

Gül's Contradictions

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It is no coincidence that the newly elected Turkish President Abdullah Gül chose the occupied part of Cyprus, the self-proclaimed "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" ("TRNC"), for his first visit outside Turkey. With his visit Gül conveyed the message that Turkey stands behind the "TRNC" and that Cyprus is of particular importance to Turkey for its perceived strategic importance as well as for reasons of symbolism. Nevertheless, while in Cyprus Gül made surprising statements which could certainly backfire for his country's interests if third parties cared to pay attention. More specifically Gül mentioned that a solution to the Cyprus problem should be based on two states given that there are two peoples of two different ethnic backgrounds, two religions and two languages. Obviously Gül consciously chose to bring into the Cyprus problem the issue of religion as well.

It should be noted that the Turkish government is far from happy when the issue of religion is brought up in relation to Turkey's EU accession process. Indeed, Erdogan as well as other Turkish politicians repeatedly raised the issue, posing the rhetorical question whether the EU wanted to be a Christian club as a counterargument to blocking Turkey's accession on the basis of religion.

Clearly Mr Gül has to make a choice. He cannot have his cake and eat it too. If religion is important in the case of Cyprus, why is it not important in the case of Turkey's accession to the EU? Secondly, in relation to the issue of ethnicities and languages it seems that Gül favours the creation of states which are ethnically homogenous. If that is the case in relation to Turkey and Iraq, clearly then the international community should see the creation of new states based on ethnic structure and as such the creation of a Kurdish state.

The objective of stability, security, cooperation and peace can only be advanced if we agree that there is a solid benchmark of principles and guidelines that all nations, including Turkey, must adhere to.