



## The security of Cyprus in the new geopolitical environment of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East

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Security is a crucial question, always of contemporary interest, since it is related to the survival of Hellenism in Cyprus, that faces a mortal danger as a consequence of Turkish expansionist strategy. Today, the Republic of Cyprus (RoC), amputated by the Turkish occupation – with its political problem unsolved and the regional environment plagued by unprecedented instability – is burdened by a disadvantage in terms of security. Greece is weakened while Turkey is eager for a solution of the Cyprus Problem with advantageous Turkish terms in order to score a single success, after the resounding collapse of the misleading policy of ‘zero problems’ with its neighbouring states, and to demolish the RoC’s strategic cooperations with Greece, Israel, Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon, that endanger its energy interests and strategic ambitions in the Eastern Mediterranean.

It is necessary to examine the security of Cyprus under the prism of three fundamental factors: a) the importance of security for the existence and functioning of a state; b) the expansionist strategy of Turkey against Cyprus; c) the particularity of the geopolitical environment in the region of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East.

### **The importance of security**

*Peace is attained by security, security is safeguarded by power, and power is achieved when its principal coefficients are strengthened.* The term *national security* means the requirement to maintain the survival of the state through the use of political, military and diplomatic power that constitute the *national power*. Security, power and survival are interrelated to the concept of the state. This is the reason that drives Turkey to pursue the dissolution of the RoC state; the last remaining ‘bastion’ of Cypriot Hellenism, the fall of which will lead to its extinction. A state *without security* is doomed to political instability and financial collapse. Then its citizens are forced to abandon it en masse in search of a safe destination; as in Syria, Lebanon, the countries of the Middle East and North Africa. The lack of security conditions in the so-called ‘Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus’ (‘TRNC’) forced 16,000 Greeks of Karpasia to leave their ancestral homes of thousands of years, despite the Third Vienna Agreement of 1975, which guaranteed their human rights, that was not respected by Turkey.

## **The Turkish strategy for Cyprus**

*The Cyprus Problem is predominantly a security problem that consists of the Turkish effort to gain the strategic control of the whole island, on the basis of long-term strategic planning since the 1950s (Nihat Erim reports 1956), and the requirement of Hellenism to inhibit this effort. The amputation suffered by Cyprus due to the Turkish invasion of 1974, the occupation, the colonization and ethnic cleansing continues for 42 years. Today, Turkey expresses uninhibitedly its expansionist plans against the RoC in all sectors – political, military, economic, demographic, and diplomatic – and continues its aggression to fulfill its *Kıbrıs İstirdat Projesi* (KIP) [Cyprus Recapture Plan] prepared in 1958 by the Special Warfare Office of the Turkish General Staff. To achieve its ultimate objective, Turkey is implementing auxiliary intermediate goals: a) the upgrade of the pseudo-state ('TRNC'); b) the degradation of the RoC; c) the demographic distortion; d) the amputation of the Republic's sovereign rights. It implements *the strategy of compellence*; that is, the use of force, not necessarily military, to oblige the opponent to act contrary to its will. It uses the intercommunal talks, under the threat of the Turkish occupation forces and the settlers that exercise psychological pressure on the island *Greeks to submit to a solution* that serves Turkey's aim of undertaking the control of the whole island; through *the catalysis of the RoC and its substitution by a regime that is subordinate to Turkey*.*

Turkey conspires against Cyprus, perceived as a pivotal space for its geopolitical expansion, and resists any solution that supports an independent state across its southern coast, where the island's Greeks will be deprived of autonomy and security choices. The control of the whole island is the aim of its high strategy since it considers Cyprus as of paramount importance to the security of the Asia Minor peninsula and the expansion of its influence in the Eastern Mediterranean and beyond. That is why the Cyprus Problem remains unresolved. That is why *Turkey does not accept full partition or two completely independent states on the island any more*. These are options that can only serve as intermediate objectives for Turkey.

## **The new geopolitical environment in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East**

Beyond the conventional Turkish threat, Cyprus, as a consequence of its geographical location and the state of semi-occupation that suffers, is vulnerable to risks of asymmetrical threats as well; threats stemming mainly from Islamic fundamentalism that is on the rise in the region. The RoC has no control over the occupied territory where the Islamic government of Turkey continues its illegal colonization and systematic Islamization, through the massive building of new mosques and the transfer of Imams from Turkey. An environment that crates risks for the growth of radicalized Islam that may spread to the free territory of the Republic because of the weaknesses that burden the internal security system of RoC.

The new geopolitical environment in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East is characterised by rapid and significant developments in the fields of security, energy and the bilateral relations of regional states. Developments that have created instability, greater ignition risks, and new power relations, as a consequence of the Syrian crisis, where the developments took the form of a regional conflict with global ignition hazards.

## **Security**

- Conflicts within Arab countries, with particular intensity in Iraq and Syria where jihadists violently installed an Islam State (IS) of rampant barbarism.
- Actions of military blocs under the United States (US) and Russia against IS but also conflicts of interest among them, with the US against Assad and Russia in favour of him, and both of them supporting the Kurds in Syria.

- Collapse of the strategic triangle US-Israel-Turkey.
- Aggravation of Islamic fundamentalism and resurgence of Sunni-Shiite confrontation.
- Mass migrations, massacres of Christian communities, destruction of religious and cultural heritage.
- The despotic government of Turkey under the Islamic AKP party that is possessed by hegemonic, neo-Ottoman visions and expansionist ambitions that contributed to the growth of Turkish aggression, namely:
  - the invasion of Cypriot Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), the illegal claim over much part of it, and threats against the RoC to cease the exploitation of its natural gas resources;
  - the military repression of the Kurdish autonomist efforts within Turkey and beyond its borders in Iraq and Syria;
  - the fostering of the Islamic State to support its aggressive strategy against the Kurds and Bashar al-Assad;
  - the pressure on the West to accept the creation of a security zone south of its borders with Syria with the objective of restricting the autonomy of the Kurdish people;
  - hostile actions towards its neighbouring states and the increase of violations in the Aegean.

The destabilization of regional security in the Eastern Mediterranean, due to the evolving geopolitical affairs, requires the adoption of *a new security architecture* that will be based on the strategic cooperation of regional states and on an acceptable level of cooperation between the US and Russia for peace, stability and security. *Turkey, with its Islamic government, its dangerous neo-Ottoman visions, its destabilizing role, its democratic deficits, and its hegemonic tendencies, should not constitute the founding structure of a new security architecture*, after the security vacuum created by the collapse of the triangular cooperations between US-Israel-Turkey and US-Israel-Egypt.

## **Energy**

The finding of large natural gas reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean in Egypt, Israel and Cyprus, and the potential reserves in Greece, Lebanon and Syria, create new geopolitical realities. But the geopolitical upgrade of the Eastern Mediterranean presents *new security cooperation opportunities and prospects for the energy security of the regional states and the European Union (EU)*, but also projects a new arena of competition, with the apparent *pursuit of Turkey to become a regional energy center* where hydrocarbon resources from the Mediterranean, the Caspian Sea, northern Iraq, and Russia *will be regulated*.

## **Interstate relations**

- Rupture of Turkish relations with neighbouring states due to its hegemonic ambitions: Israel, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Iran.
- Strengthening of the cooperation between Greece, Cyprus, Israel, Egypt, Jordan.
- Military action of Russia in Syria, with Iranian support, and aggravation of relations with Turkey due to conflicting interests over the Assad regime in Syria, the Kurdish Question and the Turkmen.
- The military presence of Russia in Syria, in order to maintain its military bases, obstructs the hegemonic aims of Turkey, which seeks to engage the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) against Russia and to prevent the US-Russian cooperation for a Syrian solution.
- Friction in Russia's relations with the US and the West over the future of the political regime in Syria.
- Creation of favourable conditions for the autonomy of the Kurds in the region.

## Republic of Cyprus strategy

In this volatile environment *the RoC should enhance its role as a stabilizing factor and upgrade its security potential in all levels*, through the strengthening of its internal and external coefficients, in order to balance Turkish power.

Internal components: prescribe the formation of a National Security Council, the drafting and implementation of a National Security Strategy, the strengthening of its armed forces, its economy, its diplomacy, intelligence and its demographic-national cohesion; particularly the defensive capabilities the National Guard on land, sea and air, that is degraded due to the lack of necessary support from the state.

External components: require the revival of the Joint Greece-Cyprus Defence Area Doctrine, the accession to the Partnership for Peace, the strengthening of the strategic cooperations with its neighbours, especially Israel, Egypt, and important United Nations Security Council and EU countries, as well as hydrocarbon companies of these countries.

In the energy sector, the RoC should target the support of *the energy axis from the Eastern Mediterranean to the EU through Greece* and exclude the channeling of its natural gas to Turkey, in order to avoid its transformation into an energy hostage of the latter.

In the Cyprus Problem, *the RoC should exclude a solution that will turn the island into a protectorate under the control of Turkey*. The Turkification/Islamization of the whole island, that is also directed against the interests of neighbouring countries – Greece, Israel, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan – as well as those of the EU, the US and Russia, must be clearly presented by its diplomacy as a destabilizing factor of regional security.

With the strategic control of the whole of Cyprus, Turkey:

- will reinforce its geopolitical gravity and increase its hegemonic role and arrogance;
- will become an uninhibited troublemaker in the region with greater independence from the US and the EU;
- will toughen its posture against Greece in the Aegean and against Israel, the strategic depth of which, and its air and sea access to the Eastern Mediterranean, will be dangerously severed;
- will take control of Cypriot natural gas and impose its transfer to Turkey;
- will undo the energy planning in the Eastern Mediterranean to its favour and cancel the strategic cooperations of the RoC with neighbouring countries.

The solution of the Cyprus Problem as specified by the joint announcement of 11 February 2014 for the beginning of intercommunal talks, serves the Turkish strategy for the control of the whole island and has to be redefined. Furthermore, it adversely affects the geopolitical interests of the Mediterranean countries as well as the regional security system and energy synergies since it limits the autonomy and independence of the RoC in favour of Turkey.

In the use of its geographical location and infrastructure, the RoC should provide support to the West and Russia that act against the global threat of jihadism and terrorism, as *an advanced EU base and a bastion for its protection*. The tripartite partnerships that the RoC had developed with neighbouring states contribute to the stability of the Eastern Mediterranean, the strengthening of its geopolitical gravity and security condition, and should be deepened even more through practical methods of implementation. The recent strategic cooperations between Cyprus and Israel, Jordan, Egypt and Lebanon may be strengthened even further, while Cyprus and Greece may constitute the bridge of cooperation between Israel and the Arab world. The parallel tripartite partnerships of Cyprus can contribute to the building of a new security architecture in the E. Mediterranean, under the necessary precondition that the independence of the RoC will be preserved and the solution of the Cyprus Problem will not place the island under the strategic control of Turkey. At the same time the armed forces of the Republic should be reinforced and their deterrent capability enhanced.

## **Conclusions**

The Republic of Cyprus, semi-occupied by Turkey and in contact with the volatile Middle East region, which is plagued by unprecedented waves of Islamic fundamentalism, faces serious security problems. To ensure its survival, it should strengthen its national power components, its strategic cooperations, the prospect of directing its energy resources to the EU, and prevent a solution of the Cyprus Problem with Turkish terms. The Turkification/Islamization of the whole island is also directed against the interests of the Arab states in the region, Greece, Israel, the EU, the US and Russia.