

## TURKEY'S EU AND CYPRUS POLICY AFTER THE ATHENS SUMMIT

*Dr. Emel OSMANÇAVUŞOĞLU OKTAY*

*Hacettepe University*

*International Relations Department*

On Turkey's Cyprus policy two trends were clarified along with the dispute reflected to the press for over a year. When the solution on the Cyprus issue was cited just two months ago, one could remember the need to sign the United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan's Cyprus plan (proposal for the comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem) that was submitted to the Turkish and Greek Cypriot parts on November 11, 2002 and was revised for two times and that the parties had discussed or little discussed the plan, by April 16, when the Greek Cyprus signed the treaty on its accession to the European Union. On the other hand, some other people thought that the continuation of the status quo was not an unpleasant outcome as there was peace in the Island since 1974. However the rallies held in the Turkish Republic of the Northern Cyprus (TRNC) demonstrated that mere peace is not adequate and the people have to share the rights Greek Cypriots already have.

What was really showed to the Turkish public regarding the Greek people casting vote for the Presidential elections and electing the hardline nationalist Tassos Papadopoulos, candidate from the centre-right Democratic Party (DIKO), at first tour, that the Greek Cypriot side was ready and eager to sign the Annan plan.

However, things did not develop in the expected way and when Papadopoulos, who seemed to stand against the Annan plan and was mostly upheld by AKEL (Communist Party) during the election campaign, and had a harsh stance, took his place in the politics scene and the domestic and foreign press gave up showing the Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash as the only responsible for the failure of reaching an agreement on Cyprus problem. When the press initiated to point out the content of the plan and eavesdrop (especially the domestic press) on what the other side was saying, the Turkish side thought that the solution would not be profitable as expected. In relation to the decision-making in the international relations (as the people both taking part in the theory and the decision stage of the issue know well) the first thing that comes to mind is the other sides' thoughts and what would their reaction be in case of a certain determination. However, before thinking their possible ideas and reactions on the Annan Plan, the Turkish media had mostly focused on the fight of the solutionists/supporters of the status quo.

Today it's well understood that just as the former Greek Cypriot leader Glafkos Clerides had accepted, the parties had failed to negotiate the Annan Plan as a whole "due to the technical impossibilities and especially the lack of time." In other words, although the plan includes certain issues, there are still vital points that the parties could not discuss (or couldn't adequately discuss.) Actually Clerides himself had also told that the negotiations could not be finalized by February 28. However, both the pressure of Annan, acting as if he is the Secretary-General of the EU rather than the UN, and the demonstrations held in the TRNC had brought the "deadline" and the "ultimatums" within a two-three-day period. Notwithstanding that much of these ultimatums look as if they take both sides' interests into consideration, the Turkish side was the only one to be made ineffective since the Greek side's EU membership was certain; whether or not it signs the agreement or agrees to hold a referendum.

As the revised Annan plan was discussed at The Hague held on March 10 (following February 28, deadline for a last-ditch effort to secure a deal between parties), the TRNC officials, thinking the plan would bring immense problems rather than peace to the island, decided to oppose it. Actually, although both the Turkish and the Greek sides had notified at the summit that they would not accept the plan with its current condition, only the Turkish side was shown as the opposing party. However, it's obvious that the solution attained at The Hague had also caused the Greek side, which believed that the corruption of the single voice at the Turkish side would show the light at the end of the tunnel, to lose patience. Especially when February 28 was approached, the message Athens, which currently holds the EU term-presidency, was giving that the Turkish government was discussing the issue absolutely on different grounds. In addition, TRNC was expected to accept the conditions recommended to them.

The policies established by Prime Minister Costas Simitis and Foreign Minister Yorgo Papandreu since 1996 were based on this enthusiasm. The interpretations as "Turkey is a stable country and wants peace and Turkey as a EU member country serves Greece's interests" were made for a long time, but prior to this policy pronouncement, Greece had carried the Cyprus and the Aegean issues it could not solve with Turkey to the EU platform and started to follow a policy that is not troublesome, but would provide an extreme success in terms of its results by taking use of Turkey's enthusiasm to be a EU member. It had even successfully dealt with the Turkish relations that were about to be cut due to the Öcalan and S-300 crises, through the earthquake diplomacy and had created the conditions for a new pressure. Today's conditions were like the continuation of this situation. And the Greek politicians told this aspect to the Greek and Greek Cypriot public as defeating Turkey through the existence of a stronger partner and as a compromising policy abroad.

Greeks attach the Turkish policy's success on having a single voice and its foreign policy not being an instrument of the political parties' rivalries. Turkey's political outlook was like this until the Justice and Development Party (JDP) came to power. The Greeks could not imagine arise of different opinions between the government and the Presidency and army on an issue like Cyprus, which is seen as a "national case", and the exaggerated reflection of these differences to the press. Moreover, the Greeks and the Greek Cypriots could not attribute any meaning to it and interpreted the condition as, "Ankara is trying to mislead and surprise us through various statements and unexpected attitude." At that period, agitated by the words of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who was seen as Prime Minister at the EU countries and especially in the Athens though he was yet the leader of the ruling JDP, as "Turkey has been following wrong policies for nearly 40 years," Greeks had started to think how to put the Aegean problem on the table by 2004.

Unfortunately the policies and expectations established on the assumption concerning the traditional Turkish policies became part of history were hit at The Hague on March 10. Although Erdoğan was not yet appointed as Prime Minister but had started to give impressive messages on foreign politics, his fixations were right. He had said, "Annan has deceived us." As a matter of fact, he had returned from the Greek side, which he knew that had no effect on Annan on the issues like the "map, sovereignty and immigration", with worse conditions and had said, "I looked over." In short, it became clear that the solution lies in the "compensation of the Turkish side only."

Although Greek Cyprus signed the EU accession treaty on April 16 in the name of both sides, it took the last step towards the EU membership alone. The treaty signed between the Greek Cypriot side and the EU said, "Cyprus

has become the EU member as a whole but in the absence of a settlement, the application of the *acquis* to the northern part of the island shall be suspended, until the political problems are solved and the Council decides unanimously otherwise, on the basis of a proposal by the Commission."

Turkey's approach was to provide synergy on equal basis in order to arrange permanent peace and for the sake of the Turkish Cypriots not to be crushed by the Greeks' political and economic pressure. However, the Annan plan was far from assuring this confidence to the Turkish side asked to sign under this plan. The plan, which had to be read carefully as a whole, gives the impression at first that it meets "management" expectations of the Turkish side in respect to the "founding partnership" and the "political equality." However, when the plan is attentively read, it is seen that it includes articles that would, in long term, endanger the Turkish Cypriots' existence in the island. The founding partnership and sovereignty means the right to demolish this partnership on condition of removing the factors those of which make sure the ongoing of the common state that is established by the sovereign factors through their own will. On the other hand, the Annan plan (including the final version) does not comprise any article on this issue and (1) the guarantorship given to the guarantor countries would in a sense guarantee the statue of Cyprus, which is to be EU's part. Likewise, the "political equality", which means the right to have a word in the decisions and the laws without considering the population of the parties, could only be provided through the right to veto. (2)

On the other hand, however much the decision reached on Turkey's EU membership at the Copenhagen Summit is shown as a "victory" on condition of "if", it prevented any will to sign Annan plan "by assuming all risks." Today it's seen that the estimations as, "although a disadvantageous agreement has to be signed in Cyprus for Turkey's EU membership, we should accept that the EU accession will not make any differences," are wrong. The Aegean problem, which is to come on agenda with or after solving the Cyprus issue, has to be solved in the same logic. The Greek Cypriots' and Greek's tactics become obviously right at this point. The tactic the Greek Cypriot side implemented for 15 years reached its goals at the Copenhagen summit held on December 12–13. As a result of this systematic policy and the efforts spent on this path, Simitis, who said, "We have opened a new page for Greece and Hellenism," on the other hand stated that Greece want Turkey's integration to the EU. After the Greek Cyprus's EU accession became definite at the Copenhagen Summit without any opposition by the ruling JDP, Papandreu brought the Aegean problem on the agenda. Greek Defense Minister Yannis Papandoniu claimed, "The violations in the Aegean Sea are increasingly continuing." He said, "Turkey's approach on this issue does not fit with its efforts on the EU path."

While the island is to be officially accepted to the EU within less than a year (May 2004), EU's political pressure on Turkey and the TRNC has increased. (3) The uneasy condition that appeared at the signing ceremony arranged for the acceding 10 countries at the Athens Summit held on April 16–17 forms the beginning of the problems Turkey would counter in Turkish–EU relations. The Turkish Ambassador to Athens has also participated to the signing ceremony of the Greek Cypriot state, which Turkey does not recognize, in position of the member country and signed the document. Hence, the political and legal arguments Turkey has supported until now had been pushed away.

#### **Recent Developments in the Island: Opening of the Gate Doors**

Following the accession treaty on April 16, TRNC Parliament opened the border gates on April 23 in order to accept one-day visitors from the South. When the Turkish and Greek Cypriots showed great interest to the opening of the gates, the Turkish side extended the entries and exits up to three days and so the Greek side had to present certain facilities to the Turkish side. Meanwhile, the Greek Cyprus announced the good intention package; however it did not produce effect as much as the opening of the border gates. The Greek Cyprus National Council wants to gather the Turkish Cypriots under its structure and give the opportunity to have the right to participate to the European Parliament elections through a decision as long as the Northern Cypriots submit the documents regarding the right to work, education possibilities and the document showing that they are the citizens of the Cyprus Republic. While only the Turkish side was expected to show interest to the opening of the border gates, the Greek Cyprus was disturbed about its citizens to seal their passports on condition of entering the Turkish side.

A question comes to mind at this point: If this attempt was expected to give such positive results why the TRNC officials did not open the gates before? The answer to this question lies in the EU accession treaty. The border gates were opened immediately after the Greek Cypriots had signed the EU accession treaty. As TRNC deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism Serdar Denktash said, "If the border gates were opened before the signing ceremony, the Greek Cyprus could prevent the act in various ways but the administration that entered the EU, where the free movement was nearly sacred, could not act like this." On the other hand, since no distress emerged on the island after the entries and exits between the two societies were allowed, many people said "Denktash was claiming that the two societies cannot live together, but the recent developments show the opposite," however, the situation would be different under the current conditions if the Greek Cypriots, after a regulation like the Annan plan, which did not foresee any homes to some 120,000 dislocated Turkish Cypriots, had come to the places where the Turkish Cypriots were living.

Under the current circumstances the Turkish and the Greek Cypriots are politically equal. In this respect, Greek International Law Professor at the Athens Pandino University, Aleksis Iraklidis's affirmation published on the Ta Nea daily paper on May 22 is important. At the end of his article titled "Denktash's sternness hid Papadopoulos," Iraklidis mentions that the antipathy and despising feelings against the Turkish Cypriots dominate the Greek society and this antipathy and despise in real terms were the source of the Cyprus problem since 1948. As a matter of fact, reacting to the intensity of the Greek Cypriots entering TRNC, the Greek administration and the Greek Cyprus Orthodoxy Church made several statements and tried to dissuade the public from these entries and exits. Having no meaning in practice, these efforts also show the unjust situation in burdening all responsibility on Denktash in the failure of the agreement between the parties.

The Turkish Cypriots were frightened of facing a similar massacre, which they had countered in the 1960s, and 70s, and this fear has been the source of the current drawbacks. This can be understood. A logical person should be able to say, "It's not possible to confront with massacres in a unipolar and global world." In addition, just eight years ago in July 1995, in front of the United Nations Peace Keeping Soldiers from Holland, some 8.000 Bosnians were massacred (4) in Srebrenica, which was announced as the "secure paradise" by the UN soldiers. This incident can take its place it deserves in the Balkan history books. From a very positive and liberal point of view, the real problem can be appraised as the Turkish Cypriots' entering into an assimilation process on their land.

What kind of changes would any solution under the Annan plan make in an ordinary TRNC citizen's life? With no doubt, all the expectations are established on the basis of the estimations that after signing the plan the parties would be capable of living together. In terms of Bosnia–Herzegovina, the EU and the UN, both trying to gather the Turkish and the Greek Cypriots, who have different religion, language and nationality and were separated due to the ethnical skirmish, had envisaged and realized with the Dayton Agreement to separate Bosnia–Herzegovina, recognized by the UN as well, saying, "These societies cannot live together anyway," just because the strong Serbian army aided the Bosnian Serbs to dismiss the Bosnian Muslims from their homes and also establishing a Serbian Republic ethnically cleaned, however this cannot be objectively evaluated.

Meanwhile, (verifying the pessimists) if Turkey cannot become an EU member in the nearby future, and even falls apart of the EU tactically due to the inevitable developments in the world, then Cyprus will be a missed "partner" for Turkey, having no chance to leave on its own geography. Likewise, Turkey, excluded from the EU, will have no position as a guarantor country for the Turkish Cypriots, who would probably lose their homes and jobs, with the most optimistic estimation and would not meet their expectation within the borders of the "United Cyprus Republic" due to the Annan plan.

As a result, what has to be done from now on is that Turkey, which is insistent on being guarantor between the Cypriot parties, must be associated with the EU membership during the EU accession process.

*1. The last paragraph of the second part of the Comprehensive Settlement Agreement's third version, which is submitted by the UN Secretary–General Kofi Annan to the Turkish and Greek Cypriot sides on February 26, read as follows: "The status and relationship of the State of Cyprus, its common state government, and its component states, is modeled on the status and relationship of Switzerland, its federal government, and its Cantons. Accordingly: Cyprus is an independent state in the form of an indissoluble partnership, with a common state government and two equal component states, one Greek Cypriot and one Turkish Cypriot.*

*Basis for A Comprehensive Settlement of Cyprus Problem, Turkish Republic of Foreign Affairs Ministry web site: <http://mfa.gov.tr>*

*2. For detailed information: A. Kuloğlu, E. Osmançavuşoğlu Oktay, Ayşe Özkan, "Kıbrıs İçin Çözümün Neresinde?: BM Kapsamlı Çözüm Belgesinin Değerlendirilmesi, Stratejik Analiz, April 2003, Vol: 3 No: 36, p. 26–28.*

*3. In line with this, the fiscal aid package for the TRNC also shows the implementation of the carrot policy skillfully.*

*4. For detailed information: Jan Willem Honig and Norbert Both, Srebrenica: Record of a War Crime, Penuin, London, 1996.*