

TURKEY'S VISION OF CYPRUS AS ITS SATRAPY

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Turkey's vision of Cyprus is that of a satrapy; a Turkish satrapy. It does not extend beyond that. If this thesis is understood and accepted then the past and present policies of Ankara vis a vis Cyprus, be those of the Kemalists or, today as it happens those of the Islamists, can be decoded and make "sense". It will make "sense" why Turkey can submit a 100 page brief to the European Commission, as Ankara did recently, developing a convoluted array of arguments to prove that one state-member of the European Union, Cyprus, does not in fact exist. The Turks are talking about a country that for six months in 2012 presided over a Union that Turkey aspires to join. One does wonder whether the Turkish Foreign Ministry prepared its EU brief on its own volition and by observation, or whether it took its a priori cue from the pronouncement of its leader, Tayyip Erdogan, who a few weeks back announced, to an unaware world, that "there is no such country called Cyprus".

Accepting the satrapy thesis will also make sense of the latest provocations of Ankara in the Exclusive Economic Zone of Cyprus and its throw back tactics of gunboat and coercive diplomacy. A satrapy has no rights except those magnanimously granted, as was the case with the satrapies of the Great Persian King. Naturally, as a Turkish satrapy Cyprus cannot have its own EEZ. Worse, Cyprus is an island state and according to the Turkish autointerpretation of the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention, island states can have neither continental shelves nor EEZs. (Lucky for the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia that do not have Turkey as a neighbour.) But that is not the end of it. Turkey is one of a handful of states that stubbornly refuses to sign the now universally accepted LOS Convention. And while it claims rights under it and pronounces that it will defend those precise rights with its gunboats, it denies the same to Cyprus.

But this is not, again, the end of it. When the Turks are not trying to impose their cockeyed sea rules on Cyprus through coercion, as they are currently attempting to do with their gunboats, they claim that they act in their capacity as "guarantor" of Cyprus under the 1960 Treaties. In other words they claim guarantor rights about a state while with the other side of their mouth they declare that such a state does not exist. Or on further contemplation, they claim that at least "half" of it exists, which is the Turkish version of Japan's Manchukuo puppet state in Manchuria (1931-1945), that they forcefully set up after their 1974 invasion. And that it is on behalf this Turkish "Manchukuo", that they act.

Accepting the satrapy thesis can also demystify western propagated wisecracks such as "those who claimed to have understood the Cyprus problem are either fools or ignorant". Or that the Cyprus problem is amongst the "most intractable" in the world, in fact the "most intractable", next to which even the Arab-Israeli conflict pales in comparison. Some even go as far as to claim that the Palestinian conflict may stand a chance to be resolved some day but not the Cypriot one. On this last point they may be right but only because Ankara cannot envision but a "Turkish peace" on Cyprus. In other words, if only a 21st century Turkish version of a satrapy is established. Then the problem will cease.

There is nothing difficult to understand about Cyprus and there is nothing "intractable" there, unless none of the international customary and conventional rules and regulations of state behaviour may apply to Cyprus and its population and, without outside powers interfering in its internal affairs as Ankara blatantly does on a daily basis. And Lord forbid that these norms should furthermore include human, individual and democratic rights that are the hallmark of the European way of life--its political and legal civilisation that took some three hundred years and rivers of blood to establish. No, none of these should apply to Cyprus, says Ankara.

Since 1974 40000 Turkish troops, NATO trained and US armed, have been illegally ensconced on Cyprus in an offensive deployment. The Cold War ended, Germany was reunited but the Turkish Army has not bulged an inch on Cyprus. In fact according to UN reports the Turkish occupied part of Cyprus remains, mile by mile, the most militarised piece of land in the world. And the only reason Turkey has been getting away with this retrograde and imperialistic behaviour is because of its membership in the Euro-atlantic security alliance. For no other reason. It is NATO membership that shields Turkey from the type of criticisms as well as sanctions that the West regularly imposes and /or demands that they be imposed on pariah state behaviour. Since the 1950s, a "holy cow" syndrome has characterised the West's relationship with Turkey allowing Ankara unrestrained and arrogant behaviour, exhibited constantly in Cyprus and, lately, to a whole range of security issues. There is not a single Western Chancery today that is not unaware that the Islamist regime in Ankara has, over the last few years, become the single most important enabler of jihadist terrorism in Syria and Iraq and with agents increasingly active in Libya, Egypt and elsewhere in Africa and the Caucasus. There exists a NATO state that is a terrorist enabler. But none dare say so except in coded diplomatese and increasingly though officially sanctioned leaks in the press.

Still, Ankara's sub rosa relationship with international terrorism is not something recent. It dates back some decades and it is documented by studious research. Turkey has been an enabler in the making of the Pakistani nuclear bomb, something Washington was aware but pretended otherwise (see, "Turks Ship U.S. A-Tools To Pakistan", The Washington

Post, Sunday, June 28, 1981). The Turkish "Deep State" (Derin Devlet) protected and guided the hand of Ali Agca in his attempt to assassinate the Pope in May 1981. And it protected his co-conspirators until matters fell apart with the 1996 Susurluk scandal revelations. Turks have played a not so opaque role in the bombings of non Muslim houses of worship in Istanbul (before and after 9/11) and in the assassination of prominent minority Turkish citizens and Turkish christians. And in the U.S. Court system the interested researcher can find troves of material and underground connections on Ankara's espionage activities against the U.S. involving illegal trade in nuclear materials, plus fascinating information based on intelligence sources about the shadowy role of Turkey prior to the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York. (see Deposition Before the Ohio Election Commission, Case No. 2009E-003, of August 8, 2009.) And these are just a sample.

If there is a country the West has been handling as "a spoiled child" and as the diachronic "model" and cure for all that ails the non-western world that country has been Turkey. Since WWII Turkey has received more monies from the West than any other western ally, including South Korea, South Vietnam and even Israel, all of which have been involved in major wars (except for Turkey, when it attacked...Cyprus). Yet the Turks firmly believe that this is "owed" to them as "indispensable" allies. "You [the US/West] must pay our bills because you need us", was the cynical way a Turkish Prime Minister put it to a well known US scholar and official, Dankwart A. Rustow, in Ankara. (see his "Turkey's Travails", Foreign Affairs, Fall 1979, p.102). This continues today in the form of various political IOUs, with weak and vulnerable states in the region, like Cyprus, at the short end of it.

Still Turkey cannot have its cake and eat it too. Certainly not in Cyprus. Its 1974 attack may have yielded conquered territory which Ankara proceeded to ethnically cleanse from its indigenous Greek Cypriot majority population and established there a de facto geographical cleansed region, to hold and control for its "lebensraum" and Great Power ambitions. These ambitions are unabashedly admitted by Ahmet (a.k.a. "Zero Problems with Neighbours") Davutoglou, in his magnum opus "Strategic Depth"(2001) where he actually uses the nazi era word "lebensraum" in the context of his geopolitical vision. But Turkey's 1974 attack failed in its strategic objective which had been to delegitimise and destroy the Cypriot state. And proof of that is that Cyprus, including its territories currently controlled by turkish bayonets, became a bona fide member of the EU. The legitimacy of the Cypriot state cannot disappear because its powerful neighbour wills it. And this is causing frustration in Ankara expressed in aphorisms, political tantrums and bullying tactics. For its part, Cyprus should remain cool and defend its interests though legal and institutional instrumentalities available to states.

The EU membership of Cyprus does by its very nature upend the vision of Cyprus as the satrapy of Turkey. Other developments in the region enhance the ability of Cyprus to thwart Turkish bullying. These include the discovery of hydrocarbons in the Eastern Mediterranean and the growing interest in energy and security cooperation amongst non-NATO regional states. An additional factor has been the gradual unmasking and almost total failure of Turkey's "benign" hegemon project for the entire region. This may have commenced with the collapse of the axis with Israel. But it was soon revealed, first in Libya, then in Syria- Iraq and now in Egypt, that it went beyond singling out Israel and was in fact based on the false and unhistorical (Davutoglean) premise that the subject peoples of the Ottoman Empire enjoyed their subjugation so much so that they were simply dying to return to it under its 21st century reincarnation, with the likes of Erdogan and Davutoglou at its helm. This is not how interstate relations work and are conducted. Yet for a weak state like Cyprus, it is a blessing in disguise that the Islamist elite in Ankara remains unwaveringly in its course, convinced, in addition, that it is carrying out Allah's (Sunny) calling.

Cyprus cannot on its own deal with its Goliath neighbour. But it does not have to. It can, within the international system and its dynamics, pursue a Lilliputian strategy. Which effectively tied down Gulliver.