

NO HEGEMONIC PEACE IN CYPRUS

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Almost forty years to the date, the Turks finally figured out that they had invaded the wrong geographic region of Cyprus. Cyprus's power wealth, its hydrocarbons, have been found to be located in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) off its southern shores and not in its northern ones, where the NATO-trained and US-supplied Turkish army attacked massively in 1974. Since then and for decades the Turks persistently and stubbornly insisted that whatever the Cyprus problem, it was permanently solved in 1974. These days they are not so sure. And they have turned peace advocates. Or so it seems.

The double irony is that if one were to believe Ankara's 1974 propaganda, namely that they were not "invading" but that they were merely launching a "peacekeeping operation" to secure the safety of their coreligionists, who were allegedly under threat of instant massacre by their blood thirsty compatriots, then it was the southern part that they should have attacked in the first place! For it was in the southern districts of Limassol and Paphos that the vast majority of the allegedly threatened 100,000 or so Turkish Cypriots lived. They did not live in the Kyrenia district and the Karpass or Morphou regions, that were the targets of the 1974 attack by Turkey.

In fact the autochthonous Greek Cypriot population in the presently Turkish-army occupied part of Cyprus numbered close to 200,000 souls. This is a figure that is twice as large as the total number of Turkish Cypriots who, prior the 1974 invasion, were intermingled with the Greek Cypriots throughout the island but, significantly, constituting nowhere a regional majority (except in a very few villages). And in July 1974, when the Athens junta- organised coup occurred against the legitimate government of the Republic, they were hardly under any threat, lest one of massacre ("genocide" is Ankara's favorite term).

Actual inter-communal violence in post-independence Cyprus occurred in 1963/64-65 and in 1967 and it was sporadic. Greek Cypriots are misleadingly cast as the villains of this period. And maybe they were. But those who do cast them as such should at least consult the posthumously published PhD thesis, "Political Geography and the Cyprus Conflict, 1963-1971" of Richard A. Patrick, a Canadian UN peacekeeper in Cyprus turned scholar. Patrick had done meticulous field research on the death toll, especially within the Turkish Cypriot community from 1963-1971 which he complemented with UN documentation, international reports and local police and death records. Space does not allow me to go into details except to say than on the basis of Patrick's figures the "massacre" and

genocide" narratives are upended. And Patrick was no friend of the Greek Cypriots.

My more relevant point is that from 1968 until 20th July 1974, the day of the Turkish invasion, there is no record of any inter-communal fighting in Cyprus and of deaths on either side (except for an accidental one in the early 1970s) and I challenge anyone to document otherwise. And who was it that said that the coup was an internal affair among Greek Cypriots and it was of no concern to the Turkish Cypriots ? No other than the late Rauf Denktash. His comments were recorded on July 15th by the CIA run Foreign Broadcast Information Service stations, operating in Cyprus since 1947.

The 1974 invasion was an act of war against the Republic of Cyprus that had a twin objective. It was designed to establish a non-existent pro-Turkish political argument that the facts on the ground and geography denied. The Turkish Cypriots, spread throughout the island, constituted nowhere and in none of the six districts of Cyprus a majority. That ethnographic and geographic fact produced a dead end for Ankara's principal argument that Cyprus should be split geographically for partitionist ends. So the invasion was politically designed to conquer the northern part and establish there the geographic basis for partition.

Still the conquest was a necessary but not a sufficient condition towards that objective. The sufficient condition was what followed the Turkish conquest and it was so planned. That was the organised ethnic cleansing of the autochthonous Greek Cypriot population that constituted the majority in the region, and the "gathering" there of the Turkish Cypriots from all over Cyprus. In other words the indigenous Greek Cypriots of the region did not become refugees because of the tragedy of war but because of the design of the invasion. Were they not forced out of their homes they would still have outnumbered the Turkish Cypriots by a 2 to 1 ratio, thus defeating Ankara's objective in spite of the conquest and forced relocation of Turkish Cypriots to the occupied areas.

Again if the objective of Ankara was the declared one of safeguarding the Turkish Cypriot population, which along with the Greek Cypriot one began to be collectively victimized after the Turkish invasion of July and not before, the Turkish invaders should have proceeded from north to south in order to secure the Limassol and Paphos districts, where the vast majority of the Turkish Cypriots resided. Instead in their August offensive the Turks proceeded to attack easterly and westerly, splitting the country in two and expelling the indigenous population.

The strategic aim of the Turkish invasion was the destruction of the Cypriot state, whose independence and territorial integrity Turkey had otherwise undertook to guarantee under the 1960 accords. But unlike its successful ethnic cleansing strategy, the forceful attempt to destroy the

1960 Republic failed spectacularly. The Cypriot state not only survived the Turkish onslaught and all subsequent and persistent Turkish efforts to delegitimize it, it succeeded, in 2004, to become a member of the European Union and even preside over it for six months in 2012, to the chagrin of Ankara. Unable to deal with Cypriot legitimacy, Ankara called off the UN sponsored negotiations. Not unsurprising, certain Western chanceries, including the UN Secretariat, were quick to shift the blame for this away from Ankara and place it, eventually, on their favourite bogey.

But there does exist a serious political problem in Cyprus; it has existed for decades and it needs to be addressed and solved foremost for the sake of Cypriots, who in two generations have suffered through an anti-colonial rebellion, a civil war, a coup and an invasion.

For peace to be established in Cyprus two conditions are necessary. First, Turkey's western supporters, by which I mean essentially Washington and London, must abandon their cockeyed view of Cyprus and their not so subtle strategy to frogmarch the Greek Cypriot majority population into a "Turkish peace", as they unsuccessfully attempted to do in 2004 through the cratocidal Annan plan. No amount of western cant, sophistry and hypocrisy (revealed in all its glory with the current Crimea crisis) can do away with the fact that the obstacle to peace in Cyprus is the offensively deployed 40,000 Turkish NATO trained and US supplied occupation army and not the alleged intransigence of the majority population of Cyprus. Concomitantly, Turkey must abandon its zero-sum game and its equally cockeyed vision of Cyprus as a Turkish satrapy.

These conditions may seem surreal to those who have been holding for decades a carpentered view of Cyprus. But are they? Why is it that the Indonesian occupation forces had to withdraw from East Timor, why did the Soviets had to leave Afghanistan and before them the Americans from Vietnam and more recently from Iraq, why did the Israelis withdrew from Lebanon in 2000 with the Syrians followed due five years later, but the Turkish elephant is allowed to trample cost free all over Cyprus for decades? Are the Turks some sort of "holy cow" in the western family? Are the West's leaders onto something about the Turks that they selfishly keep to themselves?

Why is there a consensus that there cannot be a solution to the current Ukrainian-Crimea crisis without the restoration of legitimacy, without the threat or use of force and by respecting Ukrainian sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence? Why those in the lead on this issue, the Anglo-Americans, have convinced themselves and have been unsuccessfully trying to convince the overwhelming majority of Cypriots (who in 1974 lost one percent of their population to Turkey's "peacekeepers") of the aberrant view that the Turks have so called "red lines" in Cyprus, namely that they must garrison Cyprus in perpetuity and do so through "international treaties"?

The current Greek Cypriot negotiator in the just "restarted" UN sponsored talks is fond of repeating that at this particular juncture the stars may "just align" for a win-win solution. Apparently the catalyst for his optimism, shared by his President and the so called International Community or INTCOM, are the potentially large hydrocarbon deposits discovered in the Exclusive Economic Zone off the southern cost of Cyprus.

I leave unanswered the legitimate query whether Ankara would suddenly have turned "peacemonger", were the hydrocarbons discovered off the northern shores of Cyprus, except to repeat that for decades Ankara's thesis has been that the issue had been resolved by the 1974 "peace operation". The currently advocated win-win peace scenario, is that with the hydrocarbons as "glue" and the concurrent crises in the Middle East and now in the Ukraine (where the energy issue acquires added security significance) posing unpredictable dangers, a Western sponsored sub-regional security system can be constructed in the Eastern Mediterranean that will partner Cyprus, Israel, Turkey and Greece. Such a development would be most welcomed. But for such a security regime to be viable it must have legitimacy. And as such it can only be based on reciprocity, equality, and respect and must be compatible with the existing European legal, political and civil order. No hegemons need apply. *Hic Rhodus, hic salta.*