

THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN CYPRUS CONFLICT

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the role of the U.N. to have a negotiated settlement in Cyprus conflict. The author considers the main reason for why a solution cannot be found in Cyprus problem is the different conceptions of both sides of a Cyprus settlement. She points out recently at the core of the disputes between two sides lies the application of the Greek Cypriot Republic to join the EU. The author proposes that the U.N. should continue to repair the relationship between two sides and continue in its efforts to have a negotiated settlement in Cyprus though it might be long and difficult.

1.Introduction

The United Nations (U.N.) has provided a mechanism for the management of international conflict. U.N. involvement in international conflict is not new, such as the long-standing problem of Cyprus (Gary, 1981: 244). There is a continuing dispute between Greece and Turkey over the island of Cyprus since the 1960's. The purpose of this study is to examine the role of the U.N. to have a negotiated settlement in Cyprus conflict. A full discussion of the history and points of tension in the Cyprus question is beyond the scope of this analysis.

2.Background Of The Cyprus Conflict

In 1959, with the agreement of Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom a constitution was introduced giving Cyprus shared powers with a Greek Cypriot president and a Turkish vice-president. In 1960 Cyprus became independent. However, the political structure of Cyprus caused serious crisis in 1964 and again in 1974.

In 1963, the President of Cyprus, Archbishop Makarios had proposed constitutional amendments that led to violence between the two sides (White, 1993: 241). "Greek extremists who wanted enosis-union with Greece-launched a series of attacks on Turkish Cypriots, killing some and taking others hostage" (Cooper ve Berdal, 1993: 118). Turkey threatened to invade. By the British and the U.N. intervention a cease-fire and the United Nations Peace Keeping Force in Cyprus was established. Another crisis is observed in 1967, but resolved.

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The Cyprus Conflict

Unfortunately, the U.N. forces were not able to prevent fighting in 1974. "In 1974, the Greek-Cypriot National Guard, led by Greek officers, overthrew the government of Cyprus with a view of establishing enosis." (Cooper ve Berdal, 1993: 119). The Turkish government called for their withdrawal. But with no positive response, Turkey invaded Cyprus. After 1974, Cyprus has been partitioned into a Greek Cypriot administration in the south and a Turkish Cypriot administration in the north.

The Cyprus island only 50 miles (80km) off the Turkish coast is very close to the Turkish Anatolian mainland. Thus, the Turkish state is alarmed of any prospects of having this island under the exclusive control of Greece. Also, the Turkish state is concerned about the security of the minority Turkish community in the island. Accordingly, the Turkish objectives in the 1974 invasion were to protect the Turkish Cypriot minority and avoid a Greek takeover of Cyprus.

In 1983, the leader of Turkish Cypriots, Rauf Denkdash, proclaimed the independent Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), which is only recognized by Turkey (White, 1993: 241-243). In contrast, the government of the Republic of Greek Cypriots is recognized as the only legitimate government of the island. However, this government consists of Greek Cypriots and does not govern the Northern Cyprus.

3.The Role Of The United Nations

In the Cyprus dispute, there was a British and later the U.N. peacekeeping efforts. In the conflict resolution the United Kingdom, Turkey and Greece are involved as well as Turkish and Greek Cypriots.

Since 1974, inter-communal negotiations under U.N. mediation have continued, but still today Cyprus remains divided between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots without a permanent settlement. The buffer zone continues to be policed by the United Nations Peace Keeping Force in Cyprus.

U.N. forces were invited by the Greek Cypriot government. It acts in the Turkish Cypriot only by permission. "The force has no mandate to force peace only to support and facilitate the Secretary-General's efforts to promote the inter-communal talks... Over the course of years, the Security Council has passed successive resolutions urging a settlement but has never been prepared to invoke sanctions to enforce them... The Secretary-General can only appeal to the goodwill of the parties" (Mc Donald, 1993: 184). In short, the UN forces only preserve the status quo for talking to continue.

The U.N. Security Council's mission is to work as good offices to achieve agreed, just and lasting settlement of the Cyprus problem. The Secretary-General has many times expressed that the best available means for achieving this settlement is the inter-communal talks. Thus, since 1974 the Security Council conducted many inter-communal talks between the representatives of the two communities on equal footing (Necatigil, 1993: 174).

4.In Search Of A Cyprus Settlement: Inter-Communal Negotiations

The Greek and Turkish leaders have continuous meetings to find a solution through negotiation and cooperate with the U.N. Secretary-General's efforts which proved helpful in building a good working relationship and in clarifying many of the issues and difficulties (Necatigil, 1993: 354-355). But there are still important differences between the arguments of two sides.

Especially, though both sides want a federated republic, Greek Cypriots during all the negotiations argued for unity of the country under territorial integrity. Thus, the Greek aim is to establish an independent but territorially integral federal republic where two regions are called provinces.

In contrary, Turkish Cypriots demanded for two separate independent states under federation living in two separate areas and acknowledgment of the distinct identity of two sides (Necatigil, 1993: 175). According to the argument of Turkish Cypriots, the two separate states may form a federation as bi-communal and bi-zonal, built respecting each other's existence, integrity and political equality. However, Cyprus will be prohibited to unite with any other country. There will be territorial division of Cyprus as the Turkish Cypriot region and the Greek Cypriot region. Decisions under the federation will be taken by consensus. There will be no citizenship of the federation. Federal council, composed of an equal number of Turkish and Greek Cypriots, will perform the executive function. The president and the vice president will be elected from among the members of federal council. The presidency will rotate between the two sides and will not be from the same state as the vice president at the same time. Federal council will control many functions such as foreign affairs, federal budget, taxation, trade, transportation, communication, judiciary and defense. Judiciary and legislative of both sides will be united in federal state. The freedoms of movement, settlement and the right to property shall be provided for. There will be reduction of military forces on both sides (Necatigil, 1993: 375-387).

In short, Turkish Cypriots demand to have a federation where both sides are recognized, where as Greek Cypriots want to have a federation where two sides are united. Turkish Cypriots suspicion is that if they accept the reunification, there will be a situation as before 1974. Since the majority are

The Cyprus Conflict

Greeks, president and majority of the Council of ministers will be in the hand of Greek Cypriots. Thus, they do not want a reunited federation. Instead, they demand the continuation of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (Necatigil, 1993: 358-359).

Today, another important distinction between Turkish and Greek Cypriot's arguments is on the political equality of the two republics. The Greek Cypriot government resist the idea that in the island Turkish Cypriots are entitled to community rights as equal to Greek Cypriots and do not accept the political equality of the two republics.

With two sides having different conceptions of a Cyprus settlement, it is difficult to form a federation. However, after the Cold War, there are more pressing demands from the U.N. for negotiated settlement in the island. In May 1992, the U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Gali, presented the "Set of Ideas", a reunification plan, to the Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders for negotiation. It included different areas of agreement from twenty five years of inter-communal negotiations. It foresaw a federal republic where two states have equal powers and functions with a single citizenship. It asked for a territorial change where the TRNC has to give the control of certain villages to the Republic of Greek Cypriot including Varosha and Morphou. Varosha is unoccupied for twenty four years. Morphou generates forty percent of the TRNC's foreign exchange earnings. Furthermore, the Set of Ideas mentions that the Council of Ministers would be composed of seventy percent Greek Cypriots and thirty percent Turkish Cypriots (Mc Donald, 1993: 183).

The president of the TRNC, Rauf Denkdash demanded prior recognition of the TRNC in order to negotiate on the Set of Ideas. He also demanded a change in the package as equal representation in the government. In addition, he told that territorial change is not negotiable and rejected the new map presented in the Set of Ideas (Mc Donald, 1993: 183).

In 1993 Glafkos Clerides became the president of the Republic of Greek Cypriot. Mr. Clerides also have argued that the Set of Ideas needed improvement for resolution.

Recently, new elections are held in the South of Cyprus, and Mr. Clerides has been reelected as the president of the Greek Cypriot Republic. His election does not change anything for the Turkish side. There is no new thinking. The Greek Cypriots still demand for a territorially integral federal republic where two sides are united and Turkish Cypriots demand for the continuation of the two separate republics (See Kohen, 1998a ve 1998b).

Since the beginning of the 1990's, the tension between the Greek and Turkish communities in Cyprus have increased, due to the three basic issues. The first one is the application of the Greek Cypriot Republic to join the European Union (EU) in 1990. While the EU returned down the Turkish application to join the EU recently, the possibility of entrance of the Greek Cypriot Republic as the only recognized government on the island before the Turkish government, receives a high attention in Turkey. At the end of March 1996, the EU have started negotiations with the Greek Cypriot government. Mr. Clerides has given the signs that they are eager to consolidate their political position within the EU and carry the Cyprus problem on this base. In return, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) have started negotiations with the Turkish Republic for unification. Rauf Denkdash, the president of the TRNC, and Ismail Cem, the Turkish foreign minister, told that if the Greek Cypriot government is accepted to join the EU, there will be complete partition in the island.

The second issue is the possibility of the placement of the Russian S-300 missiles on the island by the Greek Cypriot government in May 1998, which creates additional tension between the two states. And the third is the demonstrations and conflicts on the borders of two sides in the island (See Sönmezoğlu, 1998 for details). Thus, the latest problems in Cyprus are complicated and serious.

Lately, the negotiations between the two sides have stopped. The Greek side insists on the establishment of a unified Cypriot. On the other hand, during a meeting with Kofi Annan, the U.N. Secretary-General, Mr. Denkdash told that a unified Cypriot will not be accepted until the TRNC is recognized in the international arena. In contrary, the Republic of Greek Cypriot in the south of Cyprus is accepted internationally as the only legitimate government of the island. Faced with these conditions, the U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan is trying to restart the negotiations between the two sides. But with the above mentioned issues, the U.N. has a difficult role.

5. Conclusion

The Cyprus experience suggests that it is not easy to go to a settlement by two ethnic groups. Today, the island remains divided between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. By the assistance of the U.N. negotiators and the US, the Cyprus issue became less critical. However, the threat of war was replaced by continuous but unproductive negotiations between the leaders of Greek and Turkish factions in Cyprus. Serious negotiations have taken place under the U.N. auspices, but failed to produce an agreement.

The Cyprus Conflict

The world has recognized the Greek Cypriot government as the government of Cyprus, as if there is a single government representing the two sides. It may be difficult for changing this view. But as it is observed in the former Yugoslavian Republics, a loose federation does not work. Existence of different ethnic groups under a loose federation tends to create problems. These developments are a justification of the Turkish Cypriot demand for bi-zonal federation.

The U.N. has sponsored several negotiating sessions in the years since 1974, but the Greek and the Turkish governments still remain at odds over the Cyprus question. Resolution of the Cyprus problem would facilitate the settlement of issues between Greece and Turkey. In absence of progress toward a Cyprus settlement, the Greek-Turkish relationship will remain tense. However, Cyprus is a political issue in Turkey and in Greece. It has emotional importance for both sides, so the politicians neither in Turkey, nor in Greece want to make any serious concessions toward permanent settlement on Cyprus. Though the election of Kostas Simitis as the prime minister in Greece in January 1996 given a hope for more liberal outlook toward Turkey (Kurop, 1998: 7-12), hostility between the two countries over Cyprus still continues.

Though it is sometimes argued that the Turkish side wants to keep the status quo, it is debatable. The northern Cyprus has many difficulties. First of all, since no state other than Turkey recognized its government, there is no direct flights into the northern Cyprus. It is under Greek Cypriot communication embargo. Posts and telecommunications have to be routed via Turkey. These affect its tourism industry (Mc Donald, 1993: 183). Secondly, foreign investors are not able to invest due to legal difficulties. Finally, the Greek Cypriot government imposes an economic embargo. Thus, the Turkish community in the island will not have a better life without an international recognition of its government. This will only come with a settlement that reunites Cyprus in some form of federal configuration.

For the future conduct of international mediation, several points should be considered. Resolving the conflict can be done by lowering the fears and raising the hopes of both sides. Before a final agreement can be reached, there should be contacts of both sides at all levels as informal and flexible. Some alternatives should be discussed without publicity due to undesirable pressures from public. The U.N. as the third party mediator should expand its conflict techniques in case of Cyprus conflict.

In conclusion, in spite of all failed attempts for a Cyprus settlement, there can be possibility in the future. There are variety of confidence building measures that could be tried. For example, the Greek Cypriot government could terminate the economic embargo placed on Northern Cyprus. Another

alternative to an agreed settlement is the recognition of the TRNC. In their part, though the Turkish Republic could not withdraw all her forces before an acceptable settlement is found in order not to lead to inter-communal hostilities as before 1974 (Necatigil, 1993, 390-391), they could undertake a withdrawal of her troops a substantial scale to give assurance to the Greek Cypriot government for the future.

It will need time for Cypriots to heal their wounds and to enter into a pattern of a more constructive, cooperative and successful relationship. In the meanwhile, the U.N. should continue to repair the relationship between them though it might be long and difficult. The people of both countries would benefit from such a development.

ÖZET

Bu makalede, Kıbrıs konusunda karşılıklı görüşmeler ile çözüm bulunmasında Birleşmiş Milletler'in çabaları incelenmektedir. Kıbrıs probleminin çözümünde Rum ve Türk taraflarının farklı görüşleri olması nedeniyle konunun çözümlenmesi zor gözükmektedir. Son zamanlarda, Kıbrıs Rum kesiminin Avrupa Birliği'ne üyelik için başvurması problemin odak noktasını oluşturmuştur. Kıbrıs probleminin çözülmesinin çok uzun süreceği ve çözümün zor olacağı varsayılsa da, Birleşmiş Milletler'in karşılıklı görüşmeler ile çözüm arayışı çabalarını sürdürmesi önerilmektedir.

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The Cyprus Conflict

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