

QUO VADIS CYPRUS? The slippery road to reaching agreement

George C. Economou

Following the victory of Mustafa Akinci in the elections of the Turkish – Cypriot enclave and his installation as President of Northern Cyprus, a major effort has been made in order to present the new president of the Turkish enclave as a Cypriot first (and secondly as a Turk) who desires the unification of the island on a just and reasonable basis, for the benefit and well being of all Cypriots. The truth is that the groundwork is being prepared for the acceptance of a compromised federal solution similar to the “Anan Plan” which will castrate Cyprus as a sovereign and independent state.

Despite the fact that the very important aspect of the economy and, in particular, the viability of the solution which will derive from the discussions under their present dynamics is ignored and not taken into serious consideration, the Greek side should, before it reaches agreement, endeavour to capture the “big picture” which concerns, inter alia, the future of Hellenism and, by extension, the future of the West and Western civilization, as it has developed from the Renaissance onwards.

When one considers the haste which is being exhibited nowadays by everybody for the Cyprus problem “to be solved” one is obliged to stop and ponder the repercussions of this exercise, not only for Cyprus but also for Greece and potentially for the West.

This proposition may appear exaggerated. Is it realistic to countenance that Cyprus with a Greek population of under one million to become the catalyst which will emasculate geopolitically and dynamically the West in the area and which will bring great suffering to Greece and to the West in general? Wherefrom will this situation derive and how is this view explained?

Let us have a glance at the modern history of Cyprus. Great Britain acquired Cyprus in 1878 in return for its assistance to the Ottoman Empire in its conflict

with Russia, originally against payment of an annual rent and later, in 1925, by incorporating Cyprus in the British Empire. From the beginning Cyprus was considered as the link which connected India with the Mediterranean and, through Gibraltar, established the commercial route of the Empire.

There appeared a singular opportunity for Cyprus to be united with Greece in 1915, when Britain offered Cyprus in exchange for Greece's entry into the war against Germany. Since then Britain, due to the great geopolitical value which it placed on Cyprus, never again did it express the intention to allow Cyprus to exercise the right of self-determination, as it felt obliged to do, albeit unwillingly, with the other colonies as evidenced by the famous slogan of Harold Macmillan "the winds of change". In 1954 the Assistant Colonial Secretary, Henry Hopkinson, declared in the House of Commons that Cyprus would "never" acquire independence. Specifically, he declared that "*there can be no question of any change of sovereignty in Cyprus*" and that "*there are certain territories in the Commonwealth which, owing to their particular circumstances, can never expect to be fully independent*". It was the spark for the armed struggle of EOKA. Britain, following its well tried policy, introduced the Turkish factor in the Cyprus talks so that it would control and reduce the Greek demands. It was a grave error for Greece to accept the presence of Turkey, which seized the opportunity to evict the Greeks from Constantinople by the pogrom of September, 1955.

From then onwards, all plans for the resolution of the Cyprus problem involved the Turkish factor and all (Harding Plan of 1955; Radcliff proposals of 1956) provided for internal self-government, that is they offered a limited and controlled independence where the interests of Great Britain would continue to be served and, at the same time, in the island a form of co-administration would apply with the participation of both nationalities, Greeks and Turks.

From the very synoptic exposition of the facts it is eminently clear that the geopolitical position of Cyprus in modern times, following classical times and the Middle Ages, was and is, of exceptional and special value.

Let us examine the area from today's geopolitical perspective. For the last five years the greater part of the Eastern Mediterranean is the theatre of tectonic geopolitical rearrangements which alter the greater area of Eastern Mediterranean but also the Near and Middle East in general. The geostrategic changes are structural, the more important being the disintegration of Syria, the "Somalisation" of Libya, the attempt to islamise Egypt, the progressive islamisation of Turkey and the close co-operation between Greece – Israel – Cyprus and recently Egypt, primarily because of the dominant position of secular regimes in these countries. To these changes we should add the now uncontrollable exodus from the Middle East and Africa to Europe of millions of emigrants who are either expelled from their countries on purpose and are being directed to the West or they choose to take the road to a supposedly better life. It should not, however, be forgotten that in their great majority these immigrants are Muslims and, as it is well known, do not blend with the local societies; and it is now generally accepted that multiculturalism which, until recently was the official policy, has failed. It is worth making reference here to the "Clash of Civilisations" of Huntington which day by day is being confirmed.

Greece and Cyprus are obliged to function in this fluid environmental security system – there is no other choice – which they should co-shape being the powers on the borders of the EU and more general of the West and having as their strategy the defense and security of Hellenism and more general of the interests of Western civilization which are interwoven with the interests of Hellenism.

The latest agreement between the EU and Greece proved how indispensable Greece is geopolitically for Europe and more generally for the West. All the leaders of the big powers – including the President of the US – have shown great interest and have put pressure on the parties to reach agreement so that Greece should remain in the Eurozone. It is worth mentioning the secret telegraph of the Ambassador of Greece in Washington of the 16th July, 2015,

which summarizes the co-operation of Washington and Athens over many months with the object of countering the aggressiveness of Berlin and how to secure the stay of Greece in the Eurozone (vide "Kathimerini" 27/09/2015). Even Russia has advised Greece to "reach agreement" with its allies. As it is evident from the results, the EU, despite the voices which were against and despite periodic threats, agreed to enter into a new memorandum and support Greece despite the fact that the Greek debt is, in the last resort, non-viable in its present form.

Independently of the leading role of Greece and Cyprus which have by reason of their position on the map as the "portals" and the fence of the West, Greece and Cyprus are potentially even more necessary and indispensable for Europe and the West provided they manage to become important *energy* partners of the EU and of the countries of Eastern Mediterranean. Reports in the press of the 31st August state that the biggest natural gas field in the Mediterranean was discovered north of Egypt, which encourages optimism for the fields of the Greek and Cypriot exclusive economic zones (EEZ).

The geostrategic square of Greece – Cyprus – Israel – Egypt is a first reaction to the thread which is represented by the march of the fanatic Islamists in the countries of the Middle East and Turkey, given that the break of the bilateral relations between Turkey – Israel and Turkey – Egypt coincided with the climax of Turkish offensive actions in a huge zone which starts from the Cypro – Israeli EEZ in the East and ends in the EEZ of the 6 nautical miles which Turkey accepts that belong to the islands of Kassos, Karpathos and Rhodes.

The central idea for the creation of this security system is the common understanding of the need to meet the extremist Islam and Turkish expansionism. For Greece and Cyprus the Turkish thread is more direct and pressing, for Israel it refers to the differing policies that the two countries follow as regards the Arab regimes in general – it is not possible for neo-ottoman Turkey, which has set its eyes on the leadership of the Muslim world, to

cultivate its alliance with Israel – the same applies to Egypt because Turkey had come into direct conflict with the regime of Al Sissi after the overthrow of the government of the Moslem Brotherhood and the support and hospitality which Turkey extends to its exiled leadership.

The multi-level strategic co-operation of the four countries, Greece, Israel, Cyprus and Egypt creates a zone which extends from the Aegean to the Red Sea and composes a security arrangement and at the same time neutralizes the revisionist intentions of Turkey. In general, real conditions of security and stability are created within the picture of insecurity and uncertainty of the area which secure not only the uninterrupted flow of the energy resources but also the sea portals of international trade which link the markets of the Far East and the Indian Ocean with the Mediterranean and Europe and which pass through Elia, Suez and the Aegean. It is the only alternative safe route for the connection of the Far East with Europe due to the uncertain situation which prevails in the commercial land route between East and West. More specifically China, which has promoted Piraeus as the main port of entry of its products into Europe, has a very strong incentive and interest to support the four in North East Mediterranean.

The current dynamics which shape the new strategic reality in Eastern Mediterranean is derived mainly from the rise of the extreme conservative Islamism, the Wahhabism, which having its roots in Saudi Arabia and financed by the Kingdom, has spread its tentacles in all the Middle East but also in Europe. A branch of it has been transformed into ISIS, which now controls large areas of land in Iraq and in Syria.

The second reason is the reluctance of the United States and its allies in the EU to intervene dynamically in order to assist in the suppression and defeat of this new threat (boots on the ground are required) which is primarily directed against the Middle East but, subsequently, against the West. ISIS cannot be confronted solely through occasional air attacks without the presence of substantial numbers of organized army strong enough to gain and keep

control of the grounds which will be liberated. ISIS already controls in Syria and Iraq an area which is larger than the UK.

While the world was hailing the Arab Spring and the West was either directly involved as in the case of Libya, or keeping neutral, as in the case of Tunisia and Egypt, finally and to the complete surprise of the West, all these revolutions were hijacked, as was to be expected, by extremist islamists, the only organized group, which either abolished the secular state or are fighting for its abolition, and who have revived the most extreme form of Islamism and are moving forward according to plan for the conquest of the entire Middle East and of Europe at some time in the future, and in the meantime they are endeavouring to erode from the inside through the fifth column of Moslems already living in Europe and whose numbers are swelling with the continuous flows of the immigrants. Has anybody questioned why the rich Arab countries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait do not accept immigrants in their countries?

Turkey, in all this cosmogony played an obstructive role, solely and, clearly in its own interests. The term "*The Evasive Neutral*" coined by Frank Weber fits Turkey like a glove. Turkey assisted secretly ISIS to secure its position in the area, mainly by supplying arms and facilitating the passage of fighters and ammunition through its grounds using the excuse that this helps the opposition to topple "the tyrant" Assad, and, secondly, by prohibiting until recently the use of the Incirlik base against ISIS by the American Forces and NATO, demanding in exchange the creation of a no flying zone on the border between Turkey and Syria which Turkey insists that it be placed under its control. Turkey remains the main external supporter of ISIS, because it is through Turkey that all contraband oil traded by ISIS as well as the antiquities which are sold illegally by ISIS are transported.

The policy of Turkey is to weaken the Kurds of Syria and Iraq, to vanquish the Kurds of Turkey (PKK) and to finlandize Syria and Northern Iraq, frustrating at the same time the Kurdish plans to create a sovereign state and, at the same

time, to grab the oil wells of Mosul and Kirkuk. Taking into consideration the fact that the only part of Iraq where the experiment of the United States was successful and where the story of the fall of Saddam Hussein became a success story is Kurdistan, and the only group that fights ISIS on the ground are the Kurds, it is only natural that they will claim their independence, which they have earned with blood and tears. This coming development brings nightmares to Turkey because it is a matter of time for the mutiny of the Kurds to acquire new dynamics in Turkey which eventually will bring to fruition their demand and their dream for independence. It is for this reason that we are witness to the recent pogroms against the Kurds in various towns of Turkey by the (Turkish) masses, which are reminiscent, in micrography, of the "Night of Crystals" of September, 1955 when the Turkish masses destroyed in Constantinople 71 churches, 41 schools, 8 newspapers and sacked over 4.000 shops and 2.000 houses mainly belonging to Greeks. Nobody, except Turkey, doubts that the Kurds who live in the area comprise one nation and, of course, that the Kurds of Turkey are not Turks but part of the Kurdish nation.

It is natural for the neo-ottoman government of Turkey, to endeavour to re-establish its importance to the West which has been lost after the end of the Cold War and thus become the indisputable partner of the West in the new under formation situation in the Middle East and become the Euro – Middle East nub for the routing of the energy resources and for all such transportations to the West to pass through Turkey, always, however, on its own terms. In effect, the plan is for Turkey to become the master of the game as the indispensable ally and policeman of the West and, this way, to advance its neo-ottomanism in all the ex-ottoman controlled areas of the Balkans and the Middle East. In order to secure this role, Turkey endeavours to control the situation in Syria and in the greater area and, of course, strives to become the basic player for the transportation of the energy resources from the East, Russia and the Mediterranean to the West.

If this plan materializes, Europe and the West in general will become hostages to Turkey with all the consequences that will follow.

Lately, Turkey has “discovered” an additional source which allows it to increase and highlight its importance to the West. Turkey channels the millions of immigrants to the West, assisting them “to escape” to Greece, whereas the first years of the Wars the immigrants remained either in their country or near the borders of Turkey with Syria or Palestine. And it does not stop here. In Pakistan and in Afghanistan Greece is being advertised as welcoming immigrants, so that each sufferer takes the promised route for the West. Unfortunately, statements of members of the Greek government “that the sea has no borders”, helped.

Talks between the EU and Turkey are taking place for the immigrants to be housed in hot spots in Turkey and, those entitled, to be interviewed and cleared there. This has become another source of blackmail of the West by the Turks. This policy is doubtful whether it will prove useful and workable, except, of course, for Turkey, which is poised to collect €3.0 billion from Europe. Turkey, in order “to assist” in discouraging the immigrants to travel to Europe, is demanding the establishment of a neutral zone between Turkey and Syria, within Syria, where Turkey will restrict the immigrants who, until now, are not entitled to medical assistance, neither are they allowed to work, nor are they entitled to assistance from the government and for this reason they are “pushed” towards Greece and Europe. Turkey claims huge economic assistance, a relaxation of the visa requirements of its nationals to Europe and joint patrolling of the sea borders, this last being very dangerous for Greece because the next step will be a demand for co-administration of the Aegean.

For Turkey to be in position to bring into fruition its grandiose plans it is necessary to prove to its western allies (a) that it is in control of the situation and is, in general, the leading power in the Middle East, (b) that it is the guarantor of the uninterrupted flow of energy resources from Asia, Russia and Eastern Mediterranean to Europe and, possibly, (c) that it is in a position to control the waves of immigrants who have set their eyes on Europe. Inasmuch as the EU and the US both of which have no intention or inclination to get

involved in a local war so close after Iraq and Yugoslavia, they are obliged to accept and submit to Turkey's blackmail provided Turkey may be relied upon to perform its undertakings which are to expel or confine ISIS, to become the conduit for the hydrocarbon and gas transportation to the West and to control the immigration flow. In such situation the United States and Europe are ready to offer to Turkey "earth and water".

The President of Cyprus, Nicos Anastasiades, declared recently that the target of the intercommunal talks is evolution of Cyprus into a state with a federal structure and two areas and that "*each area shall have first role in its own area*". From all the published material to date it is clear that the Turkish side continues to aim at the creation of a new federal Cyprus with two constituent states which brings to mind a closet confederation which it is christened Bi-zonal Bi-communal Federation. Despite the fact that there are great differences on most issues as for example on the issue of the Presidency, on the issue of separate majorities, etc., there is agreement on 17 chapters of the Federal government out of 27 and there is agreement also that the responsibilities of the constituent states shall include the conclusion of agreements relating to religious, cultural, educational and commercial issues, which, however, will have to be approved by the Federal government.

The Greek side maintains that the population and property majorities which will be agreed should be temporary and at some future stage they should wither away and the *acquis communautaire* should become applicable, but the Turkish Cypriot side insists that they should be retained as primary legislation, so that the separation of the two communities be confirmed forever. Akinci maintains that these deviations should be seen as the "natural right" of the Turkish Cypriots and not as the restriction of the rights of the Greek Cypriots or of the other citizens of the European Union.

But even if these divisive provisions are temporary, when we take into consideration that according to the official demographic data of the end of 2013 the population in the free areas amounted to 860.000 and there are

approximately 330.000 registered citizens in the Turkish Cypriot enclave out of which 95.000 – 100.000 are Turkish Cypriots and the balance of 230.000 – 235.000 emigrants from Turkey, we can easily deduct that according to the birth rates of the two communities, it is mathematically certain that in approx. sixty years (in two generations), the Turks will equal the Greeks, or even become the majority.

Provided the Cyprus problem is solved under the present circumstances, it is certain that the solution will follow the standard position taken by Turkey which cannot be other than a bi-zonal by-communal federation which shall consist of two constituent states (the Turkish Cypriot “state” continues its basic tactic of disputing the imperium of the Cyprus Republic in the North and claims by filing recent notams to the United Nations that it has its own air-space and FIR and also its own *EEZ* (The relevant documents were filed on 29/07/2015). The only solution for the transportation of the hydrocarbonates of Cyprus to Europe will have to be through Turkey, and in such a case the geopolitical value of Cyprus is reduced noticeably and, even more serious, by controlling the *EEZ* of Cyprus through the Turkish Cypriot enclave, Turkey is elevated to the necessary player in all fields which Cyprus shares with its neighbouring countries; in effect it becomes the indispensable player for the transportation of the reserves of all Eastern Mediterranean, something which eludes Turkey until today. Mustafa Akinci, as published in the Turkish Cypriot press, has informed the Turkish Cypriot organizations of this, declaring that all the experts take it for granted that the deposits will be transported through Turkey.

At this point it is important to note that Turkey is promoting its long term plans for the partition of Cyprus which remain unchanged since formulated by the Turkish constitutional expert Nihat Erim in 1956 and part of which have already been implemented.

Apart, however, from the transportation of the energy resources in case there is a solution to the Cyprus problem, it is certain that Cyprus will be controlled

militarily and strategically by Turkey, even if agreement is reached that the island will be demilitarized and the guarantees of Turkey will cease to apply – Turkey is so near to Cyprus that in a very short time it is in a position to conquer all of Cyprus even if not one Turkish soldier is left in Cyprus.

In case the existing Cyprus Republic loses its independence by the creation of a new novel type of state and shares the control of the state in accordance with the solution which is being promoted with the Turkish Cypriots (basically with Turkey) and a state is created which shall be controlled by Turkey through the Turkish Cypriots, then the geopolitical power is being transferred from Greece and Europe, the four power system to which we referred to above and which secures strategic depth and the control of the area, loses its cohesion and its value and all benefits which derive from the geopolitical position of Cyprus will benefit Turkey.

Of course, if Turkey was a normal Western secular state, then a reasonable agreement with the Turkish Cypriots would have been acceptable. Unfortunately Turkey never really became a true Western secular state despite the pretensions of the Young Turks which appeared at the beginning as a neoteristic European movement, but which in the end excelled in the genocide of the Armenians and the Pontians, the slaughter of the Greeks in Smyrna and elsewhere, the coercion of the Greeks to leave Turkey (the Turkish Kristallnacht) in contravention of the Lausanne Treaty, an act which they have repeated in Cyprus with the planned expulsion of the Greek population from their homes in the occupied areas, and the continuous questioning of the validity of the international treaties, of the Convention of the Law of the Sea, the EEZ, the air space etc., etc., etc., with no end in sight.

The situation has been aggravated these last years by the appearance of Tayyip Erdogan, whose dream is the revival of the Ottoman Empire and he behaves accordingly. The mask of the so-called secular state has fallen and Turkey is quickly slipping through to neo-ottomanism, as this becomes evident primarily with the revival of religion, the explosion of autocratic behaviour and

the restriction of rights. There is no doubt that today the biggest unsettling factors in the whole region are the ideologically directed neo-ottoman policies and strategy of Erdogan.

In order to understand how Turkey sees Cyprus, it is sufficient to study the views of the present Prime Minister of Turkey and ex-Foreign Minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, as expressed in his book *“The Strategic Depth – The Place of Turkey in the International System”* which was instrumented in changing the direction of the policies of Turkey from adhering to the Kemalist dogma to formulating the “neo-ottoman” dogma and more specifically as set out in the Chapter *“The Strategic cul-de-sack of Turkey: The Cyprus Problem”*. Hereunder are set out in general terms a number of indicative points so that the position of Turkey relating to Cyprus be made clear.

To start with, Davutoglu believes that Cyprus occupies a vital position in the international and regional policies and influences directly the strategic inter-connections between Asia and Africa, Europe and Africa and Europe and Asia. He recognizes that the Cyprus problem is not simply a Turkish – Greek ethnic problem but its importance is increased in the new international strategic and geostrategic environment, due to its geographical position. According to Davutoglu, *“even if not a single Turk lived in Cyprus, Turkey ought to keep the Cyprus problem alive”*. He believes that no country can be indifferent to the dangers presented by an island situated in the heart of its vital area and, also, that Turkey is obligated from a strategic point of view to be interested in Cyprus, independently of the human element. According to Davutoglu, no world and regional no power involved in the Middle East, Eastern Mediterranean, the Aegean, the Suez Canal, the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf can ignore Cyprus.

In view of the policies followed until now which are committed to reaching an acceptable by both parties agreement and based on the agreements reached upto this point of time, it is neither realistic nor reasonable to change the policy of the Greek Cypriots and to demand the denouncement of the

invasion and occupation and a return to the status quo ante as a prerequisite of a just and equitable solution. This change of policy could have taken place immediately after the referendum of 2004 as it was at the time the perfect excuse for a change of policy by reason of the people's vote. The window of opportunity has now passed and this proposition appears to be unrealistic today.

What may be pursued, however, in the discussions is for the Cyprus Republic to be recognized as an independent state – member of the EU by Turkey, Turkey to settle the compensation awards which have been adjudicated against it by the European Court of Human Rights in the Court cases which have dealt with the missing persons and the immovable property in the Occupied Areas, as has been demanded by the Council of Ministers of the Council of Europe. Following this, to ensure Turkey's abandonment of the right to have a legal role in Cyprus, Turkey not to have the right to intervene in Cyprus and, most importantly, in case the two consistent states which will derive from the agreement, feel obliged to separate, the Greek Cypriot state to retain the privilege of continuity as the Cyprus Republic, member of the U.N. and the E.U., retaining the right to the EEZ and the FIR, etc. of the Republic. In effect, when agreement is reached, the Turkish Cypriot enclave to be incorporated in the Republic of Cyprus as it is recognized today by all the world, so that, in case of a break-up and separation of the state only the Cyprus Republic, the original state, to continue to enjoy international recognition, to retain membership of the EU and UN and to retain all privileges it enjoys today. Such an agreement will dissuade forever the Turkish Cypriots (and Turkey) from pursuing the dissolution of the Republic of Cyprus in case its interests and its policies are not identified with the interests of Turkey. And in case the Turkish Cypriot constituent state declares its independence and breaks up with the Republic of Cyprus then it will forfeit international recognition as will automatically be the case if Scotland or Andalusia gain their independence from Britain and Spain respectively. This way it will be ensured that the Turkish Cypriot enclave will not blackmail, neither will it pull the rope to breaking point. This is the basic reason that Turkey and the Turkish

Cypriot side insist and demand the creation of a new state, a sort of "immaculate conception", so that in case of a "divorce" between the two enclaves, the Republic of Cyprus to cease to exist and the new state which will have been created by the two enclaves "to divide" between them in equal portions the imperium of the unified Cyprus.

George C. Economou