

## **TURKEY'S CYNICAL POLICY VIS-À-VIS CYPRUS VERSUS CYPRUS'S IGNORANCE AND ILLUSIONS VIS-A-VIS TURKEY**

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Turkey's policy vis-à-vis Cyprus (and the Cyprus Problem in general), is regularly being discussed in the context of the public debate among political parties in Cyprus. Turkish attitude and stance towards the solution of the Cyprus Problem is one of the main variables that is always raised with officials from the UN, the EU as well as foreign governments that are interested in the settlement of the Problem.

Since Recep Tayyip Erdogan came to power a choir of analysts promotes a vague argument that "now Turkey is more favourable for the solution of the Cyprus Problem" and that "Turkey has adopted a more consensual approach for addressing all its bilateral problems in its neighbourhood".

During his most recent, illegal visit to the occupied part of Cyprus Turkey's Prime Minister Erdogan eloquently illustrated his vision regarding the solution of the Cyprus Problem. His explicit references that "Turkey will never recognise the Republic of Cyprus" and the expression of his "discontent because Turkey and Cyprus are members to the United Nations" proved, once again, that Erdogan is not the progressive, reformist and consensual political figure that some politicians, journalists and academics argued in the past years.

Moreover, Prime Minister Erdogan added that the solution to the Cyprus Problem must be found on the basis of a "new partnership of two equal states", hence leading to the eradication of the internationally recognized Republic of Cyprus. The agreement leading to this new partnership will also mean, according to the Turkish interpretation, that no significant territorial adjustments (notably the return of Morphou and Karpasia) will take place and the Turkish military troops and settlers that are currently present on the island will not be withdrawn.

The Government of the Republic of Cyprus should have analysed and responded to the aforementioned Turkish provocations. In addition, both the Republic of Cyprus and the Hellenic Republic ought to have decided a coordinated and synchronized approach for addressing the escalating Turkish threats regarding the sovereign right or the RoC to exploit natural gas and resources within the Exclusive Economic Zone of Cyprus.

Having said the above, I believe that some objective political judgments can be made: firstly, Erdogan's statements regarding the form of the solution of the Cyprus Problem have in effect obliterated the ongoing Christofias-Eroglou negotiation process. The Greek Cypriot side had to seize the opportunity to alter an already fading process to its benefit. Unfortunately, by investing in the so called "Cyprus owned and led process" we allow Ankara to stay behind the

scenes without paying any political cost for its rigid stance and intimidations against the RoC.

Secondly, due to our pathetic behaviour towards Turkey we are currently facing a constant escalation of Turkish provocations, notably regarding Cyprus's right for exploiting natural resources. A similar experience during 2006 and 2007 helps us to draw necessary lessons learned. At that time the government of Tassos Papadopoulos responded decisively and without any delay a) by announcing the unilateral suspension of the Chapter on Energy, and b) by not accepting the conclusion of the Agreement on Administrative Arrangements between Turkey and the European Defence Agency (EDA).

My belief after having analysed both Erdogan's public messages and the views expressed by Mr. Eroglou at the negotiating table is that our strategy for the past 3 and a half years was short sighted and full of strategic deficiencies. The tolerance that the present government has shown towards everything related to EU-Turkey relations as well as the unexcused delay for the exploitation of our natural resources (not to mention the devastating catastrophe after the explosion in Mari) have triggered Turkey's most arrogant, offensive reflects.

The government of the Republic of Cyprus, under the leadership of Mr. Christofias, has not produced any tangible repercussion to Turkey in any International organisation, even when the RoC was in a favourable position to seek new, advanced measures against Turkey building on the historic decision of the EU General Affairs and External Relations Council of December 2006, which is valid until today, to suspend 8 negotiating chapters.

History has proved that every time our side tried to satisfy Turkey's demands in an effort to appease Turkish aggression this led to the exact opposite. Our side's strategic deficiencies do not (and can not) bend Turkey's aggressive policy. On the contrary, they lead to the generation of new, more excessive demands especially since the Greek Cypriot side is the one that always makes the extra mile in order to meet Turkey's and the Turkish Cypriot side's demands and requests in order not to be blamed by the UN and the international community for not reaching a solution.

It is only fair to say that the only areas of convergence during the past 3 years of Christofias-Eroglou proximity negotiations were achieved in the areas where our side conceded unilaterally, after conceding to Turkish demands.

International Politics and Diplomacy can not be based on wishful thinking and ideological illusions, especially if one has to mitigate a cynical policy as expressed by Prime Minister Erdogan. Foreign Policy must be conducted with tactical and strategic thinking having as a basic principle that nothing remains static (as we have witnessed recently with the Arab Spring). The government of the Republic of Cyprus, unfortunately, has failed to exercise a dynamic and multidimensional Foreign Policy that could act as an enabler of pressure on Turkey and as a shield of security for promoting Cyprus's sovereign rights and claims in the Exclusive Economic Zone.