

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE CYPRUS PROBLEM, US FOREIGN POLICY AND THE ROLE OF CONGRESS

John Brademas

It was during the Administration of President Lyndon Johnson that I became personally engaged in a foreign policy question: I made clear my strong objection to the military junta in Greece that came to power in 1967. Although then the only Member of Congress of Greek origin (and a Democrat), I testified against the Administration's request for United States military aid to Greece which, I reminded the House Foreign Affairs Committee, was a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The NATO Charter was created to defend nations that adhere to democracy, freedom and the rule of law; the military dictatorship ruling Greece, I asserted, supports none of these principles. The United States should, therefore, not provide Greece military assistance. During the years of the junta, I refused to visit Greece or to set foot in the Greek Embassy in Washington.

In 1974, however, I found myself far more deeply involved in American policy toward Greece. In July of that year, the colonels engineered an unsuccessful coup against the President of Cyprus, Archbishop Makarios. Although the coup precipitated the fall of the military regime and triggered the restoration of democracy in Greece, it was also the pretext for an invasion by Turkish military forces of Cyprus. The initial invasion, in July, was followed, in August, by Attila II, a massive intervention of 40,000 Turkish troops.

Because the Turkish forces were equipped with weapons supplied by the United States, Turkey's government was in direct violation of US legal prohibitions on the use of American arms for other than defensive purposes. And because American law mandated an immediate termination of arms transfers to any country using them for aggressive purposes, I led a small delegation of Congressmen to call on Secretary of State Kissinger to protest the Turkish action and insist that he enforce the law, i.e., order an immediate end to further shipments of American arms to Turkey. This was, the same week that Richard Nixon resigned the presidency of the United States, and my colleagues and I reminded Kissinger that the reason Mr. Nixon was then on his way to San Clemente was that he had not respected the Constitution and the laws of the land. "*You should do so,*" we insisted. Kissinger

apparently did not take us seriously and neither he nor President Gerald R. Ford took any action in response to our admonition.

Consequently, several of us in Congress, notably the late Congressman Benjamin S. Rosenthal of New York, then Congressman Paul S. Sarbanes of Maryland and I in the House of Representatives and Senator Thomas Eagleton of Missouri led a successful effort in late 1974 to impose, by Congressional action, an arms embargo on Turkey. We were strongly supported not only by other Democrats but by a number of leading Republicans. Because the executive branch of the United States government willfully refused to enforce the law, we in Congress did so.

In this unusual episode, my colleagues and I had active allies outside Congress. Not only did we, understandably, have the help of Greek American and Armenian American persons and groups across the country but also of many others who shared our commitment to the rule of law. Given that there were only a handful of us of Greek origin in the House of Representatives and none at all in the Senate, I have always found amusing the charge that we were a powerful "*Greek lobby*," dictating foreign policy to the executive branch of the government of the United States. The reasons my colleagues and I prevailed were straightforward: We were better organized politically both within Congress and in the country at large and we had a superior case, both legally and morally. It was this combination of factors that brought what was a remarkable victory.

Later, during the 1976 presidential election campaign, I advised the Democratic nominee, then Governor Jimmy Carter, on his statement coupling "*improvement in relations with Turkey with increased fair progress on the Cyprus issue*." More plainly put, Carter linked a resumption of US arms supplies to Turkey with substantial progress toward a just resolution of the situation in Cyprus. It was this linkage, of course, that Kissinger opposed.

In 1978, however, after a year as President, Carter changed his mind, chiefly because of concern over the status of American bases in Turkey, which his counselors considered essential to Western deterrence of Soviet expansion. The President called on Congress to lift the arms embargo on Turkey. Although I was Democratic Whip in the House, third-ranking member of the Majority Leadership, and Jimmy Carter a Democratic president, I strongly opposed his reversal of position. The White House vigorously promoted its view and prevailed in the House of Representatives - by only three votes. The close margin was, given the pressure applied by the executive branch, a moral victory for Congressman Sarbanes, our allies and me.

In the 1980s - I was no longer in Congress - the Reagan Administration was content to leave the pursuit of a solution in Cyprus to the United Nations and made no serious steps to encourage one. As presidential candidate in 1988, Vice

President George Bush called for "a constitutional democracy (in Cyprus) based on majority rule, the rule of law, and the protection of minority rights" Once in office as President, Bush attempted to bring the parties together to find a solution but was unable to do so. I would argue that Bill Clinton is the first President since Lyndon Johnson to give serious attention, over time, to resolving the Cyprus issue. I note that in his 1992 campaign for President, then Governor Clinton declared:

"The United States and the world community will not accept the permanent division of Cyprus. The search for a just and viable solution to the Cyprus problem must be vigorously pursued. Such a Cyprus settlement should be consistent with the fundamental principles of human rights and democratic norms and practices. Accordingly, a Cyprus settlement can be just and viable only if it provides for the withdrawal of Turkish occupation forces; satisfactorily accounts for all American and Greek Cypriots missing since 1974; provides for the rights of refugees; ensures the sovereign independence and territorial integrity of the state; and establishes a democratic constitution which respects and guarantees the rights of both communities."

In March of 1994, I was one of a group of Americans of Greek origin who met at the White House with President Clinton, Vice President Albert Gore and National Security Advisor Anthony Lake to discuss both Cyprus and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). The President was clearly well-informed on both subjects and sympathetic to what my colleagues and I told him. President Clinton's appointment as his Special Envoy for Cyprus of Richard Holbrooke, architect of the *Dayton Accords* and a diplomat of wide experience, is, I believe, a significant indication of the priority the President and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright have assigned to Cyprus.

Indeed, recently, before talks in Washington with Cypriot Foreign Minister Ioannis Kasoulides, Secretary Albright said, *"In our meeting today . . . I will assure the Minister of America's interest in seeing the people of Cyprus achieve a lasting settlement to the intercommunal dispute on their island. There could be no more dramatic a demonstration of that commitment than the President's decision to name Ambassador Richard Holbrooke as our special emissary to promote the Cyprus settlement . . ."* She continued: *"... What we see is the reunification of Cyprus. We believe that the division of the island is unacceptable . . . (We) continue to support the establishment of a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation. We will do everything we can to bring the process forward."*

Now, given the impasse of a near quarter century and in light of the current instability of the Turkish political scene, I think it would be a mistake to expect a breakthrough in the short term. Holbrooke himself has said, *"This is going to be a long haul. It's not going to be a short, intense negotiation like Dayton was."* As you know, Ambassador Holbrooke has said he would not *"do anything specific"* until after the

UN-sponsored talks between President Clerides and Mr. Denktash. I add that the distinguished British diplomat who has been working on the issue, Sir David Hannay, welcomes Ambassador Holbrooke's intervention as does the US Congress, which has been concerned with the lack of progress on Cyprus. And if there is agreement between the Executive branch and Congress on the need to intensify efforts for a settlement on Cyprus, there is also, especially in the House of Representatives, bipartisan agreement. The International Relations Committee of the House, chaired by Ben Gilman, Republican of New York, joined by the senior Democrat on the Committee, Lee Hamilton of Indiana, on June 25 favorably reported their resolution urging "a *United States initiative seeking a just and peaceful resolution of the situation on Cyprus.*" The measure includes a call for "the demilitarization of Cyprus and the establishment of a multinational force to ensure the security of both communities."

Here, based on my conversation in recent weeks, I believe I can best contribute to a discussion of the Cyprus issue by telling you what, on the basis of my conversations in recent weeks with a number of persons, some in government and some not, but all at senior levels, and from the various countries concerned, seem to be factors fundamental, 23 years after the events of the summer of 1974, both to understanding the Cyprus problem and to forging a viable, realistic and just settlement of it.

First, I would assert that a normalization of relations between Greece and Turkey depends upon a resolution of the issue of Cyprus. Indeed, a senior Turkish diplomat made this same point to me a few months ago even as I heard this view echoed in Istanbul in May during a *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Forum*. The *Forum*, composed of seven Greeks, seven Turks and seven Americans, of whom I am one, involves academic, business and political leaders from all three countries, including two former Greek and two former Turkish foreign ministers and senior retired military officers from the two countries. At a dinner one night in Istanbul, a leading Turkish business figure asked me what I thought was the most important action to improve Greek-Turkish relations.

I replied, "*Cyprus.*"

He said, "*I agree. And what you (Americans) must do is help us (Turks) get out graciously and without humiliation.*"

It is my impression - reinforced by the comments of others - that the forces in Turkey pressing most vigorously for moderation, modernization and democracy there and for better relations with Greece are these top Turkish businessmen.

Second, Turkish political and military leaders must be persuaded that resolving the Cyprus question is in the national interest of Turkey. In economic terms, for example, Ankara's officially acknowledged aid to Turkish-occupied Cyprus this year

totals \$250 million, not including the cost of keeping 35,000 Turkish troops there. Here I would offer another argument for this proposition: Turkish armed forces on the island are now considerable, of such size and nature that to protect them adds further to the security commitments of Turkish military commanders. It is a burden that Turkish leaders have taken on themselves, and one must ask, from a *Turkish* point of view, is it a wise one? But much more important than economic reasons, there is a powerful political rationale for Turkey to move, at long last, toward a Cyprus settlement.

Consider the present situation in Turkey. Beleaguered by economic troubles, pressures from the military, hostility between Islamists and secularists, widespread criticism on human rights and dealing with the Kurds, thoughtful Turkish leaders know that the occupation of Cyprus is not only a continuing financial burden but a huge obstacle to Turkish ambitions for stronger ties with Europe. Even this week the new government led by Melsut Yilmaz declared, in a statement of its hope for eventual membership in the European Union, "*Turkey will ensure its rightful place in the new Europe that is being drawn up.*" Yet it must be clear that even putting aside demands from the European Parliament concerning democracy and human rights, so long as the Cyprus question goes unresolved, Turkish membership in the EU is not possible. Relevant are recent statements of Greek Foreign Minister Pangalos and Undersecretary Kranidiotis that if political objections can be overcome, Greece has no philosophical or dogmatic objection to Turkish accession to the European Union. This posture, coupled with Greek removal of a *veto* on Turkish participation in the Customs Union with the EU, means that the Greeks are saying, "*We're not the obstacle to Turkish entry into Europe.*" Yet if membership in the European Union is not on the immediate horizon, enhancement of the relationship with the EU can be a significant incentive for a Turkey that seeks to be in Europe.

Third, another basic ingredient in the search for a solution, the prospect of membership by *Cyprus* in the EU, was described by Holbrooke as "*the biggest new factor in the 30-year stalemate.*" With the commitment of the Council of Ministers of the EU in 1995, following approval of the Customs Union with Turkey, to start negotiations with the Republic of Cyprus on its accession to the EU within six months of the end of the Intergovernmental Conference (already concluded in Amsterdam), no longer is Cyprus to be held hostage for membership to Ankara. Certainly neither the Turkish government nor Mr. Denktash should be allowed to block accession by Cyprus, and the United States should continue to support Cypriot membership. In light of Turkish objections to accession by Cyprus to the EU, incentives to both Turks and Turkish Cypriots to greater involvement in Europe should vigorously be explored.

Fourth, the matter of security - for both Greek and Turkish Cypriots - is obviously among the factors indispensable to a solution. For it seems to me that in any settlement acceptable to both sides and to Greece and Turkey, there must be, fol-

lowing departure of foreign troops, provisions for a multinational peacekeeping force to assure such security for all Cypriots. Such a force might well be a NATO operation, for NATO is the one organization where Greece and Turkey are on the same level. From my perspective, it would be wise for such a force to include troops from the United States as well other members of NATO. Even a modest commitment of US forces would represent a powerful demonstration of the seriousness with which American leaders of both parties in both the Administration and Congress regard the importance of defusing what Dick Holbrooke has rightly described as "a time bomb."

Fifth, is the matter of the constitutional arrangements for a united Cyprus. The United Nations, the European Union, the United States and the Republic of Cyprus are all agreed that there must be on the island a bizonal, bicomunal federation, with a single sovereignty. There are successive Security Council resolutions, including *Resolution 1092*, adopted on December 23, 1996, which declares that any settlement "*must be based on a State of Cyprus with a single sovereignty and international personality and a single citizenship, with its independence and territorial integrity safeguarded, and comprising two politically equal communities . . . in a bicomunal and bizonal federation, and that such a settlement must exclude union in whole or in part with any other country or any form of partition or secession. . . .*" The goal now will be to negotiate an agreement that provides for such a single sovereign state within which Greek Cypriots will accord a significant degree of self-government to Turkish Cypriots who, in turn, must agree to territorial compromises that will enable them to share in the economic growth that both reunification and membership in the EU would entail. After all, everyone is aware that there is huge gap in *per capita* annual income between Greek Cypriots - \$12,000 - and the North - \$4,000.

The challenge here must be to take into account the fears and apprehensions of both Greek and Turkish Cypriots so that both communities will feel they are dealt with fairly. I observe, by way of suggesting an example of the tone or attitude that one hopes would characterize a federation that can command the support of both communities on the island and both Greece and Turkey, that the proposal of Costa Carras for cross-voting should be given serious consideration. Rather than voting only for candidates of their own community as before, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots would vote twice, all citizens casting ballots in the elections of both communities. In this way, candidates and legislators from each community would for the first time acquire a stake in appealing to the other.

A significant result of accession to the EU by a united Cyprus would be that Turkish Cypriots would then be part of a Cypriot delegation to Brussels, one way of ensuring that Cyprus would not be hostile to Turkey. Most would agree that it is unlikely - one never says "never" - that there will be a sudden accord on an issue that for so long has eluded resolution by so many. Moreover, a breakthrough is

probably not possible until after the elections in Cyprus in February. Nonetheless, it is important to begin laying the groundwork now, and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's talks with Clerides and Denktash are part of this process as Sir David Hannay observed in a thoughtful essay in *International Herald Tribune* ("*At Long Last, Cyprus Should Seize the Chance to Heal Itself*"). For we must build bridges today for action next spring.

With the end of the Cold War has come the possibility of resolution of many long-simmering conflicts. As we observe in the Middle East and Northern Ireland, however, not to speak of the on-going drama in the former Yugoslavia, it is not easy. Nonetheless, the rest of the world is moving toward solving difficult problems. The North Koreans have agreed to four-power talks aimed at formally ending the Korean War. The Indians and Pakistanis are discussing Kashmir. Formerly Communist states are being brought into NATO. China *may* be beginning to communicate with the United States in more rational terms. Surely it is time for Greece and Turkey to normalize their relationship even as did France and Germany under de Gaulle and Adenauer, thereby paving the way to progress for both.

The *Financial Times* described the July 8 agreement between Greece and Turkey as "*the biggest breakthrough in their strained relations for a decade ... pledged to respect one another's sovereign rights and renounce the use of force in dealing with each other.*" That was solid evidence of what the *Financial Times* also called "*strong pressure from the US.*"

Surely, key to the relationship between Greece and Turkey is Cyprus. Settlement, during the year ahead, of an issue over two decades old would obviously be a major triumph for US foreign policy, for Europe, for Greece, and, most important, for all the people of Cyprus. It would be splendid if even before the start of the next millenium, we can see a United Republic of Cyprus, in which all its citizens enjoy the fruits of freedom, democracy and the rule of law!

• This commentary is an edited version of an address given by the author in London, on July 10, 1997