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## **CYPRUS: PERSPECTIVES AND OPTIONS**

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Paper presented at the international conference on "US and EU Common Approaches to Turkey"  
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## **Cyprus: Perspectives and Options**

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### **1. Cyprus as an issue of Turkish politics**

The Cyprus issue has since long been of eminent relevance for Turkish foreign and domestic politics alike. In early 1998 Vice Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit stated that Cyprus is of indispensable strategic interest for Turkey and Ankara would not withdraw its troops from the island, even if there were no single Turkish Cypriot living on the island. It seems indeed that never before Turkish politicians have expressed their determination to defend the Turkish presence in Cyprus more vigorously than during the past two years.

Cyprus is located only 80 km from the Anatolian coast at the "soft belly" of Anatolia. The island provides an ideal base for both protecting Turkey and controlling the Eastern Mediterranean area and the Middle East. The

argument of protection has become a new impetus since it has been decided that the port of Ceyhan in the bay of Iskenderun will be the terminal for the oil and gas pipelines from Central Asia in the future. In addition, exercising control in the Middle East has received a new relevance in the context of Turkey's strategic alliance with Israel.

Equally important, the Cyprus issue is at the very core of Turkey's delicate relationship with neighboring Greece and the European Union alike.

After all, critics see Ankara's conduct in Cyprus as proof that Turkey is constantly violating human and international right and is therefore not eligible for a close relationship with the European Union. Critics of Ankara's policy in Cyprus find support by numerous resolutions of international bodies like the UN, the European Parliament, the Council of Europe, a.s.o. Ankara has been criticized mainly for:

- its continuous occupation of 37% of the island with considerable military forces;
- intentionally colonizing Northern Cyprus with population from Anatolia and thereby changing the demographic character of Cyprus;

Rauf Denktaş and the leadership in Ankara have always argued that the 1974 military intervention and occupation of part of the island was instead a "peace operation" legitimized by the Zurich/London Treaty of Guarantee which is a part of the constitution of the Republic of Cyprus. According to Denktaş, the Greek Cypriots already destroyed the basis for ethnic cohabitation in 1963/64. He considers the military presence of Turkey to be indispensable for the security of the Turkish Cypriots. Ankara has stationed about 35000 soldiers of the third Turkish army as well as 350 tanks on the

island (in comparison: some 650 Greek officers are in the Greek Cypriot National Guard; an additional 950 Greek soldiers are in the Greek contingent in Cyprus - ELDYK) Turkey is the only country which has recognized the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus", declared by Rauf Denktash on 15 November, 1983.

In the past, Ankara's aspirations to achieve a closer relationship with the European Union have at least theoretically been an incentive to show some will to compromise in the Cyprus question. After Turkey's rejection by the Luxembourg European Council in December 1997, this incentive has finally become irrelevant. Now, Turkish politicians have little reason to hide their political and strategic concepts and options behind diplomatic formulas.

Not only has Turkey seen its interests violated by the way, the Turkish EU-application has been dealt with. In a similar way, Ankara was snubbed by the way, the Greek Cypriot 1990 application for full membership was handled by the EU countries. From Ankara's perspective Greece was in a position to blackmail its EU partners to act according to its interests, whereas Turkey had to remain helpless without being able to exert much influence.

At this point, a short review of recent Cyprus - EU relations seems appropriate. On June,3, 1990, the government of the Republic of Cyprus formally presented its application for full membership to the EU. Three years later, on June 30, 1993, the Commission of the European Community presented its Opinion to the Cypriot application. The application of the Republic of Cyprus in the name of all Cypriots was recognized as being legitimate. The EC-Commission stated that Cyprus was meeting the

requirements of the EC-Treaty and other relevant legal frameworks.

Nevertheless, the Commission addressed two major problems that were implicit in the Cypriot application:

(1) Whereas the south of the island presented no major problems concerning the adaption of the *Acquis Communautaire*, economic competitiveness, and other factors, the same was not true of the north. For example, GDP per capita reached 55% of the EC average in the south but only 19% in the north.

(2) The Commission stressed, that the integration of Cyprus into the European Union must imply a peaceful, just, and durable solution of the Cyprus question.

The latter statement of the Commission could easily be interpreted as a demand for a solution of the Cyprus question prior to an accession. However, the key question "solution before accession?" was put aside in the following political process. In June 1994 the European Council in Corfu decided to consider the Cypriot application in the next round of EU enlargement. On March, 6, 1995 the Greek Cypriots and Greece attained a substantial breakthrough, when Greece gave up resisting the establishment of a customs union between the EU and Turkey. As a *quid pro quo* for Greece's willingness to compromise, it was decided to start accession negotiations with Cyprus six months after the commencement of the Intergovernmental Conference (Maastricht II). This decision was reconfirmed several times at later meetings of the European Council. As concerns the connection of the Cyprus membership with a solution to the Cyprus question, the hope was expressed that the ongoing accession process would act as a catalyst for the Cyprus question. Additionally, the Greek Cypriot side was asked to include Turkish Cypriots into the delegation at the EU accession talks.

Turkey as well as the Turkish Cypriot leadership have repeatedly expressed their refusal to accept the EU's approach towards Cyprus. According to the Turkish position, the application of the Republic of Cyprus is illegal, as it does not reflect the will of the Turkish Cypriot community. The accession of Cyprus to the EU is considered to be a disguised Enosis with Greece. The Treaty of Guarantee, according to the Turkish position, rules out any accession to political units like the EU. Finally, an accession of Cyprus to the EU should not be considered before Turkey itself has become a member of the EU, and before the Cyprus question has been solved. Consequently to these positions the Turkish side has also rejected President Klerides' offer to include Turkish Cypriots into the Cypriot delegation attending the accession talks.

Another reason for explaining Ankaras present hard line position towards Cyprus may be seen in the light of a changing strategic situation in the southern part of the island. At the end of January, 1997, the Klerides government announced that it had ordered modern S-300 air-defence missiles in Russia to be stationed on the territory of the south. The order consisted of four systems of 12 missiles each with a reach of 160 km. In Turkey, the announcement provoked vehement reactions: Prime Minister Tansu Ciller threatened to destroy the missiles. The strategic purpose of deploying the S-300 seemed to be obvious: The stationing of the missiles would for the first time enable the Greek Cypriots to defend their airspace against the Turkish airforce, and, Turkish aircrafts could even be hit behind the Anatolian coastline. Nevertheless, military experts agree, that the S-300 do not endanger the absolute military superiority of the Turkish army on the island. Turkey's strong reactions to Greek Cypriot armament plans can only be understood if

we consider the new role that Greece is playing on the island. In Pafos a new airbase was established where Greek F-16-fighters will be deployed.

Additionally, it was decided to erect a new port for Greek military vessels.

With its new bases, Greece is at the same time meeting two requirements. In 1993 Cyprus was declared part of a new Greek "defense doctrine" and a common defense policy inaugurated between Athens and Nicosia. The deployment of Greek aircrafts is indispensable for the Greek army to effectively support the Cypriot National Guard, hereby giving some substance to the common defense policy. At the same time the reach of the Greek airforce is extended far into the Eastern Mediterranean area. For this purpose the Greek airforce needs the S-300 mainly for its own protection. Thus, much more than by the S-300, the generals in Ankara are alarmed by the idea that Greek aircrafts could use the Greek air base on Cyprus to attack the sensitive "soft belly" of Anatolia.

As we have seen, Cyprus plays a manifold role in the foreign and military politics of Ankara.

In addition, Cyprus has long since been an issue of Turkish domestic policy. The fate of the compatriots in Cyprus has stirred up national feelings in Turkey. Consequently, no government in Ankara has ever dared to exercise severe pressure on the Turkish Cypriot leadership for substantial concessions in the Cyprus question. Turkish politicians feared the risk of being denounced as national traitors at home. More recently, Cyprus has become an issue of domestic Turkish policy in yet another sense: In a common declaration on July, 20, 1997, President Demirel and Mr Denktash agreed on a partial integration of the "TRNC" to Turkey. Turkey should take over the responsibility for the foreign and defense policy from the TRNC. At the end of

March, 1998, Turkey and the TRNC agreed on the establishment of an economic union. "From now on we are considering the KKTC as a part of ourselves", Minister of State Gürel has been quoted saying. Turkey's motives to partly annex the "TRNC" have been outlined above. Ankara may put the blame for its Cyprus policy on others. Still, it provides additional arguments for those within the EU, who prefer Turkey to be left out in the long run.

At a press conference on August 31, 1998, Denktash, accompanied by Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem, presented a document containing proposals for a solution of the Cyprus question. According to Denktash, it constituted a last effort to bring about an acceptable and durable solution in Cyprus. It called for the establishment of a special relationship between Turkey and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and Greece and the "Administration" in Southern Cyprus respectively, by means of analogous treaties. The Turkish Cypriot and the Greek Cypriot side should recognize each other as sovereign states with equal rights. The two states on the island should then form a "Cyprus confederation". If both parts of the confederation agreed, it could then apply for EU membership. A comparison of the latest proposals with earlier positions taken by Denktash reveals that they do not contain many new elements. As concerns Turkey's relationship with the TRNC the proposal was just a repetition of the de-facto situation with the TRNC being a protectorate of Turkey. But the proposals do at least constitute a clarification of the Turkish position. Some months earlier Mehmet Ali Birand criticized the Turkish (Cypriot) policy in the following sense: According to Birand, Turkey has always wanted a partition of Cyprus but instead pretended its readiness to negotiate about a federation.



Some analysts have argued that the US-administration is not thoroughly opposed to the Denktash proposals. But, Madleine Albright and other US-officials have rushed to stress that they fully support the UN proposals as a basis for negotiations. That is, any solution of the Cyprus question should be based on a bi-communal, bi-zonal federation. This formula is in principle widely accepted also by the EU member-states and - last but not least - the Greek Cypriot majority on the island.

A consensus about a solution for the Cyprus question is far from being on the horizon. Still, the EU has formally opened accession negotiations with the Republic of Cyprus on November 10. Yet, there is still the risk of an armed conflict involving Greece and Turkey as long as the plan for stationing the S-300 missiles in the south of Cyprus is not finally abandoned.

## **2. Perspectives and Strategies for Cyprus**

### **2.1. Maintaining Peace and Reducing Security Risks**

Preventing an armed conflict on and around the island is the immediate task for all parties interested in the security and stability of the area. In more concrete terms, the following issues have to be addressed:

(1) **Military de-escalation at the Green Line:** The United Nations Forces in Cyprus (UNFICYP), with presently only about 1200 men have by and large been able to prevent armed escalations at the demarcation line. The bloody events of summer 1995, when 5 people were shot and many were injured, yet showed that the capability of the blue helmets to prevent violent incidents, especially during mass demonstrations, is limited. De-escalation at the Green

Line is part of an ongoing military dialogue involving NATO and the UN that needs to be intensified.

(2) The deployment of S-300 in the south has to be prevented; Pressure from EU countries as well as from the US has been considerable in that respect. Most EU-countries are not likely to admit accession to a country involved in acute military confrontation. By providing support to the critics of a Cyprus accession, the S-300 issue has already caused considerable damage. The US do not appreciate the idea of a Russian missile system stationed on the island, the radar system of which needs to be supported by Russian specialists. President Klerides was right in his argument that the S-300 would not really threaten the military superiority of Turkey over the island. Yet, he has understood that the negative repercussions of the armament project inspired by Greek generals are too big a prize to pay for an uncertain increase in security. Military experts have stated that the S-300 can be easily identified and neutralized by the Turkish airforce. The costs involved in the armament project - about 2,5 billion dollars - are a heavy burden for the economy. Foreign tourists, the most important source of foreign currency, are deterred from visiting the island. Thus, President Klerides is presently struggling to find a way out of his self-made "missile trap". Klerides has once again presented a plan for a complete de-militarization of the island. If de-militarization could be accomplished, the Greek Cypriot side would reconsider its S-300 project, such is Klerides' offer. Greek Foreign Minister Pangalos presented another suggestion for a solution: With a military flight moratorium applied, the S-300 would be rendered unnecessary. Turkey has rejected Klerides' and Pangalos proposals. Recently an analyst has stated that armament in the greek part of Cyprus may also serve as an excuse for

Turkey's own armament activities. As concerns the S-300, the government of the Republic of Cyprus has postponed their deployment several times. Former president Vassiliou, head of the Cyprus delegation at the EU accession talks, has recently suggested in an interview: The deployment of the S-300 will be postponed to the end of December or to the end of another month. Still, a way out of the "missile trap" has to be invented.

(3) Generally the armament race on the island has to be slowed down. This task is even more important in the long run, and is certainly more difficult. Armament in Cyprus is connected to the huge armament programs launched by Greece and Turkey. Greece is currently spending 4.8% of its GDP for military purposes, more than any other country in the EU. On 6 November 1998 Athens announced the purchase of four batteries of US-made patriot missiles at a cost of 1.2 billion dollars. Additionally, substantial military equipment will be ordered in France and Canada. Greece intends to spend about 24 billion dollars for modernizing its military forces during in the next five years. On the other hand Turkey has started a giant armament program with 150 billion dollars to be spent for the modernization and the extension combat effectiveness during the next 25 years. Both the US and some European states are supplying military equipment to Turkey and Greece and thus have little credibility in demanding measures of disarmament.

(4) Deficient security in Cyprus is also caused by national hatred and prejudices on both sides. After all, any durable solution for Cyprus, and even the maintenance of peace in case of a non-solution, must be built on a certain degree of mutual confidence. It was this logic that inspired UN Secretary General Boutros Ghali to put confidence building measures (CBM) at the top

of his agenda in his 1992 Set of Ideas. Regardless how desparate the outlook for a negotiated solution may be - CBM are to be considered necessary by all parties interested in a lasting stability on a little island.

## 2.2. Accession Talks with the European Union

On 10 November 1998, the EU has started accession talks simultaneously with the Republic of Cyprus and the Central and East European countries Hungary, Poland, the Tchech Republic, Slovenia and Estonia. With the excellent economic performance of the Republic of Cyprus, the accession of Cyprus is becoming a more and more realistic perspective. At the same time more and more of the EU-members seem to feel uncomfortable with the idea of Cyprus becoming a member. The S-300 issue as well as the deadlock in intercommunal negotiations reminds the EU of a dilemma whih has not been solved but just banished. The EU partners feel uneasy with Greece continuously trying to block payments to Turkey according to the financial protocols. On the other hand, the December 1997 decisions as concerns Turkey have left some of the EU leaders with a bad conscience. The US, on the other hand, have been pressing for a change in the EU policy against Turkey. At the Luxembourg EU-summit of October 5, French Foreign Minister Védrine stated that Cyprus could not become a member of the European Union without a prior solution of the Cyprus question. The French position was supported by other countries. German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel at an earlier occasion has expressed the view that the accession of a divided island is hard to imagine. Nevertheless, according to Kinkel, Turkey should not have the right to veto the accession of Cyprus. Despite of all reservations the EU partners might have - it is Greece who objects to putting

up any new preconditions in the case of Cyprus. Greece has repeatedly made it clear that it would otherwise veto the EU's eastern enlargement.

Taking into account the present situation within the EU, there are three possible scenarios concerning the accession process of Cyprus to the European Union:

(1) the accession talks will stagnate as the existing diplomatic impasse cannot be resolved; this might eventually also imply a failure of the whole Eastern enlargement of the EU;

(2) the Republic of Cyprus will be unilaterally accepted as a member, with an option given to the Turkish Cypriots to join later; at least, this option seems to be acceptable for the Greek Cypriot leadership and Greece. The provisions of the Treaty of Rome concerning the divided Germany are considered to be a similar case (yet, the situation is quite different). The EU-Commission has stated that the option of an unilateral accession of the South will imply some technical problems but will be principally feasible. While it would meet the Greek Cypriot European aspirations it will most certainly mean the end to all hopes for a unification of Cyprus. Turkey will most probably react with a final annexation of Northern Cyprus. There been little discussion about the victims of such a scenario: certainly, these will be the Turkish Cypriots who will be endangered of finally loosing their Cypriot identity.

(3) Cyprus will become member as a whole: In fact, such an option is most unlikely as it must be based on a solution of the Cyprus question according to the concepts of the Greek Cypriots and the United Nations. The provisions of the EU-treaties require a strong central government that acts as a legal

personality, controls the economic policy and guarantees for the functioning of the Common Market on the whole territory. In short, such an option would require that the "Cyprus knot" must be cut without cutting the island into two parts at the same time.

### 2.3. Negotiating a solution for Cyprus

If we define a solution of the Cyprus question to be a true alternative to the status quo, it may be postulated that all the elements of such a solution have been on the agenda in earlier negotiations. It should be based on the model of a bi-zonal and bi-communal federation. Such elements should include confidence building measures, demilitarization and the establishment of an international military force, economic incentives for the Turkish Cypriots, a.s.o. Finding the elements for a just solution, the Boutros Ghali "Set of Ideas" of 1992 may be useful, at least as a "quarry".

Who could eventually cut the Cyprus knot and bring about a solution to the Cyprus question ?

The United Nations have recently (at the end of September 1998) launched another Cyprus initiative. The previous initiative of intercommunal negotiations in Glion/Switzerland has failed like countless previous UN initiatives. At Glion, Denktash had demanded a prior recognition of the TRNC as a sovereign state and furthermore the withdrawal of the Greek Cypriot application for EU membership. With the Turkish resistance to a federal solution now being clearer than ever before, the prospects for the new initiative are everything but bright. It seems that the UN's means of offering good services for a negotiated settlement have been exhausted.

The European Union is itself interested in a solution. But it has neither the mandate to act as a negotiator nor is it a credible and independent intermediary, with Greece as a member. US initiatives, like Holbrookes recent mission, have equally failed. The EU's demand that the accession process should act as a catalyst to a solution seems to remain wishful thinking.

The most probable option for the years to come is the preservation of the status quo on the island, with occasional interventions from mainly the US to preserve peace and prevent armed conflicts. With both sides armed to the teeth, this task will be difficult enough.

After all, Ankara retains the key role in allowing a political settlement in Cyprus. Yet, to allow for the establishment of a bi-zonal and de-militarized federation, Turkey would have to give up Northern Cyprus as a military base. This implies that substantial incentives should be given to Ankara. The EU therefore must give Turkey a clear perspective for its future membership. Like with other applicant countries the EU has to define its preconditions precisely. Binding Turkey closer to Europe seems to be the only possible strategy that might finally cut the Cyprus knot. It is a project that is in the interest of Europe and the US alike.

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