

## *ANTI-DETENTE SCHEMES IN EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN\**

Prof. Dr. Türkkaya ATAÖV

Public opinion has been mobilized to a degree that should rule out now the repetition of the question "Can détente survive without arms control?"<sup>1</sup> Doubtless, détente cannot flourish under the conditions of a lack of any arms control measures. More people now comprehend that détente is also a process in permanent development. Admittedly, it signifies an evolution from "Cold War" to security, but it is not security itself. It may indicate an easing of tension, but it does not equate with the elimination of those very tensions. Hence, in the process of détente, one may succumb to inferior levels as well as advance towards real security.

In a larger framework, détente certainly means multifarious agreements in science, trade or cultural exchange, but its effectiveness will be greatly reduced if the arms race is not halted. It is the armed forces, military bases, alliances and the division of vast territories to blocs that keep military threat alive.

Although the conception of détente is universal, because of the weight and responsibility of the great powers in international relations, universal détente cannot be achieved without détente between them. Hence, one would surely welcome any easing of tensions between the great powers. But if détente is an objective requirement of the evolution of international relations, it follows that it is not merely a matter of bipolar relationship. If it had been so, it could

---

\* This paper was presented to the "Eastern Mediterranean Security and Cooperation Seminar" in Dubrovnik (Yugoslavia), held on 27-29 June 1980.

<sup>1</sup> Among others, this question was asked and ably answered by a Rumanian colleague in a well-known Yugoslav journal: Sergiu Verona, "Can Détente Survive Without Arms Control?" *Review of International Affairs*, No. 66 (December 5, 1977), pp. 9-13

have readily progressed into its very opposite. By way of its very nature, détente evolves also to regional level. It needs to extent not only to all areas of international relations (political, military, economic, cultural and the like) but also to all regions of the world. Outside Europe, local wars that brake up seem to be pregnant with the danger of escalating into wider military confrontations, and fresh disputes between states, in which third powers are also involved, increase in frequency.

While it looks logical that détente ought to be extended to all regions, we see fresh disputes erupting constantly and military interventions designed, in the periphery of Europe. More people accept today that détente fell to its lowest ebb in the aftermath of attempts to settle the Middle Eastern crisis within the Camp David framework. Other events may also be blamed for this negative turn. For instance, the developments in South-East Asia, at the beginning of 1979, are perhaps another source of an outstanding crisis. There are many other international problems virtually frozen, and practically nothing is being done to build the New International Economic Order.

But the Eastern Mediterranean stands out as the most acute hot-bed of militarist danger that the international community ought to recognize as such. This is so, in terms of the unsolved Palestine question and attempts to utilize bases for purposes alien to the interests of the people living in that area.

The arms build-up for the countries of the Middle East is fraught with dangers from draining their resources to possibilities to involve them in military conflicts. Such militarization, of course, is a source of profits for the monopolies and it helps imperialism to bolster its positions in the developing countries. It should be stressed, within this context, that with the conclusion of a separate Egyptian-Israeli agreement, the situation in the Middle East has further deteriorated. No just and lasting peace can be built on the underlying concept of American oil security and on a pyramid of arms.

The plan for a "Pax Americana" in the Middle East also accords with the interests of Israeli expansionism. Even some Arab monarchies, generally thought of as allies of Washington, seem to be aware of the dangers with which such plans are fraught. The truth is that Israel is receiving new combat planes, tanks, armoured carriers, artillery pieces and missiles; she has been allocated more financial means to construct new air bases. Israeli generals have, several times, stated that Israel has military and technological preponderance over

the Arab countries, and that she can wage a war against them, even without American support.

There is hardly any exaggeration in the following statement: "Thirty years after the violent imposition of the Zionist state onto Palestine, the 'Promised Land' has been turned into the world's largest -in relation to its population and territory- and most aggressive military store."<sup>2</sup> Israel has become, in respect to her size, population and G.N.P., the biggest merchant of weapons in the entire world and perhaps the sixth in terms of absolute figures. *Le Monde diplomatique*, for instance, writes: "Israeli military industry has developed out of the proportions of the country."<sup>3</sup> The Israeli leaders, sometimes, argue that the militarization of their state has made them more "independent". Were it not for extensive American support and supply, far beyond the resources of the small Jewish community there, Israel could not carry on with her course in the international arena. For instance, Israel's "Merkava" tank has been made possible only through an additional "aid" program granted by President Carter. American military aid has been so substantial that even General George Brown, the Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs-of-Staff, uttered his concern that Israel was becoming "a military burden for the U.S."<sup>4</sup>

The military apparatus in Israel is inseparably entangled with the political and business establishments. The military-industrial complex overgrows the economic basis of the country. The statement of General Dayan to the effect that "since 1936 all that we achieved was through the force of arms"<sup>5</sup> is another clear indication that reliance on military force and terror has been the essence of that state. The African liberation fighters in Zimbabwe and Namibia are killed with the guns manufactured in Israel, which, ignoring international arms boycotts, has been supplying the racist white minority governments with weapons and military know-how. South Africa, Rhodesia, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, Ecuador, El Salvador and Chile have been among the known clients of Israel. The U.S. arms monopolies utilize Israel as willing intermediary to channel American weapons to régimes and forces which that country prefers not to supply openly. The Israeli and the South African militarists

---

<sup>2</sup> P.L.O., Palestine, Beirut, May 15, 1978, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> October 19, 1978.

<sup>4</sup> *International Herald Tribune*, October 22, 1978.

<sup>5</sup> Uri Avnery, *Israel Without the Zionists*, New York, 1968, p. 47.

also cooperate closely in the construction of nuclear weapons. The two have refused to sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

The following statement of General Dayan was reported in *Le Monde*: "The future should include the possibility for Israel of being totally independent of external control over its nuclear arms."<sup>6</sup> The U.S. had contributed to the construction of the first Israeli nuclear reactor in Nahal Sorek. It will be remembered that the insecurity felt by world public opinion intensified in 1965 in the wake of the mysterious disappearance in the U.S. uranium that ended up in Israel. The French also helped the building of an atomic center in the Negev town of Dimona. Through her direct links with South Africa, Israel utilized the uranium, enriched in the new nuclear reactor near Pretoria. Israel also exploited the minerals in Namibia.

It is with this entity, the Sadat régime in Egypt has come to terms with. The signing of the Camp David accords as well as the ensuing agreement has created a new triangular relationship between the United States (forming the apex of this triangle), Egypt and Israel. The U.S. Government has now apparently induced Egyptian leadership to join Israel in playing the role of policemen defending American interests in the region. Quite a few Western sources indicate expanded American presence in the area.<sup>7</sup> U.S. presence may be through stationing of American troops in the West Bank or in the establishment of air bases in the Sinai or in a military pact between Israel and the U.S.A. It is also suggested that the U.S. station naval ships permanently in Haifa and Alexandria to defend Western oil routes. On the other hand, the same Western sources leak reports that the Begin government plans a war against the Arabs to "silence down their people and potential for the next ten years."<sup>8</sup> The recent Israeli aggression into Lebanon, with the tacit approval of the U.S. as well as the killings and the destruction that followed, show that such reports are not mere terror propaganda.

It is important that the U.S. now expects Egypt to assist her in preserving the Pax Americana in the region and also play the role of combatting liberation movements as well as subverting progressive governments. Egypt too has been promised military aid. Friends of the Arabs are anxious that Egypt may have to pay for these arms with her national sovereignty and even perhaps with the blood of

---

<sup>6</sup> February 29, 1976.

<sup>7</sup> London Times, September 1, 1978; *Suddeutsche Zeitung*, September 31, 1973.

<sup>8</sup> *International Herald Tribune*, October 27, 1977.

the soldiers the Sadat régime may shed to defend alien interests in diverse armed conflicts. It is asserted that the Egyptian Vice-President Husni Mubarek has reached an oral agreement with Sultan Qabus of Oman in April 1979, whereby the Egyptian troops would replace those earlier sent by the former Shah of Iran.<sup>9</sup> The U.S. regularly uses the facilities of Oman's Masira Island base. That country already has facilities on the British-held Island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. It is also feared that the Egyptian forces are being sent to Oman not only to bolster the régime of Sultan Qabus, but also to bring pressure on the neighbouring Democratic Yemen. The people of the Middle East more and more realize that, in addition to what has been said above, if the U.S. pushes for a Sadat-led federation of Egypt, Sudan and some other Arab countries, the southern shores of the Mediterranean will become an arena of further conflicts. The idea of a nucleus of another alliance of the pro-U.S. régimes in the Middle East is fraught with dangers.

Not satisfied in taking measures to protect régimes favourable towards herself, the U.S. is also planning a special military unit for intervention in the Third World. General Rogers, the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Armed Forces, announced at a press conference in Washington, D.C., on June 22nd 1979, that the Pentagon was planning such a force, comprising 110,000 men. The components of this force would be drawn from the external NATO forces. The units would remain in their respective posts and would be called for emergency duty when needed. Regrouped into a "unilateral corps", including elements from the ground, air and naval forces, it is being thought as a sizable unit able to carry out an operation for two months based on self-reliance. If it can reach any operational theatre at short notice, then, the U.S. would depend less on the bases abroad.

Is this plan solely an American idea or one worked jointly by the U.S. and her NATO partners? One may note here that there is no reaction from the NATO members repudiating it. The humiliating defeat in Indo-China, the collapse of American-supported governments and the growing isolation of the U.S.-sponsored Sadat-Begin axis in the Middle East might have persuaded the American planners that they can no longer play the role of an international gendarmery. But in spite of the difficulties, even some American liberals, who had previously opposed the U.S. intervention in Vietnam, have now joined the cry about the need to intervene in a Middle Eastern "crisis".

---

<sup>9</sup> Palestine, May 15, 1979, p. 27.

Of course, the possible use of American forces in the Middle East is being presented to the American public as necessary to heat homes, provide fuel for transport and run the factories. This is not the exact truth. The U.S. possesses not only vast oil reserves, but also the necessary resources to explore alternative forms of energy. The energy "crisis" is really one that concerns *control*. One may remember, at this point, that oil has been a long-standing political weapon for the U.S. In June 1979, the Oil Minister A.Z. Yamani of Saudi Arabia linked, for the first time, his country's cooperation on the oil front with the solution of the Palestine problem. The utilization of oil to secure a just and stable peace in the area is, doubtless, much more justified than its previous use to keep American profits high.

Likewise, the British bases, used by the Americans as well, cast a shadow over the independence and non-alignment of Cyprus. Strategically located near the Suez Canal and Arab oil, Cyprus can be used as a military base for monitoring the southern part of the Soviet Union, the Middle East and the Balkans. It is the opinion of the democratic circles of Cyprus that the imperialist forces do not favour a lasting and a just settlement in that island. In spite of frequent impasses, negotiations, (as underlined by the Makarios-Denktaş accord of February 12, 1977, and the Kiprianou-Denktaş agreement of May 19, 1979) seem to be the only method of solution. These agreements indicate that the inter-communal talks be carried out in a continued manner.

The people of Cyprus, Greeks and Turks, will not allow this island to be incorporated in some sphere of influence and become a springboard of aggression. It will be remembered that the Anglo-French-Israeli aggression against Egypt in 1956 was launched from the British base at Akrotiri. This base and the one in Dhekelia has been used against the Arabs in 1967 and 1973 to rush arms and pilots to the Israelis. The Greeks of Cyprus tell us that the American technicians are already present in alarming numbers in the Akrotiri base.<sup>10</sup> They also inform us that the Ayios Nicolos (near Larnaca) and other monitoring and radar installations are jointly used by the British and the Americans. The British base at Akrotiri is expanded to accommodate the newly-arriving American forces and to receive large supersonic military aircraft. It is estimated that the U.S. has transferred large quantities of military equipment from

---

<sup>10</sup> Vassos Lyssarides, "Cyprus: the Test of Global Principles and Code of Interstate Relations", *Review of International Affairs*, July 5-20, 1979, p. 55. The bases and installations are at Akrotiri, Ediscope, Vekelia and Prodos.

Iran to Akrotiri, before the downfall of the Bakhtiar government. It has been pointed out that this equipment was airlifted from Iran early in 1979 by the British Hercules transport planes. Some Cypriot and Arab sources reiterate that nuclear weapons, which can be delivered by Vulcan bombers, are stored at Akrotiri. The speculation that the U.S. also wants to use the same base for reconnaissance flights by the sophisticated supersonic SR-71 planes probably derives from the provision in the Sadat-Begin treaty concerning U.S. supervision of its implementation. The U.S. U-2A reconnaissance planes have been using the Akrotiri base since 1975 to observe the implementation of the second Sinai disengagement agreement. The fact that the American planes utilized the base in Cyprus was unknown until the crash of a U-2A aircraft in early 1978.

Is there a legal basis for American presence in the 99 square mile Akrotiri base, retained by Britain after the 1960 agreement granting independence to Cyprus? Common sense requires that in the event of British withdrawal, Cypriot sovereignty is restored. Britain cannot hand the base over to a third party.

The Parliaments of the Greek and the Turkish Cypriot communities have passed resolutions demanding the evacuation and dismantling of the British bases. In their opinion, the British bases constitute the root of the inter-communal conflict. Özker Özgür, the leader of the Republican Turkish Party of Cyprus, has correctly described their role, in the following words: "The fact about the imperialist policy regarding the bases is to run with the hare on the one hand, and to hunt with the hound on the other, in order to preserve these bases".<sup>11</sup> The Cypriot Peace Council has organized a mass rally on June 3, 1979, demanding the abolition of foreign military bases. Voices from the Turkish part of Nicosia underlined that Cyprus will not be allowed to become a "non-sinking NATO aircraft carrier."<sup>12</sup>

There is also the question of the future of the military bases in Turkey. Talks between the Turkish and the American Governments are still continuing in respect to the destiny of those bases in Asia Minor. They were established in the early 1950's when Turkey became a NATO member. They were closed down, however, in 1975 in retaliation for a U.S. arms embargo. The Turkish Government allowed the bases to reopen for a provisional one-year period. The current

<sup>11</sup> Turkish News, London, Vol. VIII, No. 1 (July-August 1979), p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> The Turkish weekly *Olay* of Cyprus has devoted several issues to this topic.

negotiations are for a longer-term accord. The two sides have spent about ten months for a formula for continued American use of the bases. The Turks insist on a wording of the agreement which would restrict the U.S. from using the bases for operations in the Middle East.

There is enough evidence that détente is a long-term process that needs to engulf all regions of the world. The Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East constitute an area where some powers committed to détente in Europe are whipping up the arms race. Dangerous hot-beds of crisis are concentrated in this area in greater degree than in any other part of the world. It is also among the best equipped regions of the globe in terms of armaments. The Confidence-Building Measures need to be extended to this region as well.