THE TROUBLED TRIANGLE: CYPRUS GREECE TURKEY

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Introduction

The question addressed here concerns Cyprus and the relationship between Greece and Turkey. It falls within the broad question of European security and it should be considered within this broader context.

The analysis attempted is founded on four basic assumptions, which are hopefully acceptable by all.
1) There is a serious security risk in the area since a protracted tension might easily degenerate into an open armed conflict;
2) Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus have serious reasons to prevent such a conflict;
3) The European Union and NATO also have interest in preventing a conflict;
4) There must be a path to Greek-Turkish reconciliation.

1. The troubled relationship

We assume that there is a serious risk of armed conflict in the Eastern Mediterranean between Greece and Turkey.

Judging by its size, the tiny Aegean island of Imia/Kardak does not seem like much to fight over. Yet in January 1996, two of the most heavily armed countries in Southern Europe nearly did just that. Without quick and effective intervention from the United States, the incident might well have escalated into a full-scale war between Greece and Turkey.

There were serious issues at stake, of course. First, the issue of the uninhabited islet was not an isolated incident but part of a policy challenging the status quo in the Aegean Sea. The claim by Turkey that there are "grey areas" in the Aegean means just that. Second, the Cyprus question is one of the most complicated and intractable conflicts facing the international community today. On Cyprus, Greek and Turkish communities have been locked in a stalemate since 1974. While UN troops have been

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largely successful in separating the two sides, the situation on the island has recently become ominous. This development and other contentious issues have created a tangible threat of war between Greece and Turkey, and the situation has worsened of late because of each country's vehement popular mobilisation against the other. The two NATO partners had ample reasons to keep their bilateral tensions under control during the Cold War, but the disappearance of the Soviet threat seems to have encouraged a recent marked deterioration in the regional stability of the Eastern Mediterranean.

2. The challenge of reconciliation

The second assumption is that it is of paramount importance for Greece, Turkey and Cyprus to prevent such a conflict.

The Imia/Kardak islets and Cyprus crises of 1996 underscore the ease with which a state protracted tension between the two countries may degenerate into organised violence and warfare. With any luck, leaders in both countries will have realised by now that a Greek-Turkish war should be out of the question, because it will isolate both belligerents from their Western institutional affiliations. Furthermore, even if Greece or Turkey were to secure some marginal territorial gains after some initial battles, a chain of revanchist conflicts would surely follow, classifying both countries as high-risk zones, with a devastating impact on their economies and societies.

Although there is no easy or quick solution to the problems separating Greece and Turkey, the disputes are not irremediable. There are some political incentives on both sides to see them resolved. Greece would gain a great measure of stability in the region and a reprieve on arms spending. The incentives are perhaps greater for Turkey, which would see not only a measure of calm in the Aegean region but also a marked improvement in its relationship with the United States - and especially Europe. Moreover, despite the mutual suspicion that exists at the state level, there is a measure of goodwill among individuals that is not usually found in similar long-term conflicts. Unfortunately, there remain considerable domestic political incentives for politicians both in Greece and Turkey to continue to posture and grandstand on their differences, making compromise extremely difficult. This leads to the question of whether Turkish

and Greek politicians can resist the easy temptation to manipulate national pride and agitated emotions for short-term political gain.

Further discussion on Greek-Turkish relations should start with an understanding of these realities. Neither side can "win", and both must be prepared to give up some demands. The next stage would be an assessment of precisely which points each side could yield on and live with, a process that could be pursued through bilateral negotiations or through the help of a third party. In the end, though, any solution will hinge on the willingness of political leaders in both Greece and Turkey to explain, promote, and defend a compromise settlement to their respective constituencies.

3. The involvement of the Union and NATO

The third assumption is that the damage such a war will do to the EU and NATO is obvious. Scholars and analysts acquainted with the problems are suggesting three organisations as potential players in negotiating and maintaining a settlement on a number of regional questions, particularly on Cyprus: the United Nations, the EU, and NATO. The EU, however, is unlikely to take a lead in such efforts. For the time being, the argument being that for the Turks it seems too partial toward Greece. NATO has the advantage of being considered a more trustworthy organisation by both sides. Its active participation in resolving regional disputes - such as deploying troops in Cyprus would be desirable at least by the Greek side but the Alliance is reluctant to become actively engaged. That leaves the United Nations, which has the stigma of having been part of the stalemate on the island for over thirty years. Nevertheless, a redefinition of the UN role and mission, backed up by the Security Council, may enable that organisation to become something more than a caretaker of the current stand-off.

Our view is that a concerted effort by all these organisations is needed and can be effective as they who have vested interest.

The Greek-Turkish tension is a serious problem for the operational capability of the southern flank of the Atlantic Alliance. But a potential war between these two countries will destroy the credibility of the alliance, will affect seriously the stability of

the region and will have serious negative repercussions for the presence of the West in the Middle East and the Persian Golf.

At the same time, it will be a dramatic failure for the European Union. Not only would the EU's Mediterranean Policy and its presence in the Balkans be affected seriously but its image and credibility will also suffer a serious setback.

For those reasons, Greece, a member state of the Union, and Turkey, an associated member candidate for accession, should not be left alone in their complicated relationship.

A serious involvement of the Union is needed not only because its interests are at stake but also because it has the leverage to bring about solutions. The adopted attitude of a third party advocating rather indifferently restraint is not an effective policy. The policy of equal distance leaves enough space for aggressive and dangerous policies.

4. The path to reconciliation

The fourth assumption is that there must be a path to reconciliation. One plausible and probably effective way of proceeding would be to start with the Cyprus problem.

A comprehensive Greek-Turkish settlement most likely will not be achieved without a just and mutually acceptable solution to the Cyprus problem. Cyprus has long been at the centre of Greek-Turkish issues and still remains so, especially in light of the tragic events that occurred in the summer of 1996 at the UN Green Line that separates the two Cypriot communities. As long as the present situation in Cyprus continues, with Turkish armed forces occupying 36 percent of the island's territory, Greek-Turkish relations will remain tense and a solution to the Cyprus question most likely will not be forthcoming.

Efforts up to now have been unsuccessful because of luck of political will by both sides and lack of serious interest by the international players who have not considered the question up to now as quite a threat to stability and peace in the region.

There have been three occasions over the past two decades when there were good prospects for an understanding on Cyprus. The first time was in 1977-78, when President Carter's special envoy indirectly gained an acceptance from Greek Cypriot leader Archbishop Makarios for a bizonal, bicommunal settlement. Unfortunately, Makarios was willing to allow the Turks only 20 percent of the island, which they never would have accepted. Nonetheless, it was a beginning.

High-level agreements reached in 1978-79 also would have provided a settlement for Cyprus had Makarios not died. It was not until 1985-86 that his successor Spyros Kyprianou engaged in a serious round of negotiations at the United Nations with Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash, during which the two Cypriot leaders essentially reached the basic outline for an agreement. They vacillated though when it was time to initial the document. According to the American negotiator, Ambassador Nelson Ledsky, "unfortunately there was no one in Washington or the United Nations who insisted that these two men throw away their aeroplane tickets and reach an agreement before they went home."

A similar situation came in 1992, when a set of ideas was negotiated between the Turkish government and the United Nations, with support from President Vassiliou of Cyprus. The ideas were endorsed by the UN Security Council and were published together with a map of a territorial compromise giving Turkish Cypriots approximately 29 percent of the island's territory. Yet Denktash rejected the various plans showing how the agreed 29 percent could be arranged and he returned to Cyprus without any agreement, thus ending the third, most serious attempt at a solution.

This brief reminder of the facts shows, among other things, how much the political will is lacking at least by one side while it takes two to tango. It shows also that there are certain lines beyond which neither side can accept to co-operate for a solution.

A genuine settlement of the Cyprus problem, which is today ripe for a solution, would exclude *enosis* (the union of Cyprus with Greece) and *taksim* (the partition of Cyprus into separate, sovereign Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot states). The historic compromise, therefore, calls for independence of a federal, bizonal, and bicommunal state along the lines of the Makarios-Denktash (1977) and Kyprianou-Denktash (1979) agreements. Furthermore, Greece and Turkey cannot - and must not - attempt to impose a settlement on Cyprus. Reconciliation and peace in Cyprus are matters for the two Cypriot communities to agree upon.

The new state of Cyprus that will emerge, following an agreement of the representatives of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities, will be given an excellent chance to survive and prosper if at the time of its creation the "Federal Republic of Cyprus" will *simultaneously* become a member of the EU and NATO. EU membership, together with genuine collective guarantees, demilitarisation (except for the British sovereign base areas), and a multinational implementation force (until mutual confidence is securely established) under UN or NATO command, will allow the troubled Cypriots to construct an enduring unity based on all the rights, duties, and freedoms that democracy provides.

A genuine settlement of the Cyprus problem, however, cannot rest on a premise equating the 80 percent of the Greek-Cypriot community with the 18 percent of the Turkish-Cypriot community in terms of shares of territory, gross national product, and federal parliamentary and executive powers. In fact, all states and governments in the ethnically volatile Balkan and Eastern Mediterranean regions must begin to abide by a simple and logical rule of behaviour; otherwise, the chances of bringing peace to the region will be very slim. This rule could be articulated as follows "Treat (that is, offer similar rights and guarantees) minority communities and other dual-identity groups residing in your country as *well* as you would expect other countries to treat minority groups that are affiliated with your country."

One of the reasons why efforts to bring about a solution have failed to produce results is the fact that they were based on the assumptions that international law and UNSC resolutions will be respected. Now that it has become obvious after two decades of efforts that it is not the case, Cyprus, an independent state victim of aggression, has decided to adopt a more realistic attitude and organise its defence.

Turning to the Aegean dispute, a much needed historic compromise between Greece and Turkey must rest on two general and two operational principles of foreign policy behaviour. The first general principle involves both countries' mutual renunciation of the use of force, possibly with the signing and ratification of a non-aggression pact. The second general principle, which follows from the first, is that the Greek-Turkish disputes in the Aegean will follow the road of peaceful settlement, involving time-tested methods such as bilateral negotiations and, in case of deadlocks, conciliation, good offices, mediation, arbitration, and adjudication.

The two operational principles apply to Turkey and Greece, respectively. For the benefit of Turkey, it must be made clear that the Aegean will not be transformed into a "Greek lake". For the benefit of Greece, it also must be made clear that the Aegean cannot be partitioned or subdivided in a way that *encloses* Greek territories such as the Dodecanese and eastern Aegean islands in a zone or zones of Turkish functional jurisdiction.

For the sake of clarity and precision, one of the many alternative strategies leading toward (or permitting) a comprehensive settlement of the Greek -Turkish disputes, needs to be outlined. This strategy assumes, as was previously stressed, a just and mutually acceptable settlement of the Cyprus question. Furthermore, the strategy rests upon the two general and the two operational principles presented above.

Thus, the thorny issue of the Aegean continental shelf will once more become subject to bilateral negotiations, which should satisfy Turkey. Questions that defy mutual agreement will be submitted to arbitration or to the International Court of Justice for final resolution (which should satisfy Greece). Alternatively, both Greece and Turkey could agree (following the logic of the Antarctic Treaty) to defer the issue of continental shelf delimitation for a number of years, reserving the right to press their respective claims at the end of the moratorium period provided by any such treaty. Needless to say, the "Antarctic approach" would gain additional appeal if we were to assume that there are no significant and profit-generating oils reserves in the Aegean region.

One way of bypassing the thorny issues of Turkish challenges to Greece's ten-mile territorial air limit (in effect since 1931) and the potential of Greece's extending its territorial waters from the present six miles to the generally accepted twelve-mile limit could rely on the following scenario: both Greece and Turkey agree to twelve-mile limits (for both territorial waters and airspace) for their mainland territory, and to six-mile limits for Aegean islands belonging to Greece and Turkey (with the exception of Euboea and Crete, which would enjoy the twelve-mile limit because of their size and distance from Turkey).

Questions such as Flight Information Region (FIR) and NATO command-and-control arrangements in the Aegean should be handled as technical issues to be settled within the framework of the International Civil Aviation Organisation and NATO, respectively, and in accordance with practices that have been employed since the early 1950s. It should be stressed that technical issues should be much more readily resolved following substantive progress in the settlement of the Cyprus and continental shelf questions.

The potentially explosive issue of minorities in Greece and Turkey should follow the dual rule discussed above: (a) minority protection should not lead to claims by either side calling for changes in international borders; and (b) minorities within a country should be treated as well as that country expects its ethnically affiliated groups to be treated in other countries.

In an era favouring arms control, arms reductions, and confidence-building measures, Greece and Turkey would benefit from undertaking a series of mutual and balanced force reductions (MBFRs) involving their land and sea border areas in Thrace and the Aegean. A mirror-image reduction of *offensive* weapons (especially landing craft) in the border areas would go a long way toward reducing the chances of the outbreak of armed conflict as well as relieving the hard-pressed economies of both countries from the heavy burden of high military expenditures. Ultimately, all parties, including the two Cypriot communities, should pursue reductions in arms that are primarily offensive in purpose. Eventually, following a grand settlement and the establishment of peaceful and friendly relations between Greece and Turkey in the Aegean and a mutually acceptable settlement in Cyprus, the border areas between the two countries will no longer call for fortifications of any consequence.

Finally, Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus, as well as other states in the region, should embark on the much needed task of mutual and balanced prejudice reduction (MBPR), whether prejudice is manifested in hostile press commentaries, textbooks, literature, theatre, movies, sports, or other forms of social and cultural expression. Universities, think tanks, business and labour associations, and non-governmental organisations can contribute to such a task immensely through carefully conceived projects that promote mutual engagement and co-operation.

Following a potential grand settlement, trade, tourism, investment, and joint ventures between Greece and Turkey at home and abroad should increase significantly. Greece will also abandon its policy of linking Turkey's EU accession strategy to the Cyprus and Aegean questions and will, in fact, seek to facilitate Turkish entry which will make

it a much easier neighbour for Greece to live with than an alienated and militaristic Turkey.

In the last analysis, the state of relations between the two countries, which impacts on the prospects for peace in Cyprus, is a product of the attitudes and perceptions of ruling elites and general publics, operating within global and regional settings.

Since 1974, Greece has developed durable and tested democratic institutions and has become a member of the EU. Turkey is currently at the cross-roads of the great choice between a European and a non-European orientation. The ingredients of a lasting settlement, given the current international setting can be based only on the assumption that Turkey, in addition to Greece, will solidify its West European orientation.