

## An Address by the Turkish Prime Minister

Oct 4, 1999



Brief Analysis

**O**n September 28, 1999, Bulent Ecevit, prime minister of the Republic of Turkey, addressed The Washington Institute's Special Policy Forum. The following are excerpts from his remarks during the question-and-answer session that followed his speech. [Read a full transcript \(templateC07.php?CID=181\)](#) of the speech itself.

On Discussions with President Bill Clinton concerning Cyprus, Iraq, and NATO

"We discussed Cyprus very briefly, but in a very important way. President Clinton made it clear that no solution which would [return] the island to pre-1974 [status] would be acceptable. I think this was a historic announcement . . .

"We subscribe to the undeniable fact that there exist two separate, independent states in Cyprus, so it should be up to the two independent states to form a dialogue and try to find a settlement that would be acceptable to both sides. But for that, as I said, the fact--the reality--must be accepted: there are two separate, independent states on the island. In fact, the Turks have been self-governing, not since 1974, but since 1964, when the Cypriot Constitution was annulled by the Makarios regime, and when genocidal attacks began to take place against the Turks for ten years . . .

"For ten years, the Turks [in Cyprus] lived without even minority rights, without any constitutional rights, continuously faced with attacks--with genocidal attempts. They had to learn to govern themselves under the most adverse conditions, and they have proven that they have the right to have their own state. In spite of the fact that no country except Turkey has recognized the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus diplomatically, it has become a well-established state. In spite of the cruel economic embargos from Greece and the [European Union], the economy of the Turkish Cypriot Republic is also flourishing. Although diplomatically the state is not recognized except by Turkey, there are six universities operating in that small country, in a country with 180,000 people . . .

"Fruitful negotiations can take place on the island and for the island only if and when this stark reality [is accepted], that there exists an independent state, a real state and a democratic state exists in the northern part of the island. . .

"With regard to Iraq, we did not discuss the possibilities. We always stressed the fact that we are concerned lest the dismemberment of Iraq becomes permanent, because that would seriously upset the previous balance in the Middle East. Apart from this, we talked about what was going on in Indonesia [and] in Kosovo, [and] the problems that may be encountered in [the North Atlantic Treaty Organization], particularly with regard to the new tendency in the European Union [EU] according to which the EU will take the decisions for military operations. I told President Clinton that this would be totally unacceptable for Turkey and he fully agreed with our concern."

On Developments in Iran and Relations with President Muhammad Khatami "I never met President Khatami, but my impression is that he is much more liberal-minded than [the people in] many other politico-religious circles in Iran. I do not know whether he will be able to exert his influence as much as he wishes, to open new horizons for the people in Iran. Of course, I do not know what his real inclinations are, but he seems to give a hope for some substantial changes in Iran. In the meantime, we had problems with Iran but recently a fruitful dialogue was started between

Iran and Turkey."

On the Caspian Oil Pipeline "We are totally against the Supsa alternative. We believe that Baku-Ceyhan is the only acceptable alternative for Turkey and, I understand, for the United States also."

On Greek-Turkish Relations "Of course there are problems about seabed rights among all riparian countries, and we have our own problems with regard to the Aegean [Sea] with Greece. As far as I know, in almost all cases, all the other countries have negotiated among themselves rather than going to a court, [or] before going to a court at least, and we would like to emulate the same method. In fact, in 1978, when the Soviet Union still existed, we approached [the Soviets] for an agreement on the continental shelf [in the Black Sea] and we were able to reach an agreement within a week, whereas we still have not been able to settle our problem with Greece in that regard. About a year ago, an agreement [was] signed between Turkey and Bulgaria, again on territorial waters. Now, we are not allies with those countries [Bulgaria and the then-Soviet Union], but we have been able to negotiate our problems regarding the sea, and we were able to reach a settlement. We hope that the same method can be used between Turkey and Greece.

"I find it very hopeful that a dialogue has started . . . at the level of the ministers of foreign affairs with [Turkish foreign minister Ismail] Cem and [Greek foreign minister George] Papandreu. Of course, it would be too optimistic to expect two neighboring countries to address immediately the sensitive Aegean question, but if the dialogue helps to create a psychological atmosphere conducive to address sensitive problems, we may be possibly able to reach some positive results."

On Turkish Relations with Syria "When Syria realized that we were determined to do something about their giving freedom to terrorists, they accepted dialogue. So dialogue and determination are the keys [to better relations], in my view."

On Turkish Ties with Israel "Our relations with Israel have improved very much and very vastly. Although initially many Arab countries objected, they seem to have realized now that we have no aims or objectives which would cause any problems to any other country; on the contrary, [our relations] would enhance peace in that sensitive region. Also, there is a large community of, if I may say so, Turkish Jews in Israel, people who emigrated from Turkey. They are staunch supporters of the Turkish-Israeli friendship, and they contribute a lot to it . . . "

On Armenia "We cannot accept or resign [ourselves] to the fact that Armenia has occupied some territories belonging to Azerbaijan. If and when Armenia decides to return those territories occupied by them . . . then there would be no obstacle to establishing diplomatic relations between Turkey and Armenia."

On Ecevit's Ideological Evolution "I never attached to any ideology forcefully. For instance, when my former party was very much adhered to etatism [state control of the economy] in the economic sense, I had my doubts about excessive etatism--which I expressed earlier, since the beginning of the 1960s. So the fact that I have never been attached to an ideology too closely has given me a breathing room for adapting myself to changes."

◆ This report was prepared by Levent Onar.

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