restrictions in many countries on humanitarian, work and study visa routes.

A tougher regime in the UK includes the closure of most visa routes for non-graduates and much longer routes to settlement. Australia and Canada are clamping down on foreign students and other temporary migrants.

Governments across Europe are returning failed asylum seekers in greater numbers to their origin countries while exploring policies to make refugee status more temporary and conditional.

These policies appear to be having an impact on migration through unauthorised routes. Outside the US, the number of asylum applications was more than a fifth lower in 2025 than in 2024, the OECD said, and in the EU, detections of irregular border crossings were around a third lower.

Meanwhile, inflows of international students to the OECD, which peaked at 2.1mn in 2023, fell sharply to 1.6mn. This reflects new restrictions in the US, UK, Australia and Canada, the big anglophone countries that have traditionally seen higher education as an export industry and a lure for talented graduates who go on to found companies in cutting-edge industries.



REUTERS/PEDRO NUNES

Fatna, 21, collects the laundry at San Antonio attention centre for migrants, where she found shelter after crossing the border pregnant with her 3-year-old son and her husband, amongst the recent mass crossings of migrants from Morocco to Ceuta, Spain, September 30, 2026.

Some analysts see the slowdown as a tempering of post-pandemic excess rather than the onset of a new, more restrictive era. In many countries, inflows remain above pre-pandemic levels.

"The spike during the post-pandemic era was the historical one-off...There was a surge that massively subsided and has adjusted down further by the policy backlash," says Michael Clemens, senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

But with support for the populist Vox party rising in Spain, the far-right leader Marine Le Pen heading opinion polls in France and Italy's Giorgia Meloni facing a challenge from an anti-immigrant hardliner, others see little prospect of governments risking any significant loosening of policy.

The UK's Prime Minister Andy Burnham has declared himself open to rejoining the EU with free movement of labour — but has also endorsed reforms that will leave many migrants waiting a decade or more to settle or become citizens.

In the US, Trump has given mixed messages in the wake of bruising midterm election results. He has admitted his approach to immigration may have been "too tough" for voters to stomach. He has also appointed Stephen Miller, architect of the harshest policies, as his new chief of staff and threatened to double tariffs on Mexico over illegal immigration.

Buying time

Migration is notoriously unpredictable, stopping and starting with turns in the economic cycle or geopolitical events. But if the world does enter a sustained period of lower cross-border mobility, the drop in workers arriving in rich countries will have far-reaching impacts.

For the first time in more than half a century, net migration to the US may have been negative in 2025 and 2026, according to economists at the Brookings Institution — who believe many who lack legal status have chosen to return to their home countries for fear of deportation.

"The US is a big, empty country — rich, English-

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speaking. It wants to remain a world superpower based on GDP, not GDP per capita. It is wildly restrictive," says Manning, who calls the current direction of policy "clearly sub-optimal".

Analysts at the consultancy Oxford Economics, who have modelled a "net zero" migration scenario, say it implies a "terrifyingly steep" decline in labour supply to other rich economies.

UN projections show that without migration, the working-age population in France, Spain and Germany would be more than 10 per cent lower by 2060 than in a central scenario. In the US and UK it would be around 20 per cent lower; in Canada, more than 30 per cent. Governments would have to act faster and go further to manage the fiscal strains of ageing populations.

Migration cannot solve such challenges — migrants age as well and eventually receive state pensions and healthcare. But because people usually arrive when they are of working age, even those with modest earnings tend to pay more in tax than they receive in benefits for some time.

Paul Moroz and Marco Santaniello of Oxford Economics say their modelling depicts an extreme "thought experiment" rather than a likely outcome — but shows how reliant countries are on incomers to sustain growth in GDP and fund the needs of ageing populations.

"A world in which we can't expect economies to grow is a scary one — and one we would expect to see in our lifetimes in a world with zero migration," Moroz says.

A more likely outcome — in which migration slows but does not halt — would still limit growth in GDP and tax revenues for countries putting up barriers. But the more important question is what it would mean for per-capita GDP — a better measure of living standards.

Clemens, the Peterson Institute senior fellow, argued in 2011 that governments attempting to curb migration were leaving "trillion-dollar bills on the sidewalk" as they ignored vast gains to global GDP to focus on whether migrants benefit or disadvantage their own voters.

In theory, migration can make everyone more prosperous, as mobility allows skills to be deployed where they are most valuable.

Highly qualified migrants often fill gaps in engineering, medicine or tech, and can be talented entrepreneurs. Auriol also notes that the many who work in low-paid sectors — such as care or cleaning — can make highly qualified women more likely to stay in paid employment.

In practice, the effects on productivity are mixed, however, and very rapid inflows are often associated with lower GDP per capita in the short term.

This is partly because migration can change the structure of the economy. Migrants often work in low-paid sectors or for lower-paying firms — sometimes allowing these sectors to become a bigger share of the economy than they would if employers had to rely on homegrown labour or invest in automation.

Migrants are also more likely to be in jobs they are overqualified for, and the terms of their visa can make it difficult to move to better opportunities.

Higher education — previously one of the least contentious areas of migration — has become one of the hardest-fought battlegrounds, as soaring student numbers led to concern over poor-quality courses, rent inflation and visas being used as a route into low-paid work.

In India, the world's top country of origin for migration to the OECD, young people are now struggling to navigate the ever-shifting rules on student and post-study visas and determine whether to stake their families' fortunes on overseas studies that might no longer pay off.

In Mumbai, Tia Kamath, a 20-year-old biomedical student, has dreamt since she was a child of studying and living abroad, particularly in the US. But now she is pivoting to other countries as she worries about rising costs, visa restrictions and anti-immigrant sentiment.

"I'm OK with any country as long as I'm getting the work," she told the FT at a recent student recruitment event. Kamath is eyeing options to study food technology at higher education institutions in Ireland, Germany and the Netherlands, hoping to later land a job in research and development in the food and beverage industry.

America's not got talent

Many governments are now trying to balance political and fiscal pressures by toughening controls on irregular and low-skilled migration, while creating a plethora of selective, fast-track "talent" visas to pull in high earners.

Madeleine Sumption, director of Oxford university's Migration Observatory, argues that for governments worrying about the fiscal pressures of ageing populations, the answer is not to pursue population growth but to target high taxpayers, "migration with the most impact on the public finances".

Australia — although it is now clamping down on international students and so-called backpacker visas — has doubled its revenues from visa fees within a few years, to A$6bn, notes Henry Sherrell, a former government adviser.

The US is the striking exception. The Trump administration has relaxed wage rules for migrant farm workers and increased quotas on visas for other low-skilled workers. But it is proposing sky-high fees and tougher scrutiny of the H-1B visas that launched many of the biggest names in US tech into their careers — while making it much harder for foreign students to work in the US on graduating.

"These are the people founding AI firms, developing AI technologies... a third of the Stem PhDs in the US are not just foreign-born but also got their degrees here," says Clemens, who argues the restrictions on students will mean "impairing US innovation and productivity for a generation".

America's loss may be other countries' gain.

Universities in Italy, Germany and Ireland are seeing international enrolments rise as the big English-speaking destinations become harder to reach. That could help countries like Germany where language barriers make it harder to attract skilled migrants who can more readily work in English.

Even Mexico — whose poorest states are acutely exposed to a loss of remittances from the US — could see some benefits from the Trump administration's deportation policies, if returning migrants from across the region choose to settle and put newly acquired skills to work.

Gretchen Kuhner, director at the civil society group Imumi, says organisations that previously supported migrants on their journey north are now pivoting to support for integration in Mexico, as people who have given up on the US disperse across cities and states. Younger people fill posts in the call centre industry, work informally in markets or set up small businesses, while those who win legal residence status go into formal work in sectors like retail, Kuhner says.

Given Mexico's fast-ageing population, "a new wave of return migration could help to mitigate the decline of the demographic dividend", according to analysis by the Bank of Spain. Economists at the bank said that returning deportees could boost Mexico's per capita GDP by up to 2 percentage points by 2028.

Cedeño, who heard recently that a friend driving for Uber in the US had been picked up by ICE, now feels God saved her from being stuck on the wrong side of the border.

"To be living like that? To be running, fleeing? No, mami, that's not a life."



AP PHOTO/CHARLES REX ARBOGAST

Illinois Institute of Technology student Wofai Ewa, originally from Nigeria, poses for a portrait at the institute's library in Chicago, September 18, 2020.

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Can West Asia Defend Itself Without Outside Powers?

Former Pakistani ambassador Asif Durrani calls for regional security cooperation as the Mecca Pact gains momentum amid the war with Iran

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SAUDI PRESS AGENCY VIA AP

From left, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif sign a trilateral defense agreement in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, August 7, 2026.

What is the future of the Mecca Agreement?

This agreement is actually defensive in nature. Initially, it was a bilateral agreement between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia in September last year. Subsequent dialogue, brought in Turkey. This has been, welcomed by Iran because it expressed its policy of having defense of the region by the regional countries rather than outsiders. You have seen the kind of death and destruction that has taken place. Destruction of infrastructure, especially on the Iranian side but at the same time, American bases in the Gulf States also became the target because they were used by the United States against Iran. That subsequently caused a lot of problems as well as destruction in those Gulf States. Therefore, the question being asked is what these bases were for. If they could not protect. The primary idea was that they would give protection to those Gulf States which would offer the air bases, the naval forces. It is better that you adopt measures which may act as a deterrence against any aggression. This is the spirit behind the Mecca Pact and hopefully, though it is in the initial stages, I think things are coming in place. Its secretariat has been decided which would be based in Riyadh, and the first secretary general is from Pakistan.

You said that this agreement has been welcomed by Iran. However, the idea behind the Mecca Pact was actually to join forces with Pakistan, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia against Iran, or is this not the spirit of the agreement?

This is certainly not the case. Without the inclusion of Iran in this Mecca Pact, I think this pact would not be complete. Geographically it makes sense if Iran is also part of this pact. And this would, in fact, give further strength in having a stable West Asia and it would encourage the countries of the region to have their own defense system rather than relying on external sources.

Saudi Arabia has been attacked by Houthis. Why doesn't Pakistan and Turkey support Saudi Arabia against the Houthis, if that is the idea behind the Pact?

Saudi Arabia's tensions with Houthis is not new. Those are very much there since 2013 onward like we have our adversarial relationship with India since 1947 onwards. We all have inherited these issues. Here we are talking about the larger picture as far as deterrence and defense is concerned. With regard to Houthis, that is there in Saudi Arabia, along with the UAE, they fought together against Yemen, and there is a faction fighting going on in Yemen. They are divided into President Saleh's forces and the Houthis. This is a historical tension between these two groups ruling in Yemen. Saudi Arabia is supporting the government, which is also recognized at the international level. Houthis are declared, as a foreign terrorist organization. We have also declared them as a foreign terrorist organization and we have expressed our full solidarity to Saudi Arabia. We have condemned the attacks which have taken place. When you talk about Iran, it has no fight with Saudi Arabia. The attacks which took place were on the American bases. When you talk about the deterrence value of the Mecca Pact, it means that it is a statement given to any possible aggressors, to either of the countries that these countries are united and they will respond together.

How would you describe the situation as it stands between the US, Iran and Israel? Is there a way out of it anytime soon?

It takes two to tango. This war was initiated by Israel, followed by the United States, so, Iran had to adopt its defense measures. Despite all military might, of Israel or the United States, they could not achieve the objective they wanted. Initially, the regime changed. They could remove the faces, but the system is now well entrenched and it immediately replaced the leadership, whether it was political leadership or it was military leadership. Until the time the boots are on the ground, I don't think that the United States can ever think of achieving their objectives from a military point of view. From a diplomatic point of view, I think the United States have been seen that they are not a factor of stability in the region, which is why our states are considering that the United States have failed in providing protection to countries which had grown bases for the United States.

There have been rumors about boots on the ground, but that would entail some sort of, rebellion from the Iranian people in order for a complete change to take place in Iran. Do you think that the Iranian people are ready to rise up and change the regime as it stands right now?



EPA/YAHYA ARHAB

Houthi fighters hold machine guns during a campaign to mobilize more fighters amid an escalation of fighting in Sana'a, Yemen, September 10, 2026.

This was the objective of the United States. They thought that perhaps people will come out on the street, but the reverse had happened, and those who were opposed to the regime have also rallied behind the flag. Look at the Iranian nationalism, which has been very much there, despite the fact that they may have ideological differences. With regard to overall change in Iran, internal change, would only happen if, there would be challenges like unemployment, and sanctions which have had an impact, ever since the clergy took power in Iran. And then the kind of inflation they have and food inflation has touched 128% and it is growing. That would be the day after scenario. Once this war is over, the biggest challenge for the Iranian leadership would be to provide jobs, to do reconstruction according to the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding of approximately $300 million. How these resources would be made available is yet to be decided. Ultimately, I hope sense will prevail and the two sides will sit down and evolve a model whereby they can live peacefully, even if they may entertain their differences.

How would you describe Pakistan's role in bringing those two sides together?

The very fact that the United States and Iran sat across the table face to face, and they could agree on the memorandum of understanding, was due to this mediation. But don't forget that the 47 years of mistrust cannot be removed with one sitting or one MOU. There are to be some assurances, bilaterally as well as for the region.

What do you think Iran's day after will look like following the replacement of the regime? Who might be a leader that can unite the Iranian people and lead the country into a peaceful future?

I don't think that Iran is disunited in the present circumstance that they are passing through a war phase with the United States. There are opposition people, but they're sitting outside their country.

Have you personally met with the Supreme Leader?

I had the opportunity of meeting Ayatollah Khamenei twice as the ambassador while I was accompanying our high level delegations, but he would remain always in the background. He was never in the forefront, but he was running his father's office.

Iran has launched some threats against European countries should they interfere or they get involved in the fight against Iran. Do you think that Tehran is ready to realize those threats?

The idea was that should any of the countries provide any assistance to US forces or use the US bases on their ground to launch any kind of operations or somehow intervene and attack Iran, even using airplanes or any kind of weapons, those countries would be targeted. I think Iran is justified. You put yourself into its shoes. If a country is providing help to the United States and the United States is attacking Iran, so naturally that country also becomes a target or enemy territory. Its facilities become enemy territory. What you have seen in the Gulf States and their bases provided to the United States and those bases were used to attack Iran. So those became naturally as enemy territories. Iran has not responded to something unreal.



REUTERS/CARLOS BARRIA

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, left, and White House Chief of Staff Stephen Miller attend a trade deal signing ceremony between the US and Thailand in Paranaque, Metro Manila, Philippines, November 17, 2026.

Once Bitter Rivals, Stephen Miller and Marco Rubio Form Unlikely Alliance

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Now 'besties,' the men went to war over immigration policy a decade ago

Continued from Page One

It was a crowning moment for one of Trump's longest-serving advisers—and it also offered a view into the unlikely alliance between Miller and Rubio, who more than a dozen years earlier had been on opposite sides of a bitter fight over immigration policy.

Today, their relationship is one of the most under-the-radar—and consequential—of Trump's second term. It pairs Miller's hard-edge bureaucratic muscle with Rubio's diplomatic experience and skill for selling contentious policies at home and abroad. Now, with Miller poised to wield more power as chief of staff, the two men will play leading roles in shaping the remainder of Trump's presidency—and the battle over the future of his movement.

Often huddled in Miller's West Wing office, Rubio and Miller helped engineer some of the most audacious foreign-policy moves of Trump's second term, from his push to acquire Greenland to the deadly strikes on suspected drug boats and the raid that captured Venezuelan leader Nicolá Maduro. Rubio, 55 years old, and Miller, 41, have frequently made the case to Trump together, framing proposals in terms they knew would resonate with the president. Rubio's influence is amplified by his dual role as secretary of state and national security adviser.

"Our wives joke about you've got to be careful not to let Marco and Stephen be together too much because they're going to come up with some wild idea. We motivate each other," Miller said in an interview from his office this week.

Katie Miller, Miller's wife, described the men as "besties," adding that she often finds herself chatting with Rubio's wife, Jeanette, when their husbands are on the phone with each other in the evenings. Not long after the Venezuela raid, Rubio and Miller were dining together at Mar-a-Lago when Katie Miller came in and handed them each a bag. Inside were matching gray Nike tracksuits, like the one Maduro wore when U.S. forces captured him. Rubio later wore his on Air Force One.

The blowout midterm election has renewed speculation about Rubio's own presidential ambitions. Allies have publicly and privately tried to draft him into a 2028 run, despite Rubio's past pledges to support Vice President JD Vance should he enter the race.

'The Rubio hit'

Rubio arrived in Washington in January 2011 as a hotshot Republican senator from Florida, riding the energy of the right-wing tea-party movement. Two years later, the son of Cuban immigrants joined a bipartisan Gang of 8 to tackle immigration reform. But the 844-page bill came under unrelenting attack by hard-line conservatives.

Miller, then a 27-year-old adviser to Republican Sen. Jeff Sessions of Alabama, emerged as one of the bill's fiercest antagonists, working behind the scenes to undermine Rubio.

Miller saw Rubio as a politician whose ambitions had to be stopped, according to emails with staff of Breitbart News that became public in 2019. The fight elevated Miller from a little-known congressional staffer into a well-known immigration hard-liner. "Really important that you got the Rubio hit in there," Miller wrote in one message in July 2015. He repeatedly pressed for negative coverage, describing Rubio as dishonest to a "pathological" degree and as "an extremist who wants unlimited immigration."

When Rubio suspended his presidential campaign in March 2016, Miller took credit for helping to bring him down. While Rubio had warned that Trump would ruin the GOP, he found ways to work with the new president after winning re-election to the Senate. He carved out a role as one of Trump's chief advisers on Latin America policy and began to win the president's trust.

To the surprise of some aides, Rubio also found common ground with Miller, who by then was one of Trump's most influential advisers. Rubio was impressed by the arguments in some of Trump's speeches, many of which had been written by Miller. Rubio and Miller also shared a grasp of immigration law and could debate its finer points long after others lost interest, according to people who worked with them at the time.

Miller's efforts to enact his hard-line immigration policies overlapped with Rubio's longstanding focus on Latin America. He worked with the senator to champion a domestic economic agenda that included expanding the child tax credit.

After Trump left office in 2021, Rubio continued to remake his political identity, sharpening his focus on the America First-style populism rising in the GOP. He stayed in touch with Miller, occasionally consulting on speeches, according to people familiar with the relationship. In 2023, Miller hosted an event to promote Rubio's new book, an indictment of globalism. Miller called Rubio "my good friend, principled conservative leader, beloved senator from Florida." Some former Rubio aides were stunned by the warmth he expressed.

"It's certainly not something a lot of people would have predicted," Rubio said in an interview of his friendship with Miller.



AP PHOTO/MANUEL BALCE CENETA

White House Deputy Chief of Staff Stephen Miller, White House aide Natalie Harp and Secretary of State Marco Rubio, board Air Force One at Joint Base Andrews, Maryland, US, November 6, 2026

Common ground on Latin America

When Rubio first walked into the White House as Trump's new secretary of state in January 2025, some officials familiar with their history were uncertain about how they would work together.

Rubio quickly put the State Department's machinery to work for Miller's immigration crackdown—aggressively revoking visas, negotiating deportation deals and proposing new restrictions of his own. The moves cemented his place in the president's inner circle, administration officials said.

Two weeks after Trump's inauguration, Rubio flew to El Salvador to negotiate a deal championed by Miller under which hundreds of U.S. deportees would be sent to a notorious maximum-security prison for gang members.

Rubio also worked closely with Miller to revoke visas of foreign students involved in pro-Palestine protests, adopting the same combative rhetoric as his onetime adversary. "Every time I find one of these lunatics, I take away their visa," Rubio declared in March 2025.

Their partnership soon extended to an unprecedented use of U.S. military force that served both men's goals—a campaign to strike alleged drug-smuggling boats in the Caribbean, which helped Miller's war on cartels and Rubio's efforts to pressure the Venezuelan government. They found an ally in Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, who carried out the campaign.

The military campaign raised concerns among officials in Rubio's agency, some of whom questioned the legality of the strikes and grew increasingly uneasy about a decision-making process that left little room for questions or dissent.

Some who have worked for Rubio wonder whether his relationship with Miller—who is seen as the architect of the hard-line agenda that some Republicans blame for the party's midterm losses—could become a future political liability for the secretary of state.

By the summer of 2025, Miller and Rubio had zeroed in on Venezuela. While Trump was reluctant to revisit regime change efforts in the country after failing to oust Maduro in his first term, the two found ways to appeal to him through his focus on cracking down on drug flows. They argued to Trump that Maduro shouldn't be treated as just an authoritarian leader but a drug kingpin who posed a direct threat to the U.S. and should be brought to justice, U.S. officials said.

At a lavish New Year's Eve bash at Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida, the two men were in high spirits, with Rubio being filmed singing along to Pitbull's "Fireball." Trump had approved the raid to capture Maduro, and U.S. Special Forces were standing by and waiting for favorable weather. Three days later, Rubio and Miller were at Trump's side in a makeshift war room as they watched U.S. commandos descend on Caracas.

The old feud between Rubio and Miller has settled into something of a family joke. During a recent gathering with the Rubios, Katie Miller reminded Jeanette Rubio of the days when her husband lambasted the Florida senator over immigration.

"Katie, do not bring up unpleasant times," Miller quipped.

TO BHMA International edition

Spyros Kotsalas: How to say everything with four colors

The Greek painter discusses his relationship with Byzantine art, the influence of nature and the search for meaning through painting

By Panos Kougias



PHOTOS BY PANOS KOUGIAS/ TO VIMA INTL EDITION

"We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep," says Prospero in Shakespeare's The Tempest. The phrase came to mind when I saw Spyros Kotsalas's exhibition, "Minor Route," at the Alma Gallery. In one of the paintings, the red of the mountains pulls your eye in right away, until you discern among them a small reclining figure that could be sleeping. It is through compositional "seams" like this that the painter speaks to us. The way he lends such gravity to a motionless body that occupies such little space reveals a highly original and sincere "sanctity of painting."

In our conversation, Kotsalas uses the word "theosis" to talk about humanity's need to rediscover its relationship with the transcendent. A little later, to explain what fascinates him about Byzantine painting, he refers to an icon depicting the Baptism in which a single mountain can be green on one side and pink on the other. His profound cultural refinement is evident both in the naturalness with which he transitions from a matter of faith to such a specific observation about color, and in the way he recognizes the same freedom in the composition of a Byzantine icon and the work of modern artists.

Needless to say, this freedom is evident in his own palette, too. Kotsalas says there is no story that cannot be told with four colors. He uses the same ochre for a human figure as he does to render the soil. It is in this kinship between body and earth that I discern what is perhaps his painting's most enduring quest: to make palpable, with the most minimal means possible, how deeply a person can belong to a place when a minor route falls to them. Which may also be why the meaning he ultimately ascribes to the time spent following that route matters so much.

What set 'Minor Route' in motion?

When one show ends, I almost always get an idea for the next one right away. In this case, my previous exhibition was about human relationships—or, rather, our failure to relate to one another. As I was finishing the work for it, I knew it was the existential question I wanted to explore next. The question marks along the journey—the whys. What the reason is, what the meaning is, where that meaning comes from. And in this framework, I am also preoccupied with the concept of theosis—of sanctity. Everyone finds the source of their own meaning. I believe that when a person becomes one with their source, they rediscover their true substance. They become whole. So I consider it crucial that, as people, we commune both with one another and with something that transcends us.

What changes about the human figure when you take it out of the urban fabric of the previous exhibition and put it in the natural landscape?

Back then, I had chosen empty, abstract spaces to allow the human presence to resonate. Now, we have almost the exact same figure once again. I am interested in the person in motion, in the people of every era. Wherever the figure is absent, its presence is declared by buildings, whether it be a city or a structure in nature. Mountains, rivers, and the sea are the constants. It is through these that Man makes his journey; and, no matter how hard it may be to accept, that journey is short. Beyond that, there is the purely painterly issue. Nature possesses a certain grace; it has curves. Humans move in straight lines. The vertical elements of the buildings engage in a dialogue with the curves of the mountains. That's what interests me in the composition.

Which elements of the exhibition stem from your childhood in Chalkida?

I lived in Chalkida until I was eighteen. There are towers in the area, which I could see from our house. There's also a river running through the town, the Lilas. All those elements have entered my work in an abstract form. For this exhibition, I felt I needed to go back, to look at my own route through life. I started with my childhood, because those are the memories that define us. I included a lot of autobiographical elements in my work in the past, too—things from the land on which I was raised. The wood and stone, the soil.

You've said you work with just a few colors...

One source that feeds my work is the Greek way. Starting in ancient Greece and continuing through Byzantium, Greek painters have traditionally worked with limited palettes. You can say everything with four colors. We just need to be creative with what we have. From the very start, I have gravitated toward earth tones, grays, ochres, and deep reds. Here, because the visual language is more archetypal, the colors of Man and Nature are often the same. Just as a mountain can be red, so a person can also be entirely blue or ochre. It depends on what the particular work needs, on the harmony achieved in each new painting.

What do you retain from Byzantine painting in your work?

I am always struck by the freedom with which it depicts the world on a surface. In a Baptism, you might have a mountain that is green on one side and pinkish-red on the other. This is the mindset I adopt, through the visual language I have arrived at. Today, various classes focus on the Byzantine painting technique, on how the layers of color are applied. The most important thing of all, however, is the painting itself. And when I entered the world of modern art at the Athens School of Fine Arts (ASFA), I found something that interested me just as much. Modern artists do away with the false third dimension and work in two dimensions and with an incredible freedom in both color and composition. I find myself at the intersection of these two worlds.

There is a work entitled Talthybius Sleeps in your show. What was it about this image that interested you?

We encounter Talthybius in various works, but primarily in The Trojan Women. In Euripides' tragedy, he foretells the women's fate, telling them of the horrors that lie ahead. I thought that, in order to steel himself for what he must do, he has first to sleep. There is something else, too. I feel that the choices we have made have sent us hurtling toward disaster. We see it in the environment, in violence in society. And it's as though the person who tells us "what you are doing is destructive" is somehow absent. This is the sense in which I use Talthybius.

How did you settle on the title 'Minor Route' ?

I was considering several titles. I settled on this one because it conveyed the urgency of the questions I pose. Our passage through life is brief. I must find the "whys," the reasons and the meanings. And it's important that we take joy in our everyday lives. We need to appreciate the gifts we have been given. Because Nature





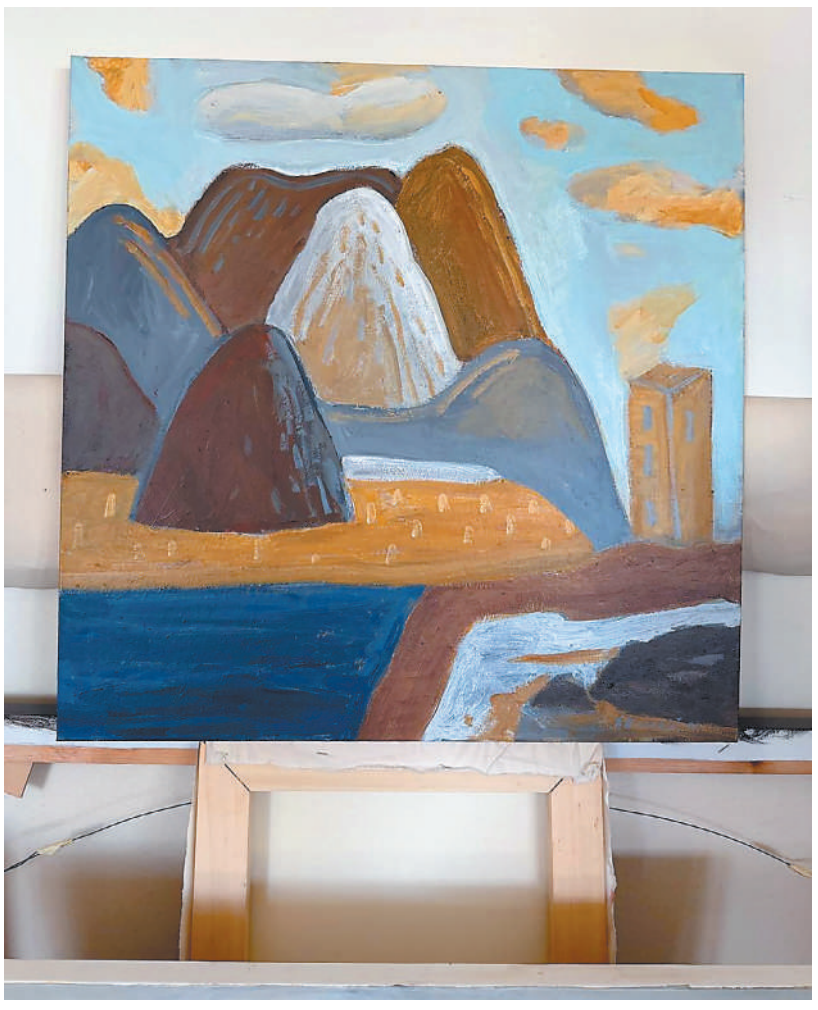
is the greatest gift of all. If you feel like that about Nature, you won't throw your plastic bottle away, you won't toss a cigarette butt that could set a mountain ablaze. We're behaving like we're the last beings on earth. We don't think about the other generations who will come after us; that they should be able to enjoy the same beauty we enjoyed.

You studied under Vangelis Dimitreas and Nikos Kessanlis. Is there a particular moment from those years you remember with total clarity?

Dimitreas was a very good art theorist. He used to tell us we had to read for three hours a day. I already loved reading, but it was good that he set it as a condition. Because this was how you transcended art history into its philosophy, into what underlies the movements of any given era. Kessanlis was also very open-minded. It is traditional for students at the ASFA to do something very close to their professor's work. But I was doing work that was completely different from both of theirs. Kessanlis was actually enthusiastic about what I was doing at the time. I was working with very few colors, and he liked that what I was doing engaged with things that were happening abroad, in Europe and America. I remember them both with gratitude.

In 2015, you worked on the opening ceremony of the European Games, which Dimitris Papaioannou directed in Baku. What exactly did you do there?

Dimitris Papaioannou and I were at the ASFA at the same time. He is a very good painter. He had the idea that the sets should be grounded in the country's tradition, in their miniatures, which have many features in common with our own Byzantine painting. I was able to read them using those tools. In Baku, I undertook a massive construction on-site in the center of the stadium. The ground was flat, and this suddenly rose up from below. It had to be painted in a specific way because images would be projected onto it. I initially went to supervise the work. At some point, I said to Dimitris, "I'll do it myself." He said, "You're crazy." I got an assistant to prepare the colors for me, and I started painting. When I was finished, I asked the architects to tell me what the surface area was. It was 2,300 square meters. It had taken me five months.





What is it that still moves you to paint?

For me, painting is a profound inner need. I have always painted obsessively, even as a child. The other kids would be out playing, and I'd shut myself up somewhere and paint. My family had noticed and given me a large space of my own. I already knew I was going to be a painter. It's the only place I'm at peace. Even on holiday, I find it difficult to sit in the sun, to drink coffee, stroll around or do nothing. I want to have my sketchbook with me and to be doing something. For the most part, I have painted the Attic landscape and the Cyclades, which are very close to it. I often say that if they told me to go to Germany to paint a uniform forest, all the same kind of tree and the same color, I probably wouldn't be able to. It's the starkness that captivates me here. A stone, a rock, a thyme bush, a small cypress further along, a pine tree. Experientially, I can understand why the ancient Greeks and the Byzantines chose these palettes, this way of painting. The landscape dictates it, in a way.

What troubles you about painting today?

The concept is often assigned a great deal of importance in contemporary art. What interests me is how this concept takes on form within the artwork. I remember an installation and a colleague telling me to read the text beside it. I wanted to stand in front of the work first and see what it made me feel. For me, that's where the interest lies—in seeing how form and content meet.

I am also interested in how the form changes when the painter wants to better understand what they are seeing. The Cubists, for example, wanted to rotate the vase of flowers, view five sides of it and fit them all into the same artwork. The new form emerges from this need to see more in an object with which they are already familiar.

When you revisit an old painting of yours, are you tempted to tinker with it?

I see things I might work on differently today. Something I would add or take away. But I never intervene after the fact. I want to respect who I was at that time. That was how I felt then, which is why I did it that way. It is also difficult to recapture the feeling and conditions of the moment you were working on it. So I leave it just as it is.

What could someone who has just seen the exhibition say that would give you joy?

It makes me happy when people connect with my work. When someone finds a piece of their own inner world and connects it to what they are seeing. It could be a memory, a feeling. Everyone finds something different. I try to leave the artworks open, and usually keep what prompted them to myself. I want to leave the other person space to find something of their own. That connection gives me a reason to carry on.

What does painting still have to teach you?

It never ends. I have often thought that, in place of a CV, I could simply write "I am a student of painting." That's how I feel. The further you go, the more you see how little you know. You learn the techniques at art school; you learn the chemistry of the colors. As a phenomenon, art is limitless. We are so small before something so immense. It calls for humility and for care.

The exhibition "Minor Route" will be on at the Alma Gallery Athens (24A Skoufa St, Kolonaki) until 28 November 2026. Curators: Maria Albani and Spyros Kotsalas.

Is Mainland Greece Worth Visiting?

Thought the Greek islands were amazing? Wait till you see the mainland

Continued from Page One

THE BEST OF ALL WORLDS

One thing few people know about mainland Greece: its award-winning beaches can easily compete with those on the Greek islands. So if you think it's all mountains. Think again.



Yes, there are ski resorts in the winter for the mainland Greece traveler. Kalavryta, Greece.

Places like **Halkidiki** up north, **Pelion** in central Greece, and **Parga** on the Ionian coast are home to some of the most incredible beaches in the country. And yes, there's a shore for every taste. In other words, mainland Greece is so diverse that travelers will never run out of things to do and places to discover.



So beaches aside, we're talking everything from traditional mountain villages and sleepy fishing towns to unique landscapes like the Meteora rock formations and the ancient sites you've read about in myths and books.





PLACES TO VISIT

In all honesty, the list could go on forever, but below I recommend some of the areas that should definitely be on your bucket lists.

- **First off, Mount Olympus:** the legendary home of the Greek gods, a hiking lovers pick, and a true nature paradise.
- **Arcadia:** a short drive from Athens, with dozens of traditional villages, monasteries, village feasts and archaeological sites.
- **Next up, Mani:** rugged, wild, carved in stone, with a back-to-basics feel, ideal for camping fans and carefree types.
- **Epirus:** a nature and outdoor-sports paradise, unique stone architecture and all-night dance festivals.
- **The Meteora monasteries** perched on top of towering rock formations rising from the Thessaly plain. A must for the religious travelers, and yes, the climbers too.
- **Nafpaktia:** an underrated destination boasting amazing beaches and the true mountain life experience.
- And of course the towns of **Kavala, Xanthi, Florina, Karpenisi, and Kastoria,** each with its own character, history, and reasons to explore.

What's more, many mainland destinations are also less crowded in the summer, more affordable and full of character.

This is where you can start your day with a hike in the woods, enjoy a coffee in a traditional mountain village at noon, and enjoy a fresh fish dinner by the seaside in the evening.

Mainland Greece is where you'll find dozens of open-air village festivals (panegyria) in the summer, ski resorts in the winter, traditional Easter celebrations in the spring, and tsipouro distillation festivities in the fall.



So before you plan your next trip to Greece, spend a couple of days in Athens, and then make sure to head to the mainland for some authentic Greek action. Who knows? You may just like it even more than the famous islands.

WHO IS IT FOR?

Mainland Greece is for the adventure lover, the history fan, the sports enthusiast, those of you seeking real, genuine experiences. It's about slow, meaningful travel. And ideal for road trip lovers, not to mention happy campers.

Some things to keep in mind: expect longer distances. Public transport isn't always the most convenient way to get around. Mainland Greece is best explored by car, giving you the freedom to do so at your own pace.

Although many mainland destinations like Halkidiki do have sexy beach bars and exciting nightlife, most of the spots you'll discover will bring you closer to a more authentic side of Greece. Think "live like a local".

**Send your questions to Maria Paravantes at mparavantes@tovima.com*