

THE FINLANDISATION OF CYPRUS IS NOT AN OPTION

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Whenever the Republic of Cyprus attempts to improve its strategic situation Turkey reacts consistently and issues threats. Recently, Turkey criticised the military agreement between Cyprus and France and posed threats. The same occurred in relation to the cooperation between Cyprus and Israel.

There is no doubt that Turkey's objective is the strategic control of Cyprus. This is why it reacts whenever the Republic of Cyprus seeks to upgrade its strategic position. Turkey controls the occupied part of Cyprus. But this is not enough for Ankara. It also wishes and aims to have a say in the actions of the legitimate state, the Republic of Cyprus. It is within this framework that Ankara systematically invokes, selectively, the Constitution and the Agreements of 1960.

Some people occasionally express the view that Cyprus should avoid actions which may be perceived by Turkey as provocative. Moreover, they also appear as advocates of a bizonal bicommunal federation with political equality, or even a confederation, while holding the Greek Cypriot side responsible for the lack of a solution. To a large extent, such positions absolve Turkey of its own responsibilities in relation to the Cyprus problem. Assessing the high-level agreements it is evident that the Greek Cypriot side made substantial concessions. It is the Turkish side that did not reciprocate. On the contrary, the terms it has put forward over time do not contribute to a functional state. Furthermore, no serious state negotiates its own existence.

I also note that, according to the theory of small states, while neutrality may often be desirable, in periods of major conflicts such a policy may prove harmful. It is essential to engage on partnerships rationally and on the basis of reciprocity. At the same time, Cyprus cannot become part of any conflicts of other countries.

We should recall that when the Republic of Cyprus was striving to join the EU, the then Foreign Minister of Turkey, Ismail Cem, stated that “there would be no limit to Ankara’s reaction if ‘the Greek Cypriot Administration’ joined the Union”. Cyprus rightly continued its course, with the support of Greece as well as other countries. There were voices at the time too arguing that Turkey’s threats should not be ignored.

Memories do not fade. When the Greek Cypriot side did not accept the Turkish side’s terms of surrender in Geneva in August 1974, Operation Attila II followed. Yet even then, when the situation was desperate, the Greek Cypriot side did not surrender.

I understand the realities on the ground, as well as the balance or imbalance of power in the Eastern Mediterranean. Assessing, on the one hand, the suggestions that the Republic of Cyprus should avoid strengthening its defence and also enhance its network of strategic cooperations, and, on the other, the support for any solution, I consider that such approaches largely amount to advocating the Finlandisation of Cyprus to Turkey. And their reasoning is to avoid worse consequences. It is not rational, however, for Cyprus to accept to be placed under Ankara’s strategic control.

It is evident that Cyprus does not have the luxury of advancing maximalist positions. Yet the pursuit of an arrangement which improves the *status quo* is legitimate. In this context, I consider it important to put forward guidelines for a settlement, as well as a package of cooperation measures involving all the interested parties, as part of an evolutionary process. By the same reasoning, all efforts aimed at strengthening the statehood of the Republic of Cyprus and its deterrent capabilities are not only legitimate but also imperative. When military cooperation agreements are pursued, it is important that that they also entail the element of reciprocity. Among other things, for any facilities that are provided, it is not only legitimate but also imperative that there are guarantees for the security of Cyprus.

Finally, it is also important that the Republic of Cyprus requests from the other two guarantor powers, Britain and Greece, that they uphold its security. This is an obligation which derives from the 1960 Agreements. At the same time, it is important that the EU also safeguards the security and territorial integrity of all its member states.