

# Thoughts on Cyprus as a Geopolitical Condition in the Eastern Mediterranean

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## RÉSUMÉ

L'auteur esquisse un cadre nouveau basé sur le rôle géopolitique de Chypre dans la région méditerranéenne. Ses réflexions se destinent aux chercheurs actifs dans le domaine des affaires étrangères grecques et turques.

## ABSTRACT

Through his reflections, the author offers researchers in the field of Greek and Turkish affairs a different frame work based on the geopolitical role of Cyprus within the Mediterranean region.

## Deficit of Geopolitical Strategy

Perhaps the most striking characteristics of the geopolitics of Cyprus over the last century are the growth in its content and the change in context within which the Cyprus issue has evolved.

The contextual change became very apparent, for example, shortly after the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974. Since then, the changes associated with amateur foreign policy management led to the notable road to geopolitical reductionism for the Greek interest in the Eastern Mediterranean. What needs to be considered is that the present geopolitical context, in all its aspects, comes as the intended result of various hegemonic (in Gramscian terms) and neo-colonial practices implemented by an Anglo-American axis in collaboration with the local élite. Despite the fact that the anglo-american axis is somehow incompatible, the Greek geopolitical position eroded in the Eastern Mediterranean ignoring Cyprus strategic position. According to Hitchens (1997), Cyprus occupies a strategic position in the Levant

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and outside powers have never scrupled to employ local and regional rivalries in order to get their own way there.

Once again, the lack of foreign policy-making strategy did not help to capitalize on the definite antagonistic symptoms between London and Washington. Having failed to exploit such symptoms, Athens annihilated its own astonishing geopolitical interest in the area. Moreover, all the mistakes and inconsistencies (essentially those before and after Helsinki) spelled out the disintegration of the Republic of Cyprus.

One might think that the appalling crisis in the former Yugoslavia, in conjunction with the anatomy of turmoil and violence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, had the effect of deepening the geopolitical eclipse of Greece in the region.

More precisely, the controversies surrounding the current Greek official action towards Southeastern Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean, including the Cyprus issue, have led to the geopolitical eclipse of Greece.

Given this eclipse, it seems that Athens is incapable, due to the lack of geopolitical strategy, of estimating and tackling the revival of Turkish expansionism, reinforced by a vast industrial-military complex.

Undoubtedly, a new set of problems emerges when we look at the relationship of advanced military technology to the problems of regional destruction.

A consequence of this concentration on military applications of technology in Turkey has been the build-up of a vast industrial-military complex. Major industrial firms are now involved in the production of military equipment or machines. Control is thus usually achieved by concentrating on military production.

Critical decisions about rapid military industrialization, however, are taken not in the light of public debate about general social or even political desirability, but rather on Turkey's expansionist objectives of

panturanism Frank Weber (1979) and Fitzroy Maclean (1949) point out that Turkey's roots on *panturanism* go back to the late 30s foreign policies.

I would argue that these objectives are attached to the orientations of a *neo-Ottoman* foreign policy model. According to Constantinides (2000), this model goes against the European orientation of Turkey. In the broadest possible sense, Turkey becomes increasingly linked with the mechanisms of military technology, and welded into one mammoth war structure. This implies that the increasing use and reliance on military technology itself leads to strengthening authoritarian political management driven by the military autocracy.

The main point, however, is that the existing 'depoliticization' associated with the military autocracy, makes such a system appear a 'rational necessity' lying outside the field of political democracy. This necessity is already apparent in support of highly authoritarian and coercive policies for population as well as for ethnic control. Virtually, political and economic democracy in Turkey can be achieved through a system of confederation. Indeed, as a mosaic of various nations, Turkey can be a modern democracy if a system of confederation is designed to meet nations needs, human and political rights. Whatever one feels about the political significance towards a confederation system in Turkey, one of the more important practical ideas to have emerged from it is the need for a geopolitical equilibrium in the Eastern Mediterranean.

In this sense, nations will be liberated from the domination and exploitation inherent in Turkey's totalitarian régime and, at least, will therefore contribute to the required decentralization of power.

Apart from that, the projected sense for the need of a 'post-emotional' approach to the Greek-Turkish relations (a concept somewhat related to postmodernism) stems from either quasi-historical arguments or apolitical as well as irrational foreign affairs methodology which contribute to geopolitical annihilation in an indisputable manner.

There are even post-emotional rationalizations for why Turkey would not stop its own carefully planned goals pertaining to territorial aggrandizement in the form of confederation in Cyprus and consolidation in the Aegean. It seems there is a concrete world of rooted fictions saturated with concrete geopolitical goals. In fact it seems as unreasonable to suppose that there is absolutely no evidence.

By continuous misassessment of Turkey's geopolitical goals, Greece has forfeited a historic opportunity to foster development, stability and security in Eastern Mediterranean as well as to possess an efficient political mechanism to stop naked aggression, as Turkey showed in the Cypriot village of Strovilia, last summer.

Perhaps the most consistent feature of the Greek foreign policy toward Turkey has been its inconsistency. Such a policy, primarily consisting of rhetoric but practically ineffective and counterproductive, reaffirms an apparent chronic instability which is instrumental in Turkey's geopolitical patterns on the content growth of the Cyprus issue. The subsequent eclipse of Greece and the resulting alienation between Athens and Nicosia have made Ankara an operational center of political gravity in the whole region.

Given the geopolitical eclipse of Greece, it is conspicuous continuity for the international community (whether through the UN, EU or other) to perform with equanimity and reluctance; in other words, not to act more forcefully at an earlier stage leading, therefore, Turkey to view the international consideration as only a relatively minor obstacle to Ankara's goals.

Again the case of Strovilia, after Helsinki, along with the impending decision by Athens-Nicosia to go (in 2000) through political contortions has proved the fallacy of Greek foreign policy.

The recent, rather selective and one-dimensional political imaginary inevitably marginalizes some wills and national interests. Even more discouraging for the content and context of the Cyprus issue are the projections for the *catalysis* (abolition) of the Republic of Cyprus, if one takes into account the recent 'proximity talks' started in New York on December 3, 1999.

What is surprising then is not the fact that the manipulation of information falsified the content of *catalysis*, but rather the fact that the governments (Athens and Nicosia) did not provide an efficient foreign policy response to those who foment the Republic of Cyprus.

Ultimately, one can conclude the following: the disappearance of Greece and appearance of Turkey created a new geopolitical *fait accompli* in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Rather than encourage a geopolitical strategy, Athens has tended to look for illusory solutions and present simplistic versions for the content and context of the Cyprus issue, particularly in the post-Helsinki era.

Greece's ineffectiveness in designing and implementing geopolitical strategy has led to its intention, along with Nicosia, for absolution in respect to the *catalysis* of the Republic of Cyprus. Whether they negotiate a quasi-solution or seek to improve their European affairs, the Simitis and Clerides governments will be doing so from a less favorable position than that which it might have achieved, if it had established geopolitical strategy in the Eastern Mediterranean.

In addition, the current practice of forcing the victims of Turkish aggression (Cypriots) to negotiate with their tormentors, while keeping the victims weak through an arms embargo (S-300) or a defense system, is morally reprehensible and politically unwise, serving only to reward Turkey's aggression by legitimizing ill-gotten invasion gains. Meanwhile the bilateral strategic partnership between Ankara and Tel Aviv is considered a geopolitical threat to a EuroMed security system. According to Mourtos (2000) the geopolitical dimension of this alliance is not confined to the narrow geographical limits of the two countries. It extends both to the Eastern Mediterranean and the countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia, infiltrated by Turkish and Israeli interests in a mutually supplementary manner, thus creating a joint power network.

Predictably, such a practice also has the effect of creating the context for continued tensions. Thus, Cyprus-occupied territories should be returned to the control of their legitimate government before negotia-

tions are undertaken in Geneva or New York. Following the restoration of the territorial integrity of Cyprus, internationally sponsored peace negotiations can address several issues such as the following four:

1. the rights and security of all ethnicities and minorities must be guaranteed;
2. all refugees must be permitted and assisted to return safely to their rightful homes, where many dwellings need to be rebuilt;
3. all the settlers have to leave Cyprus;
4. invasion crimes trials for violators should be undertaken to underscore the seriousness of the world community's commitment to human rights.

In sum, Turkey's perpetual aggression, along with Greece's geopolitical absence in the Eastern Mediterranean, has introduced a potentially dangerous destabilization in region in which there is no delicate balance.

## **Towards the *Catalysis* of the Republic of Cyprus**

All the phenomena of new geopolitical developments and changes should be considered from the perspective of their structural foreign and defence policy determination as well as their relation to contrasting strategic positions.

As Loucas (2000) points out the recent crisis in Kosovo, many folds of which have continued up to today, assured all of us that a triangle of instability, whose angles are Yugoslavia, Caucasus and Middle East, was set up in our broader region ten years after the dissolution of the USSR. Greece has the misfortune and fortune to be located within this triangle. It is a misfortune, because security runs high risks from the shaking of stability and peace in these three areas. But at the same time, it is a fortune, because through participation in NATO, OSCE and EU, Greece has a major role in the formation of the new geopo-

litical sub-system in that specific area of Eurasia. By examining the matters through this context, we observe that the geopolitical map of Balkans (from day after NATO air raids against Yugoslavia began) is characterized by a completely 'new' structure for the macro-historic reality of the region.

Geopolitics should be seen as a form-determined foreign policy and, therefore, it will be more suited to the pursuit of some types of economic or political strategy than others because of the modes of intervention and resources which characterize that system of geopolitics.

Furthermore, one cannot understand the context of geopolitical strategy without referring to political or economic strategic selectivity by other antagonistic states as main foreign policy *modus operandi*; nor can one understand the activities of these states, without referring to their level of substantive operational unity.

It is a matter of great importance that strategic selectivity is, at least in principle, the *modus operandi* of Turkey in the post-Helsinki era.

In a recent paper, F. Tayfur (2000) comments that the Turks perceive the Mediterranean region as being composed of the Middle East, Greece and Cyprus, the Balkans, and Europe. This means that Mediterranean really means the Eastern Mediterranean in Turkish foreign and defence policy thinking. This focus stems from the fact that the Eastern Mediterranean presents a variety of problems that are perceived as important threats to Turkish territorial integrity and the country's vital interests. The problems with Greece and Syria, the Cyprus problem, the Arab-Israeli conflict and its spillover effects in the region constitute the main preoccupations of the Turkish foreign policy establishment in the Mediterranean overall.

On the other hand, Alifantis (2000) underlines that the regional developments surrounding the kind of national security that is interconnected with national aspirations are summarized clearly in the following question: Can the revisionist claims of Ankara be covered by the strategic interests of the USA or the Greek geostrategic control of the Aegean Sea that assures the security of the eastern Greek islands —

especially since this situation continues to constitute the basis of the Euro-atlantic nexus of security as was in the post-war period.

A favourable development for Ankara is steadily based on the Turkish provocation of tension and friction in the Aegean sea. Tension-invitation for international mediation in a *de facto* Greek-Turkish negotiation or indirect regulations in various international organizations, e.g. NATO and ICAO. On the other hand, any Turkish attempt for controlled crises in the Aegean Sea, even if such an attempt fails completely as a method of compulsory diplomacy at the expense of Greece, shall have provoked international interference as in the crises of 1974, 1976, 1987 and 1996.

Since Greece has failed to produce a strategic geopolitical codification, the relational character of foreign policy based mostly on reactionary activities appears all the more clearly.

It is here that the role of Greece's political administration of foreign policy (before and after Helsinki) is crucial in understanding how a geopolitical absence, in conjunction with the relative apathy on Cyprus issue, is imposed on the various (in)activities and how these (in) activities place the *catalysis* of the Republic of Cyprus. Such a *catalysis* became quite evident last September in New York when Secretary-General of the UN stressed equal status of parties in Cyprus proximity talks.

What follows is the text of Secretary-General Kofi Annan's statement read on September 12, 2000, to the participants in the Cyprus proximity talks, Glafcos Clerides and Rauf Denktaş:

"The Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot parties have been participating, since December 1999, in proximity talks to prepare the ground for meaningful negotiations leading to a comprehensive settlement. I believe the time has now come to move ahead.

In the course of these talks I have ascertained that the parties share a common desire to bring about, thorough negotiations in which each represents its side,



and no one else, as the political equal of the other, a comprehensive settlement enshrining a new partnership on which to build a better future in peace, security and prosperity on a united island.

In this spirit, and with the purpose of expediting negotiations in good faith and without preconditions on all issues before them, I have concluded that the equal status of the parties must and should be recognized explicitly in the comprehensive settlement, which will embody the results of the detailed negotiations required or translate this concept into clear and practical provisions".

However, besides the argument of the abolition of the Republic of Cyprus, there are very serious challenges to the accession of Cyprus to the European Union (EU). In summary, D.B. Sezer (1999) stated that Turkey was opposed to the accession of Cyprus to the EU above all else on the argument that the Guarantee Agreements of 1960 rule out the accession of Cyprus before that of Turkey. In other words, the proposed accession of Cyprus to the EU would be in violation of the international agreements that created the republic in the first place until after Turkey has joined.

Despite the Turkish 'perforated' arguments on accession legitimacy, which targets the annihilation of the Republic of Cyprus, the process of EU enlargement suits Cypriot and Greek strategic objectives of encouraging stability and peace in the South East Mediterranean region. On top of it all, the last report produced by the EU (November 2000) indicates that Cyprus has achieved substantive progress in various areas of the *acquis* and continued with further harmonization measures. In this sense, it is regrettable that Turkey has not been able to realize the unique impetus that the European perspective offers to a Cyprus solution. EU membership would introduce in Cyprus a network of rules, principles and institutions that would respect democracy, human and political rights, religion and cultural heritage. In the final analysis, Cyprus will offer geopolitical benefits to EU and Greece, as a member of the European Union, is affected directly.

Nonetheless, we can consider actual as well as potential political criticisms on the absence of geopolitics which, in turn, implies a constant need for strategems and processes towards rational foreign policy management.

Adopting a geopolitical strategy approach also involves re-thinking the relations between nation(s) conscious action and the nation(s) relevance of action.

For both, nation(s) relevance and nation(s) power must be defined in terms of their impact on nation(s) interest in the whole region.

In light of this, Greece should incorporate the institutional mechanisms that will make it possible to guarantee the effectiveness and coherence of a geopolitical approach based *inter alia* on:

- Continuity
- Simplification of diplomatic structures
- Interface between foreign and defence policy
- Strategic intelligence, planning and information pooling
- Strategic mobility
- Electronic interoperability

To that will have to be added substantial progress on both the research and development (R&D) practices of foreign and defense departments.

A Greek geopolitical vision of Cyprus and subsequently of the Eastern Mediterranean could prove to be sufficiently a key factor for its own capability to compete and cooperate in the region.

Any discussion of Greece's current foreign policy has to start with the fact that the Euromediterranean transformations and European enlargement run parallel. According to Horafas (2000), Greece has a central geopolitical position, exceptional geopolitical significance, in conjunction with the shift of the basic orientation of international security from the East-West relations of the previous decades to the North-south relations.

Greece is the only member state of the European Union, NATO and Western European Union in the region of the Balkans and Eastern Mediterranean and, for this reason only, it could and should play a stabilizing role in the broader region.

If Greece follows through, it should propose an international verification apparatus to prevent any transgressions or violations, as took place last July in Strovilia. Furthermore, in an era of virtual diplomacy, outmoded administrative and human resources practices as well as obsolete information technology threaten Greece's geopolitical capability in Eastern Mediterranean, with far-reaching consequences for nation security and prosperity.

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