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TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS: AN AFFAIR TO REMEMBER*

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If you will permit me to adapt a favorite metaphor of President Ford, let me say that the Turkish-American relationship resembles a love affair which began with great romance and vows of eternal fidelity. Over the years, the shadow of reality, manifested in diverging interests, has caused the romance to cool; the starry-eyed couple is clearly drifting apart, although still vowing to remain friends.

The forces that brought the two together derived from a sense of common peril. After World War II, Soviet leader Joseph Stalin began testing American commitment in Europe at various postwar conferences. Sensing little American interest in Turkey, he demanded readjustment of the Black Sea Straits administration to include Russian participation and the cession of some of Turkey's eastern provinces.

The Turkish government turned to the United States, admired as the most powerful nation in the world and free of colonial entanglements, for help against the Soviet threat. To the Turks, Stalin's behavior represented a renewal of the centuries-old Russian-Turkish rivalry, which had been punctuated by periodic warfare. Czarist victories during the declining years of the Ottoman Empire remained vivid in Turkish memories. American officials proved receptive to the Turkish appeal. President Truman, who was already concerned at the time over the prospect that Greece might collapse under civil war, decided to include Turkey with Greece as recipients of American aid and protection under the Truman Doctrine.

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That decision began a relationship during which over $7 billion in American assistance -- $4 billion in military, $3 billion in economic -- went to Turkey, in return for Turkish support for the Western alliance both as a member of NATO and CENTO (Central Treaty Organization). Why was the United States willing to spend so much to court the Turks? After all, before World War II the two countries had very little to do with one another.

Some observers suggest that persistent wooing of American favor by the Turkish government accounted for the closeness of ties. However, the effectiveness of the suit rested on a very real and very attractive Turkish attribute -- her strategic location with respect to the Soviet Union, as seen in the following:

-- Turkish control of the Straits of Bosphorus and the Dardanelles gave her command over the Soviet Union's southern naval routes into the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. From her vantage point, she was able to monitor the comings and goings of Soviet ships from important Black Sea ports.

-- Turkey stood at an ancient and modern crossroads of transportation and communication between Europe (including the USSR) and the Middle East with its precious oil reserves.

-- In the framework of a Western alliance, Turkey would form a link in the land barrier between the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc nations, and Western Europe. Together with Greece, Turkey would constitute the first line of defense for NATO's southern flank.

American assistance came first, primarily in the form of military aid. A substantial amount of money was required to bring fighting ability up to an appropriate level because Turkish military equipment was of World War I vintage. Later, the U.S. Government expanded its economic aid program when Turkish leaders, desiring to further strengthen American ties and bolster the domestic regime, requested help in alleviating the financial burden of their large army.

The Turks provided positive reinforcement for the American commitment by promptly responding to the U.S. request for United Nations troops

to serve in Korea; their soldiers won recognition for fearlessness and combat effectiveness in the Korean theatre. Politically and militarily, Turkey took its place unreservedly in the Western alliance.

The 1950s were the honeymoon years for Turkey and the United States. To Turkey, the United States was a savior, a protector against the Russian bully. The idea that the intimacy required by the administration of various aid programs involving a large number of American personnel might breed contempt seemed not to occur to either side. Thus, little forethought was given to the longer-term details of the relationship. What was to be the extent of American control over aid monies, over NATO facilities in Turkey, over the use of NATO equipment and units pledged to NATO? Just how far did the mutual commitment go?

The 1960s were a testing time for the Turkish-American relationship over precisely these issues. The period from 1963-1967 constituted a time of transition and disillusionment. Cyprus was the primary cause of the estrangement.

From the Turkish perspective, Cyprus was -- and is -- important for two primary reasons: strategically, it is regarded as their "Cuba," lying only 40 miles off the mainland; and ethnically, it has a population of about 20 percent Turks or around 140,000 people compared to approximately 500,000 Greek Cypriots.

When Cyprus left British rule under the Zurich Agreement of 1960, guarantees for the rights of the Turkish minority were built into the accords. Archbishop Makarios, the Cypriot Nationalist leader, promised that the island would remain an independent state, although union with Greece -- *Enosis* -- was always to be regarded as an ideal. The three guarantor states -- Greece, Turkey, and Great Britain -- were given the right to intervene on the island to protect the accords.

A faction of the Cypriot nationalist movement was not satisfied with independence and demanded immediate union with Greece. The EOKA movement, led by Greek General Grivas, presented Makarios with many

difficult moments over the years. With a goal of *"Enosis* now!" and the sometime sympathy and support of the Greek government, EOKA continued to stir up trouble with the Turkish Cypriots, and as a consequence, between Turkey and Greece.

Great powers as well as local ones have interest in the fate of Cyprus. The British retain two large bases on the island, which, although technically assigned to the Central Treaty Organization, provide a bolster for NATO forces in the Eastern Mediterranean. The air base at Akrotiri is regarded as particularly valuable. The Soviet Union would like to see these bases removed, and so has favored the idea of an ultimately demilitarized Cyprus independent from both Greece and Turkey. To this end, the Soviets have supported Archbishop Makarios, who until recently showed himself capable of balancing off the many conflicting interests on the island. (AKEL, the well-organized Cypriot Communist Party, has also supported Makarios.) The Turks have been uncomfortable with Makarios' Soviet friendship in spite of the fact that the Soviet and Turkish governments join in opposing *Enosis*; fear of Communist influence on Cyprus accounts for the wariness.

The United States has expressed great concern over the prospect of conflict between Greece and Turkey over Cyprus. When crises arose on the island in 1963 and 1967, the American role was to restrain both sides with diplomatic urgings and threats of cutting off aid. No matter what the outcome of the dispute, as in every *ménage à trois*, each time one or other of the two sides has blamed the United States for the result. In 1963 and 1967, the Turks felt betrayed. In 1974, it is primarily the Greeks.

The 1963 crisis was the occasion of the famous "Johnson ultimatum" to the Turkish government -- the American President's response to Turkish preparations for an invasion of the island designed to protect Turkish Cypriots involved in communal clashes with the majority Greeks. Johnson

warned Turkey that the United States would not guarantee NATO protection should the Turkish action provoke an attack from the Soviet Union. The harshness of the Johnson letter shocked the Turks deeply, and brought into question the entire basis of their relationship with NATO and particularly with the United States. Relations between the two countries were never the same after the Johnson memorandum.

The 1963 crisis simply resolved itself without resort to arms. Because the underlying problems had not been settled, however, a new crisis arose in 1967. Once more the Turks made preparations to invade Cyprus. This time, the American Government used more subtle methods of diplomacy, dispatching veteran diplomat Cyrus Vance to shuttle between Ankara and Athens. He succeeded in preventing armed intervention. The new Greek military government was persuaded to remove General Grivas from the island, and this action reassured the Turks for the time being. However, a number of Turkish intellectuals again accused the United States of interfering in Turkish affairs to prevent the exercise of rights granted in the Zurich accords.

Other events in 1967 contributed to further alienation of Turkish affections from the United States. American activities in Vietnam lent credence to those who accused the United States of imperialist designs. The Soviet Union's campaign to improve relations with the Turks began to pay off, resulting in an increase in trade relations and the acceptance of Soviet development aid. Furthermore, the U.S. Government gradually became closely identified with the Greek military regime.

The virulence of anti-American sentiment in Turkey born out of the Cyprus crises deepened and spread after 1967. As the fear of Soviet imperialism decreased, resentment of American and NATO influence grew, fanned by an increasingly active and outspoken leftist political movement.

Cyprus remained fairly stable so long as the Papadopolous regime in Greece supported Makarios -- and this relationship had its ups and downs. But with the coup-within-a-coup of EOKA ally, General Ionnidis, in July

1974, the balance was destroyed. The ouster of Makarios by EOKA elements led by Greek military officers touched off the chain of events which today sees Turkish armed forces occupying 40 percent of the island.

Why was the U.S. Government unable to prevent Turkish intervention this time? A number of factors contributed to the loss of American leverage or influence since 1967.

First, a new Turkish government had taken office in January 1974, after a two-year period of martial law. Led by left-of-center Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit, it was observed suspiciously by the country's military leaders for signs of leftist leanings or weakness. The regime was based on a coalition of two very different parties: Ecevit's social-democratic Republican People's Party, and the National Salvation Party, a right-wing, populist party quite chauvinistic in orientation. Thus, Ecevit headed a divided government that had to prove itself decisive in the face of external challenges.

Second, two challenges had already arisen in the Spring of 1974 to heighten Turkish sensitivities to foreign pressure: the first involved a decision to renew growth of opium crops in Turkey against the wishes of the United States. Originally a minor point of difference between the two countries, the question of opium-growing had become a symbol of American interference in Turkish affairs.

The second incident involved a dispute with Greece over oil prospecting rights in the Aegean Sea. The Greeks claimed the Aegean to be a "Greek Lake," because of the many Greek islands, but the Turks wanted to prospect in the area they considered to be their own continental shelf.

In both cases, the Turkish government had disregarded outside pressures and proceeded on the basis of domestic interests. Ecevit had been at the forefront of criticism of American influence in the previous Cyprus crises. A main platform of his party's policy was "normalization" of foreign relations, implying a pulling-away from the United States, and

assuming correct relations with the Soviet bloc. In the 1974 crisis, he had to act under the burden of his own rhetoric.

Third, in launching its invasion, the Turkish government was also reacting to the very real threat to the Turkish Cypriot population from EOKA forces. This time, with Makarios out of the country, no power existed to protect the rights or lives of the minority Cypriots who were spread in enclaves all over the island. Their peril had never been more acute.

Fourth, strategic considerations involving the United States and USSR also were involved in the Turkish action: with the departure of Makarios and the real possibility of *Enosis* looming, the Soviet Union no longer represented a restraining influence on a Turkish invasion, because the Soviets' primary goal was to prevent *Enosis*. (Once the Turks seized a considerable piece of Cypriot territory, however, the Soviets began warming up to the new civilian Greek government. They now appear to fear partition and the creation of a Turkish NATO base on the island.)

Furthermore, since the Greek junta took power in 1967, ambiguity had developed in Turkish (as well as Greek) perceptions of American interests and intentions in the area. The announced American posture of remaining uninvolved in local disputes may have given the Turks the idea that the United States would play no decisive role in the Cyprus question as it had in the past.

The situation in Cyprus is currently at a standstill until the new Greek government becomes established and a stable government can be formed in Turkey. Ecevit's coalition collapsed on September 18 over policy towards Cyprus: his partners wanted annexation of Turkish-occupied territory, while Ecevit favored an independent federation of separate Greek and Turkish Cypriot territories, or at worst, an independent Turkish Cypriot Republic.

The 1974 Cyprus crisis, unlike previous ones, resulted in a slight

plus for U.S. policy in Turkish eyes.* While the Turks are unhappy about the cutoff of American military aid threatened by Congress, they apparently feel assured that the U.S. administration understands the situation of Turkish Cypriots and favors an equitable settlement of the long-standing dispute. Should American aid ultimately be cut off, however, the consequences for Turkish-American relations would be very serious. The prolonged governmental crisis in Turkey prevents a resolution of the Cyprus question for the time being.

Whatever marginal improvement in U.S.-Turkish relations may emerge from the 1974 Cyprus crisis, the estrangement of the 1960s cannot be fully reconciled. Long-term trends point to a reorientation of Turkish attentions toward Europe and possibly the Middle East.

Turkish economic ties to Western Europe have grown, particularly since 1967, as illustrated by her association with the European Economic Community. In recent years, Turkey has sent about one million migrant workers to European countries. Although this movement has slackened, overall prospects for increasingly close relations are favorable, with corresponding decline in dependence on the United States to be expected.

The Turks also see themselves as playing a greater economic role in the Middle East, sending manufactured goods to Arab countries at lower prices than European goods. Produce trade should expand with both Israel and the Arabs. The United States and United Kingdom have hoped that the Turks would play a stabilizing political role in the volatile Middle East. However, Turkey's dependence on Arab oil may

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*The cost to Greek-American relations has been considerable, however. Some Greek opponents of the military regime suspected that the U.S. Government and the CIA favored "Double *Enosis*," and planned to get rid of Makarios and his leftist friends in order to tie a partitioned Cyprus inextricably to NATO as a part of both Greece and Turkey. The apparent intimacy between American Ambassador Tasca and junta members also suggested to these people that the United States had approved of the EOKA action. American denials and protestations rang hollow on the ears of the Greek civilian regime which took over the reins of power from the generals. For the time being at least, Greece has opted out of NATO's military activities.

bring her to a more pro-Arab position than anticipated.

In sum, then, we can say that while the passionate love of the fifties has gone out of the Turkish-American affair, so has the passionate hate of the sixties. We may be seeing the beginning of a healthy change to a relationship which puts less of a burden on the United States to live up to unrealistic expectations and frees the Turks to concentrate on a normal expression of their own regional and national interests.