

## Memories of Tragic anniversaries and U.S. Policy Failures

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Fifty years ago, Turkey, a NATO member, invaded and continues to occupy 37% of the Republic of Cyprus, an independent country, member of the UN, the EU, and other major international organizations. Turkey's illegal actions brought about the creation of AHI, whose work since then has focused on the rule of law in US foreign policy in the Eastern Mediterranean. This sad anniversary comes in the midst of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and Israel's invasion of Gaza. The failure of the international community to address Turkey's gross violations of international law encouraged Russia's and Israel's actions. Despite resolutions adopted by the UN Security Council, and other major international organizations condemning Turkey's actions in Cyprus, Turkey, an aspirant for EU membership, continues its occupation of Cyprus. Some 40,000 Turkish troops are stationed in occupied Cyprus, treating the area as a province of Turkey.

In violation of major international treaties signed also by Turkey following WWII, Ankara has ethnically cleansed occupied Cyprus and brought into the occupied areas of Cyprus Anatolian settlers who have changed the ethnic makeup of the Republic of Cyprus. With the exception of a few dozen enclaved Greek Cypriots remaining in the occupied area under UN protection, occupied Cyprus has been ethnically cleansed. Greek Cypriot properties have been confiscated, looted, and turned over to Turkish settlers and foreign buyers. Cyprus' rich religious heritage has been desecrated, looted and sold in the international black market. The Church of Cyprus has been able to recover some of the stolen religious artifacts following actions in European and US Courts. The cost of the invasion on the innocent civilian population has been immense. Turkey has yet to account for thousands of persons killed and missing since the invasion and has refused to investigate their fate or take any steps to address the actions of Turkish military that led to their disappearance. Murders and rapes of Cypriot civilians have been fully documented by European and other international organizations. Over the last fifty years the UN and

other international organizations have adopted numerous resolutions on Cyprus that have not been implemented. Various unsuccessful attempts have also been made to find a solution to the Cyprus problem. These initiatives failed as they sought to legitimize Turkey's actions. American and British diplomats led by Richard Holbrooke and Lord David Hannay, proposed unprecedented and unworkable constitutional schemes under the guise of a "bizonal bicomunal federation". All these schemes legitimized the outcome of the Turkish invasion. These unprecedented constitutional schemes culminated in the "Annan Plan" that was overwhelmingly rejected by the Greek Cypriots in a free and fair referendum. The US and Britain committed significant political and financial resources to gain approval of this plan. They created and funded "civil society" groups in the Republic of Cyprus to carry out propagandist activities in favor of the plan. Having failed to convince the Greek Cypriots, they condemned the President of the Republic of Cyprus for not supporting this unprecedented 9000 page plan that legitimized the Turkish invasion and the partition of Cyprus. This constitutional sophistry was couched in "constructive ambiguity" that allowed Turkey to enjoy the fruits of its invasion of Cyprus.

Since then, we have heard claims by American and British officials about "lost opportunities" to solve the Cyprus problem. However, the only "lost opportunity" has been for the adoption of plans legitimizing the illegal Turkish invasion, and the division and continuing occupation of Cyprus. The unprecedented schemes of the "bizonal, bicomunal federation" that have been presented, simply legitimize the outcome of the Turkish invasion. Turkey maintains that the Republic of Cyprus is "defunct" and demands that the Republic of Cyprus, a member of the EU, cannot object to Turkey's application to become a member of the EU. Since the 1974 invasion of Cyprus, our government and that of Britain have opposed the imposition of sanctions on Turkey and have opposed the implementation of resolutions adopted by Security Council. Kissinger actually led the effort to lift the Congressionally imposed arms embargo on Turkey. Ironically, Israel during the earlier phase of positive relations with Turkey, promoted the Annan Plan on behalf of Turkey while refusing to consider something similar to address Palestinian political aspirations. Meaningless routine calls for the UN to undertake new initiatives on Cyprus fail to account for Turkey's consistent position that there are two states on Cyprus. The Republic of Cyprus as a member of the UN and the EU has remained a pillar of stability in the Eastern Mediterranean. Prior to the Israeli invasion of Gaza, Cyprus, Israel and other regional Arab states had expanded their cooperation in the area of hydrocarbons. Turkey threatened the use of force to gain control of these resources.

After fifty years, the unresolved Cyprus problem has created a serious credibility problem for Western and particularly for American foreign policy. Calls for new diplomatic initiatives on Cyprus will fail as long as Turkey demands the creation of two states on Cyprus.

The Republic of Cyprus as an EU member has promoted the rule of law in the Eastern Mediterranean and has become a pillar of stability in a crucial strategic region. Prior to the Gaza invasion, Cyprus along with Israel and other Arab countries promoted regional cooperation particularly in the area of hydrocarbons. All these initiatives were opposed by Turkey who threatened the use of force in order to control these resources in the Eastern Mediterranean. Over the last 50 years the US and NATO, by tolerating Turkey's illegal behavior, have encouraged instability in a critical region of the world. If the US, truly believes in its proclaimed objectives in Ukraine, there is no reason for tolerating and supporting Turkey's illegal conduct in Cyprus.

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