

WHAT STRATEGY FOR AKINCI?

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Well before his election to the leadership of the Turkish Cypriot community, Mustafa Akinci has set his strategic objectives on the Cyprus problem. These include a federal solution that would unite the Island and taking control of the affairs of the Turkish Cypriots by themselves - causing reactions from Turkey. Under the circumstances, the question examined here is what strategy will he adopt in the pursuance of his objectives?

Beyond his personal endeavor to achieve his objectives, which will improve the lives of the Turkish Cypriots and weaken Turkey's hold over them, there are another two important factors that will determine the strategy of Akinci. The first factor relates to the local environment within which every Turkish Cypriot leader operates, in other words, the de-facto situation on the island. Legally or not, Akinci, like his predecessors, Talat, and Denktash, has been elected by the Turkish Cypriots as "president" of the so-called Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus ("TRNC"). It will, therefore, be unrealistic to expect him to put aside the "status" and his title as "president". This title was placed upon him by the de-facto regime that was created by the events of 1974 on the island and by the unilateral proclamation of the "TRNC" in 1983. It does not also follow that because he is a moderate or because he declares that he wants the reunification of Cyprus; he will behave less as "president" of the de-facto regime, than his predecessors. Neither he is expected to remove the symbols and other institutional elements of the "TRNC". Akinci, like previous Turkish Cypriot leaders, will continue to consolidate the entity, status and functioning of its "institutions" and if possible to promote recognition of the regime. This strategic set up will define his role in pursuing the above objectives in the Cyprus talks. In other words, he may be well intended but at the same time he will be a demanding and tough negotiator in finding a solution as an equal partner in the Cyprus talks.

The second strategic parameter that will significantly affect Akinci's role is Turkey itself. The presence of 46,000 Turkish troops in northern Cyprus preserves the occupied territory of the Cypriot Republic at the north as a single and coherent geographical entity. At the same time, the de-facto regime created by the Turkish forces since the 1974 invasion is supporting and decisively strengthening the negotiating position of the Turkish Cypriot leader in the Cyprus talks. On the other hand, Ankara through its strong military presence there can exercise a decisive control over the activities of the Turkish Cypriots. Turkey controls the security forces, telecommunications, ports and water resources, as well as aviation and

commercial activities and the circulation of money there. Turkey allocates around \$ 400 million annually in the form of "financial aid" to the Turkish Cypriot community, but it is utilized by the defence establishment there. This situation serves as a rope around the neck of every Turkish Cypriot leader. Ankara can use it and tighten it accordingly, depending to what extent his diverging views need to be consistent with Turkey's interests and views.

It was within these strategic parameters that Dervis Eroglou had to operate in promoting his inflexible and hard line behaviour. But occasionally he was made to exhibit a more reconciliatory public attitude by Ankara, in order not to expose Turkey or to serve Turkish interests at the time. However, Eroglou, at the same time, he was trying covertly or overtly to pass his positions at the negotiating table, which aimed at partitioning the island or a confederal solution. Akinci will probably have to operate through the same framework as Eroglou and formulate his strategy too. But unlike his predecessor he is expected, at least, to continue to adhere to the same principles he supported so far. If this is the case, he should be expected to promote carefully at the negotiation's table the reunification of the island and a federal solution to the Cyprus problem - without interference from outside. If not, all the Cypriots will bear the cost.