

## THE TIME HAS COME FOR CYPRUS

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### Abstract

*Since 1974 Turkey has contended that the Cyprus question should be settled through negotiations between the Turkish and Greek Cypriots. However, developments have shown that bargaining carried out on this platform did not yield the expected results. The time has come for direct bilateral negotiations between Turkey and Greece since the Cyprus question is basically a Greco-Turkish problem. This is the only platform which can pave the way for a solution on the island. In this process, both parties should pursue a bipartisanship model that will ease the bargaining process by making it easier for the parties to give concessions and retreat to an extent from their starting positions. Both Turkey and Greece should adapt their political decision-making processes to facilitate the adoption of a solution on the Cyprus issue.*

It is not realistic to defend the thesis that the status quo which emerged after the 1974 Turkish military operation is an ultimate solution for Turkish side and therefore there is nothing to discuss about the topic. This is so because, Turkey desires to be in a positive relationship with international organizations and particularly in good political and economic relationship with the West. It is easy to understand this within the context of Turkey's entrance to the Customs Union and her general efforts for full membership to the European Union. Although the Greek Cypriot side has a more urgent need for a political solution in Cyprus, we can not ignore the disturbing effects of the current situation on the Turkish side and the Turkish foreign policy. However, it is arguably correct to assume that "the present situation on the island seems to support the consolidation of Turkish stand on Cyprus", but we have to consider that this situation brings about new opportunities to Greece for pressuring Turkey on several other issues. Even, some Greek politicians (i.e. exprime minister Andreas Papandreou who had based the Greek foreign policy on Turkey and "Turkey's expansionist desires") see more beneficial continuing this tense situation to press this country on international ground.

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In fact, in 1985, at the end of the negotiations that were held under the patronage of the UN Secretary General Perez de Cuellar, Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktaş and Greek Cypriot leader Spiros Kyprianou had come close to reach an ultimate settlement. Nevertheless, at the last stage, Kyprianou rejected to sign the agreement. Although, some of Kyprianou's personal political doubts may have played an important role on this decision, perhaps the most determinant factor of this decision was the role played by the Greek Prime Minister Andreas Papandreu himself. The thesis that the status quo on the island is the ultimate solution for the Cyprus question reflects a perspective that sees the problem only from the standpoint of the island of Cyprus. However, the problem is not as simple as that. It is equally, if not more, important that the final settlement be acceptable to the mainland Turks and Greeks as well.

On the other hand, the question of "what is the most appropriate platform for negotiations about the Cyprus problem?" is very important. Since 1974, Turkey has defended the thesis that the parties of the Cyprus question are Turkish and Greek Cypriots. Thus, Turkey has tried to avoid to be a formal side to the problem and to push The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) forward on to the diplomatic scene. However, up to this date, these efforts have not brought any significant diplomatic and political advantages for the Turkish side, beyond the successful protection of the Turkish Cypriots and the frontiers of TRNC in a military sense. It is obvious that this is not enough or acceptable for the Turkish Cypriots and Turkey's foreign policy needs. For this reason, the time has come for Turkey to take the initiative in proposing a different negotiation platform to find a solution to the question. I believe that direct bilateral negotiations between Turkey and Greece with a common understanding of Cyprus question is a Greco-Turkish problem in essence, and the only platform that has a chance for a permanent solution to the question.

Today as in the past, the Cyprus question is essentially a disagreement between Turkey and Greece. The Cyprus Republic of 1960 is an artificial state with limited sovereignty and without a nation. It can be said that there are many sovereign countries that contain many different ethnic, religious and cultural groups as majority or minority. This is true. However, the main differences in the case of Cyprus are the legal base of the Cyprus republic and the powerful emotional attachment of both communities to the nearby motherlands. As we know, the Cyprus Republic was founded by the 1959 London and Zurich Agreements and the constitutional structure of 1960, and it was a state with limited sovereignty. We can find the legal base of this fact in the Guarantee Agreement and the Agreement of Alliance that are the integrated parts of the Cyprus Republic's constitution. On the other hand, motherland flags are more important for the majority of both communities than the flags of the Cyprus Republic.

Similar divisions are true with respect to the religious and the nationalistic days of observance of the two communities. It is interesting that this is true also for the

Greek Cypriots who are keeping the "legitimate state" title and the government apparatus in their hands. It is possible to increase such examples. The problem resembles the Northern Ireland question in certain respects. Let us assume for a moment that an independent Northern Ireland State has been founded. Would it be possible to create a Northern Ireland nation this way? Would it be possible to live in peace in such a country if the majority ethnic group, in spite of the formal structure, had effectively captured the whole governmental organization and the title of the Government of Northern Ireland? Would it be possible to find a permanent solution to the question on a ground other than the bilateral relations between London and Dublin? Most likely, such questions are quite indicative for the Cyprus problem as well - with due allowance for the obvious differences between two cases.

In the light of these explanations, we can say that the time has come to negotiate the Cyprus problem directly between Turkey and Greece without any precondition. Thus, Turkey can avoid facing Greek-dominated Cyprus Republic in the international arena. This is important because a great number of "the third world states" are ready to give their support to the "small, weak and oppressed" Cyprus Republic against a "great, powerful and oppressive" Turkey. The settlement to be reached between Turkey and Greece must be accepted or rejected by communities of the Cypriots separately in a referendum. De facto situation is also conducive to such a permanent solution of the problem. A possible counter argument may be that the existing political and demographic status quo of the island was shaped by the military operation of Turkey in 1974 and that it should not even be considered as a starting base for negotiations. In other words, the two communities that had lived together on the island, began to live side by side on two territories as a result of this military operation. It would be more desirable to reach peace without using force any more.

However, it should be recalled that Turkey had tried for many years peaceful means to reach an equitable solution to the problem, but all her efforts were made fruitless by the violent designs of the Greeks to dominate the Turkish side. Such developments led to the Turkish intervention in 1974. Some undesired and side effects are inevitable in such conflicts and amelioration processes. During the Turkish Independence War too, similar events were experienced in Anatolia, Aegean Islands and Western Thrace. At the end of the conflicts, the leaders of both communities had tried to solve the problems radically. Considering recently experienced unhappy memories, they had agreed to exchange millions of their compatriots that otherwise would have been left in the middle of a hostile majority. If they had taken the principle "de facto situations which are reached by force, can not be taken as basis for political solutions" into consideration, it would have been inescapable to face a new series of conflicts between these two communities which they had experienced through many unhappy memories recently as regards to each other. Such high valued rules and principles are only for the benefit of peoples.

Whenever it is evident that it is impossible to reach these ends by utilizing such rules and principles, the situation should be evaluated realistically. In other words, the rules and the principles that are created for the well being of people, may have to be suspended, again, for the well being of people. It will be easy to reach an agreement in Cyprus if the problem is seen from this standpoint. The returning of the refugees to their homelands and the beginning of the two communities to live together (at least too soon) will not bring peace to the island. On the contrary, the hostility of the last 35-40 years between the two communities will most likely initiate some new and serious conflicts. A physical border between the two communities, on the other hand (as it has been in recent 22 years) is bound to decrease the possibility of a conflict.

If the parties of a conflict desire to solve a problem by peaceful means (like negotiations), they ought to be prepared to give some concessions from their original theses and demands. The extents of these concessions are determined in the context of power parties of the parities and some soft rules of the international system. The similar situation is also relevant for the Cyprus question. Thus, if the situations on which parties get closer to reach an agreement (for example, U.N. Secretary General's initiative of 1985) are examined, it is seen that both sides give in from their original theses within acceptable limits. In this framework, the most suitable ground for solving the Cyprus question is for the Greeks to accept bizonality, living of the communities side by side (not together), and a relatively loose federation status, and for the Turks a smaller territory for the Turkish Cypriot community.

The type of political regimes of the parties is very significant for the successful working of this kind of process. In the multiparty democratic states, decision-makers can not use some initiatives that are necessary (and possible) because of the opposition parties' existing or potential pressures. We know, responsibility-free opposition parties are defenders of non-concession from maximalism in diplomatic bargaining process. Thus, this can be easily determined in political life of both countries that the Cyprus question is considered as a national problem. In these kinds of situations, it is much easier to gather people around maximalist demands. Due to the fear that this can be easily used against them, sometimes only for this reason, the politicians in power are hesitant to solve a problem by bargaining in diplomatic negotiations. For this reason, persuading the government, the opposition, the pressure groups and various centers of public opinion to consider negotiations and bargaining process has a vital importance. Therefore, each of the parties of Cyprus question should operate a kind of bipartisanship model that is widely used by the United States Presidents in their internal decision making process. Implementation of such a decision making process will produce a kind of guarantee to the governments involved in the Cyprus conflict against the fear that opposition will exploit the bargaining process.

As a result, we have to accept that there is a Cyprus question that has to be solved by the two parties. The main parties are Turkey and Greece. If they want to solve the problem by peaceful means, they have to learn to negotiate directly and they have to adapt their political decision making process to reach an agreement in this way.

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