U.S. To Dominate All Europe, Mediterranean Through NATO

Cyprus Joins Atlantic Alliance

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On February 24 a majority in the Cyprus parliament voted for the country to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's Partnership for Peace program, a transitional mechanism employed to bring twelve Eastern European nations into the U.S.-dominated military bloc from 1999-2009: The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Albania and Croatia. Macedonia would have become a full member of the Alliance in 2009 along with the last two except for the lingering name dispute with Greece.

Cyprus is the only member of the 27-nation European Union that is not either in NATO or the Partnership for Peace (PfP), the only EU member that did not need to join NATO or be on its doorstep in order to be accepted, and the only European nation (excluding the microstates of Andorra, Liechtenstein, Monaco, San Marino and Vatican City) that is free of NATO entanglements. Every other nation on the continent and island state in the Mediterranean Sea is a member of NATO or the PfP. (NATO still lists Russia as a member of the second and since last November's NATO summit in Portugal it has been active again in the NATO-Russia Council.)

The vote broke down along party lines, with all 32 opposition parties' members voting supporting the resolution and all 17 members of the ruling party, the left-wing Progressive Party of [the] Working People (AKEL), voting against it. Deputies from the right-wing Democratic Rally (DISY) – whose initiative it was – the centrist Democratic Party (DIKO) and European Party (EVROKO), the liberal United Democrats (EDI) and the Movement of Social Democrats (EDEK) closed ranks against the government of AKEL President Demetris Christofias in a move to, in the words of a Cypriot newspaper, "force the administration to apply for membership in Partnership for Peace." [1]

Ahead of the vote, which AKEL members of parliament succeeded in postponing for a week, government spokesman Stefanos Stefanou stated, "Exercising foreign policy and taking foreign policy decisions is a safeguarded constitutional right of the executive." [2]

Cyprus was split into northern ethnic Turkish and southern Greek sections after the Turkish military invasion of 1974, although only Turkey recognizes the northern entity. The Republic of Cyprus has a population of 800,000 and a unicameral parliament, the House of Representatives, and as there is no prime minister President Christofias is both head of state and head of government.

The administration accused DISY and its allies of violating the principle of the separation of

powers in attempting to override the president's prerogative to make foreign policy decisions, with the country's ruling party denouncing the move as "unprecedented political blackmail."

AKEL Central Committee member Aristos Damianou "said there is clear evidence of NATO's involvement in the division of Cyprus and wondered why EDEK [ADEL's coalition partner from 2008 until February of 2010], which chairs the committee on the Cyprus File – as the investigation into the 1974 coup and subsequent invasion is called – sides with DISY on the matter." [3]

Damianou also leveled the charge that representatives of the opposition parties (the one Green Party member of parliament abstained on February 24) conspired behind the backs of their AKEL colleagues to introduce the motion.

When the proposal to join the NATO partnership program was passed in the legislature President Christofias announced he would veto the decision, and government spokesman Stefanou issued a written statement maintaining "that membership of the program is not in line with President Dimitris Christofias' vow to achieve a peace deal with breakaway Turkish Cypriots that would demilitarize the island." [4]

The day of the vote supporters of the Cyprus Peace Council, including minority Turkish, Armenian and Maronite Cypriots, and all 17 AKEL representatives demonstrated outside the parliament building with banners reading "No to the Partnership for Peace" and "No Cyprus in NATO, or NATO in Cyprus." Former mayor of Famagusta (now in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus where NATO member Turkey maintains 30,000 troops) Yiannakis Skordis demanded Cyprus abjure any association with the "murderous organisation, at the hands of which Cyprus has suffered and continues to suffer." [5]

The protesters delivered a petition for House President Marios Garoyian (of DIKO) which castigated the drive to drag Cyprus into "warmongering NATO" as an act of "treachery."

It added: "We demand an immediate end to efforts to join the military camp of those who are responsible for the Cypriot tragedy. We demand respect for the deceased of the coup and the invasion; respect to the revolutionaries, respect to everything the refugees and enclaved have suffered; respect to our missing persons." [6]

The local press at the time reported that the president would "take the decision to the supreme court as he believes Parliament's decision violates the Constitution." [7]

The parliamentary action of last month is the culmination of several years of a concerted campaign by DISY, NATO and the EU to incorporate the last truly neutral European nation into the Pentagon-NATO global military nexus.

Six years ago Canada's General Raymond Henault (now retired), at the time chairman of the NATO Military Committee, said, in relation to "Cyprus's strategic importance in the eastern Mediterranean," that "NATO has a very open policy for countries that want to work with it and Cyprus could be one of those if it decided to do that." [8]

In January of 2009 DISY intensified efforts to bring Cyprus into the PfP, winning support from EVROKO:

"Based on the argument that Cyprus is the only EU member that has not joined, DISY is

trying to forge alliances with other parties that support its entry. Meanwhile, AKEL is adamant that entry to the PfP would not serve Cyprus' interests, particularly while peace talks [for reunification of the island] are ongoing." [9]

At the time AKEL leader Damianou itemized the country's ruling party's objections to a partnership with the world's only military bloc, one which has waged open warfare from Southeastern Europe to South Asia:

"AKEL is opposed for three main reasons. First, we are now going through a period of negotiations for the settlement of the Cyprus problem, and demilitarisation is a basic parameter of this settlement.

"We would therefore be giving the wrong messages to the international community if at the same time we start negotiating entry into a military organisation.

"Second, we should also analyse international political developments, our capabilities as a small state and what role we could play in such an organisation. This body functions as a gateway to NATO, where Turkey plays a significant role.

"Thirdly, we should not forget the role which NATO played in Cyprus, in the events of 1974."

He added: "Indeed, nine out of the ten new member-states that joined in the 2004 enlargement were granted EU membership on the precondition that they joined NATO. We did not have to do that as our interests are different and we seek a solution without armies." [10]

Regarding the assertion that NATO accession is a precondition for EU membership – that is, that through control of the military bloc the U.S. effectively determines who enters the European Union – the defense minister of post-"Twitter Revolution" (2009) Moldova, Valeriu Marinuta, last week affirmed that "joining NATO is crucial to gaining European Union membership" and that "As a rule...countries join NATO first and then the European Union." [11]

The AKEL leader also warned that "NATO and the Partnership for Peace participated in military missions that were not sanctioned by the United Nations, such as the war in Yugoslavia and the first stages of the Iraq war.

"As we are struggling for a solution based on international justice, we cannot join an organisation that infringes international rules." [12]

All twelve new NATO members (some at the time still in the Partnership for Peace) – Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia – deployed troops to Iraq after the U.S. invasion of 2003 and all now have troops in Afghanistan serving under NATO command. Current Partnership for Peace affiliates Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Macedonia, Moldova and Ukraine also provided the U.S. with troops for Iraq and all those except for Moldova (for the time being) have troops in Afghanistan. Fellow PfP members Austria, Finland, Ireland, Montenegro (which became an independent nation in 2006), Sweden and Switzerland have also assigned troops to NATO's International Security Assistance Force, a nominal amount in most cases but with Sweden supplying 500 soldiers and Finland 200.

Georgia has 950 troops in the Afghan war theater and had 2,000 in Iraq in 2008, the third largest national contingent at the time until the U.S. flew them home for the five-day war with Russia in August of that year.

Two years ago AKEL also warned about the perils of PfP membership in regard to another war – NATO's first, the 78-day bombing campaign against Yugoslavia in 1999 – recalling that "during the Kosovo crisis, Albania and Macedonia had used a mechanism provided in the PfP's Framework Document, that calls partners to alert the organisation when it perceives a direct threat to its territorial integrity, political independence or security." [13] That is, whatever NATO and the U.S. may say to the contrary, PfP members are de facto covered by NATO's Article 5 which obligates all members to respond to a threat, real or contrived, against another member. Or partner.

A commentary in the Cypriot press two years ago framed the prospect of PfP membership this way:

"Call me an idealist but it does seem a little contradictory that an island which has been exploited for centuries due to its geographic location would still want to place itself in the firing line for any future wars in the region.

"Cyprus could easily become the Switzerland of the Middle East, given a peaceful solution to the Cy Prob [Cyprus Problem] and the complete demilitarisation of the island." [14]

The earlier-cited government spokesman Stephanou has just demanded information from Britain about plans for deploying Eurofighter Typhoon combat aircraft to one of the two military bases the United Kingdom still retains in Cyprus, that at Akrotiri, for use against Libya. (The base and that at Dhekelia are referred to as a British Overseas Territory and Sovereign Base Areas of the United Kingdom. President Christofias has referred to the bases as a "colonial bloodstain".)

On February 20, 2009 the EU's European Parliament complemented the push by DISY in Cyprus to recruit the nation into the PfP by characterizing "the Cyprus problem as a major obstacle in EU-NATO relations" and "deploring" the fact that it continued to "badly impair the development of EU-NATO cooperation." It "further called on the Cyprus government to join NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme."

In the European Parliament's first report on NATO, it bemoaned the fact "that only six member states of the EU are not NATO members. From those, only one, Cyprus, does not have bilateral ties with NATO through its PfP programme."

AKEL-supported MEP [Member of the European Parliament] Adamos Adamou said the report was "interfering in the internal affairs of a sovereign country by asking it to join an organisation that it has no obligation to join." [15]

AKEL General Secretary Andros Kyprianou, who replaced Demetris Christofias in that role after the latter was elected president in 2008, blasted the narrowly-approved European Parliament report – 293 votes for, 283 against and 60 abstentions – which "included a clause inserted by Cypriot MEP Yiannakis Matsis [member of DISY and at the time of the center-right European People's Party] calling on the Cyprus government to join NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme."

Kyprianou called the action of Matsis and fellow DISY MEPs "unacceptable and unethical"

and described NATO as "an aggressive organisation that has scattered death and destruction in many corners of the world" and one which "continuously violates international law and the UN Charter."

The AKEL leader also warned that PfP membership mandates submitting defense plans and budgets to all NATO members, including Turkey, adding: "If that doesn't bother some people, they should say so openly to the Cypriot people."

Regarding the European Parliament itself, Kyprianou stated: "It is unacceptable for a democratic country, operating on a completely democratic basis, to have its sovereignty compromised and have opinions imposed on it from abroad, wherever that opinion may come from." [16]

President Christofias was equally firm in rejecting the demand to join the NATO program and "referred to decisions taken by former Presidents Tassos Papadopoulos and Glafcos Clerides not to apply for accession to PfP and said he wondered why his government is now being urged to apply for PfP membership." [17]

In April of 2009 DISY, DIKO and EDEK deputies in the parliament mustered a majority to pass a resolution calling on the government to join the PfP.

Government spokesman Stefanou condemned the move, calling the PfP an "antechamber" to full NATO membership, and ruling party AKEL's General Secretary Kyprianou said that any affiliation with NATO would irredeemably jeopardize the achievement of a just solution to the Cyprus problem, adding:

"We remain committed to our position for the demilitarization of the island. We insist on defending the cause of Cyprus based on the principles of international law and the United Nations Charter.

"We are adamant that we should not attach ourselves to the bandwagon of NATO and of the United States. We are resolute that nations must base their behavior on international law and not on the law of the 'big fish eats the small fish.'" [18]

Joining the PfP would put pressure on Cyprus to honor its obligations to NATO – and through NATO to the U.S. – by supplying troops for the war in Afghanistan and providing support for NATO's Operation Active Endeavor in the Mediterranean Sea and Operation Ocean Shield off the Horn of Africa. Had Cyprus become a member two years ago as DISY, NATO and the EU alike pushed for, it might at this moment be dragged into plans for military intervention against Libya.

It would be expected to accommodate ships and submarines assigned to the Mediterranean-based U.S. Sixth Fleet and American carrier and expeditionary strike groups (the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower aircraft carrier visited Cyprus in 2006) crossing the sea from the Strait of Gibraltar to the Suez Canal for operations in the Horn of Africa and for the war in Afghanistan.

As a NATO partner, Cyprus will be unable to deny the Alliance and the U.S. the use and upgrading of military bases – infantry, air and naval – and will be employed for the U.S. and NATO interceptor missile system being developed in Europe, the Middle East and the South Caucasus, initially in relation to Aegis class American warships with Standard Missile-3 interceptors of the sort that have already been deployed in the Mediterranean.

Cyprus, south of Turkey and west of Syria in the Eastern Mediterranean, is the final link in the chain that allows NATO to control the entire sea. Every other European nation bordering or in the sea is a member of NATO or the PfP: Albania, Britain (through Gibraltar), Croatia, France, Italy, Greece, Slovenia, Spain and Turkey in NATO and Bosnia, Malta (which withdrew in 1996 and rejoined in 2008) and Montenegro in the PfP. Bosnia and Montenegro have more advanced NATO Individual Partnership Action Plans, Montenegro being granted one only two years after becoming independent.

All the African nations on the Mediterranean except for Libya are members of NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue partnership: Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia. A new government in Libya, especially one installed after a U.S.-NATO military intervention, would be expected to join the Mediterranean Dialogue.

Israel is the major member of that program, leaving only Lebanon (under a five-year-long naval blockade enforced by NATO nations), Libya and Syria among Mediterranean littoral nations not members of NATO and its partnership programs. (NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen was in Israel last month where he discussed the deployment of NATO troops as part of a future Israeli-Palestinian peace plan, which means sending them to the Gaza Strip in the first place.)

Small and insular Cyprus is for the moment the last holdout in U.S. and NATO plans to consolidate control over Europe and the Mediterranean Basin.

Notes

1) Cyprus Mail, February 19, 2011
2) Ibid
3) Ibid
4) Associated Press, February 24, 2011
5) Cyprus Mail, February 25, 2011
6) Ibid
7) Famagusta Gazette, February 25, 2011
8) Kathimerini, December 5, 2005
9) Cyprus Mail, January 28, 2009
10) Ibid
11) Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, February 24, 2011
12) Cyprus Mail, January 28, 2009
13) Ibid
14) Haji Mike, From the sublime to the ridiculous
    Cyprus Mail, February 21, 2009
15) Cyprus Mail, February 21, 2009
16) Ibid
17) Famagusta Gazette, February 23, 2009
18) Cyprus Mail, April 3, 2009

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