

The Turkish Arms Embargo: Drugs, Ethnic Lobbies, and US Domestic Politics

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James F. Goode, an experienced historian and recognisable expert on Middle East affairs, has made a valuable contribution on the study and deeper understanding of the factors and dynamics involved in the decisions for the initial imposition and, finally, the lifting of the US arms embargo on Turkey, following the invasion of Cyprus in 1974. More specifically, he offers a thorough analysis on three intricately interconnected issues that constitute significant pillars of the main topic: the political impact of poppy production in Turkey and illicit drugs exports to the United States; the activity of Greek American lobby and, generally, the implications of ethnic identities and interests in US domestic politics; and the role of the Congress in the making of US foreign policy. The author successfully incorporates the international historical context of the 1970s and early 1980s and sets forth interesting hypotheses through the connection of political views and decisions with contemporary developments at the international level, particularly in the geopolitical complex of the broader Middle East.

The author makes some well-grounded points by examining how supporters of Greece and Cyprus in the United States exploited the looming social anxiety on drug addiction among young Americans to spoil Turkey's image and promote the idea of an arms embargo to press Ankara for concessions on the Cyprus talks. He closely follows the actions taken by the so-called 'gang of four', namely Senator Thomas Eagleton, House Representative John Brademas, Senator Paul Sarbanes, and House Representative Benjamin Rosenthal, who worked hard to persuade the White House and the Congress for the necessity of an arms embargo. He highlights the persistence of the lobby, particularly the consistent efforts to exercise influence on the White House in relation to Cyprus. He provides some very interesting details

regarding the role of Secretary Henry Kissinger and the broader issue of relations between the Congress and the executive branch on foreign policy matters. He also thoroughly describes the turn from the Congress' support of the embargo to its dismissal, which provides some very useful evidence on how States consider their national interests when making foreign policy decisions. President Carter's shift from supporting the embargo before his election in 1976 to working for (and achieving) the lift of the embargo is indicative of this tendency: sooner or later, foreign policy will adapt to hard-core national interests as defined by the State bureaucracy.

An issue that merits special attention is the author's analytical approach of the events in Cyprus and, particularly, the way he perceives the Greek American lobby's efforts to demonise Turkey in the eyes of the American society, vis-à-vis his perception of what actually happened in Cyprus in the summer of 1974. In my view, the author's historical assessment bears a degree of pro-Turkish bias that, in some instances, distorts his inferences. This is particularly evident in chapter three, where the author examines organised Greek efforts to present Turkish actions in Cyprus as war crimes. For example, on the events that followed the Turkish Cypriot mutiny in 1963-64 and the Turkish Cypriots' gathering in enclaves, the author observes that, 'The Makarios government in Nicosia had shown little interest in reversing this informal separation between the two communities. In fact, it had contributed to the situation by steadily whittling away at the minority guarantees provided in the 1960 constitution'. This conclusion is very close to the official Turkish and Turkish Cypriot narrative, but it could also be supported by many Greek Cypriot pundits, especially if we consider the Greek Cypriot ideological polarisation around these unfortunate events that eventually culminated to the forcible geographic division of Cyprus in 1974. Someone would expect an experienced historian to offer well-grounded evidence in support of such an argument. Surprisingly though, the author just offers the following reference in a footnote: "Observations based on the author's visit to Paphos, September 1969". I wonder whether a site visit to a socially divided destination could by itself offer credible knowledge on decisions made behind closed doors and amidst ethnic violence and severe external pressure.

In another case, the author evaluates the Greek American accusations against Turkish 'barbarianism', in relation to what took place during and right after the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974. Particularly, he stresses that '[o]ccasionally, such vitriol made its way into the publications of the major Greek-American organizations. (...) There were tales of looting, rape, and intentional destruction of

churches in the area under Turkish army control'. On these allegations communicated to Washington D.C. by members of the lobby and Archbishop Iacovos, the author argues that 'there is little incontrovertible evidence to support these lurid tales. Someone may wonder whether we could expect to find such evidence in an ethnically cleansed area, where Turkish army was (and to a large degree still is) exclusively in charge. While the author seems too eager to underline Greek zeal for lashing out on Turkey (which, indeed, was sometimes excessive and pompous), in some instances the reader gets the impression that he is trying to water down Turkish war crimes that took place in Cyprus (in fact, the term 'war crimes' is never used by the author). Even if 'tales' about rapes can hardly be verified, what about the self-evident looting and/or destruction of hundreds of churches, monasteries and cemeteries? Photos have been extensively published, while someone may easily see (even visit) such sites in the northern part of Cyprus, which have turned to barns, warehouses, and even pool bars and casinos. It would definitely be easier to check this on a site visit than Makarios' 'little interest in reversing separation' back in 1969.

James F. Goode's work is very helpful for a researcher who aims to study and deeply understand the factors that played out regarding the imposition and the lifting of US arms embargo on Turkey, while it offers very useful conclusions on the issues of ethnic politics in Washington D.C. and the balance between the Congress and the executive branch on US foreign policy. However, his analytical framing of historical events in (and regarding) Cyprus suffers from a significant degree of bias. In any case though, such biases, which are common in history books, may contribute to the stimulation of public and scholarly debates and the enrichment of one's analytical lenses.

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