

**1/2014**  
JANUARY 2014

**REVISITING THE CYPRUS QUESTION AND THE WAY  
FORWARD**

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**1/2014**  
**March 2014**

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This paper was submitted for publication in early January 2014 for the book Anton Bebler (Ed), "Frozen conflicts in Europe", to be published by Verlag Barbara Budrich, Germany forthcoming.

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## REVISITING THE CYPRUS QUESTION AND WAY FORWARD

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### INTRODUCTION

Despite years of intercommunal negotiations and repeated efforts by the international community the Cyprus problem remains unresolved. The overwhelming presence of Turkish troops on the island since 1974 and Ankara's objective to strategically control Cyprus continue to be the most important factors shaping developments. The accession of the Republic of Cyprus to the EU in 2004 in conjunction with Turkey's own European ambitions did not, as expected, lead to a breakthrough thus far. Since the April 2004 referendum on the UN Plan, overwhelmingly rejected by Greek Cypriots but strongly backed by Turkish Cypriots (and Turkish settlers), this issue has become more complicated. The fundamental question remains: what model can lead to a viable solution?

### I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The early days of the Republic of Cyprus were marred by intercommunal and intracommunal strife and occasionally violence as the objectives of the two sides were initially diametrically opposed, with the level of tolerance and trust rather low. Most Greek Cypriots aimed for *enosis* (union with Greece) and most Turkish Cypriots for *taksim* (partition). The defining period for the Turkish Cypriots was 1963/64 which led to their withdrawal from the government, the establishment of the "green line" and the creation of enclaves. Greek Cypriots felt that this was part of a broader Turkish plan for the partition of Cyprus. Conversely, most Turkish Cypriots felt there was a real issue of security (Kyriakides 1968: 157-162).<sup>1</sup>

Besides ideology there were other forces contributing to major changes. Cyprus was undergoing a socioeconomic transformation which created new stakes. This

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<sup>1</sup> In his Report in March 1965, the UN special envoy Galo Plaza indicated that there was no rationale for the federalization of Cyprus and/or any form of division. This Report supported that Cyprus should move toward further integration and indeed to a unitary state. He also proposed that a solution to the Cyprus problem should be consistent with the principles of the UN. The Report was rejected by Turkey.

in conjunction with the military coup in Greece on 21 April 1967 led to a fundamental redefinition of Greek Cypriot objectives. In a significant shift of approach, Makarios declared the parameters of "what is feasible, which does not always coincide with what is desirable." The new policy objective toward a unitary state was confirmed with his re-election with a vast majority in 1968. Cyprus was moving along the lines of pragmatism and a promising future was foreseen.

On 13 July 1974 M. Dekleris and O. Alticacti, the two constitutional experts from Greece and Turkey respectively, finalized a draft for a comprehensive settlement on the basis of a unitary state with elements of local and communal self-administration which was to be ratified on 16 July 1974 by the two negotiators, G. Clerides and R. Denktash (Dekleris 1981: 266-273, Christodoulou 1987: 623). At the time local and international media were not focusing on the prospect of an imminent solution of the Cyprus problem but on the brewing clash between President Makarios and the Greek junta.

On 15 July 1974 the Greek junta overthrew Makarios and reversed an important historical path. The putschist regime in Nicosia announced "that the change was an internal affair of the Greeks of Cyprus only" and that the intercommunal negotiations would be continued in order to find a solution on the agreed basis. The Turkish Cypriot leader R. Denktash stated (initially) that what had happened was "an internal affair of the Greek Cypriots." For Ankara, though, it was an opportunity to be exploited as both the Greek junta and the putschist Sampson regime in Nicosia were internationally isolated.

On 20 July 1974 Turkey invaded Cyprus. Ankara stated that "its intervention was intended to reestablish the constitutional order and to protect the Turkish Cypriot [minority] community." On 23 July 1974 the Greek junta collapsed and C. Karamanlis returned to Athens to reestablish democracy and to lead the country to a new era (O'Malley and Craig 1999: 87-119). The putschist regime in Nicosia

collapsed and G. Clerides – as Speaker of the House of Representatives – assumed the duties of Acting President in accordance with the constitution. He immediately suggested to R. Denktash the return to the 1960 constitution. R. Denktash and Ankara declined (Clerides 1991: 38-39).

With the reestablishment of democracy in Greece and the constitutional order in Cyprus international public opinion changed. Both C. Karamanlis and G. Clerides enjoyed respect and credibility internationally. Nevertheless, Turkey continued its military operations despite the negotiations (involving Greece, Turkey, Britain, Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots and the UN) for a peaceful resolution. On August 14, Turkey launched a second massive attack against Cyprus after the rejection of its ultimatum to the Republic of Cyprus to surrender about 34% of its territory. Greek Cypriot civilians were expected to evacuate this territory and allow the Turkish army to deploy accordingly. By August 16, 1974 Turkey had occupied 38% of the land of the Republic of Cyprus, having committed atrocities and violations of human rights (Hitchens 1997, O'Malley and Craig 1999, Coufoudakis 2008).

Had Turkey stopped its military operations on July 23, 1974 and contributed to the reestablishment of the constitutional order based on the 1960 agreements, few would have questioned its stated reasons for "intervening." Instead, Turkey committed ethnic cleansing, did not reestablish the constitutional order in Cyprus, occupied 38% of the land of this island-state, has set up a puppet regime and has pursued an ambitious policy of colonization. Furthermore, there has been systematic destruction of the cultural heritage and massive exploitation and usurpation of Greek Cypriot properties (Ioannides 1991, Coufoudakis 2008).

Despite the initial outcry and resolutions of the UN and other international institutions, virtually no action has been taken against Turkey. In November 1974, the UN General Assembly passed a unanimous resolution (3212) for the respect of the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of the Republic

of Cyprus and for the withdrawal of all foreign troops. Ironically, Turkey voted in favour of this resolution. Subsequently, the UN urged bicomunal negotiations to address the problem despite the fact that the issue is multidimensional and with the bicomunal aspect not being the most important one. Not surprisingly, successive years of bicomunal negotiations did not lead to any results (Michael 2009).

## **II. THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE AFTER 1974, THE UN INITIATIVES, THE EU AND THE REJECTION OF THE ANNAN PLAN**

In addition to the human tragedy, there was severe socioeconomic disruption as well as a new *de facto* political state of affairs following the summer of 1974. This included the expulsion of thousands of Greek Cypriots and the gradual transfer of all Turkish Cypriots to the occupied part of Cyprus. In February 1975, the Turkish Cypriot leader R. Denktash declared the occupied northern part as the "Turkish Federated State of Northern Cyprus" (Dodd 1993).

New ideas arose on how to proceed with a solution to the Cyprus problem. Greek Cypriots discussed the prospect of a "multi-canton federation." The Turkish Cypriots immediately revealed their preference for "a bizonal bicomunal federation." The high level agreements of 1977 and 1979 entailed a very different approach than what was discussed before 1974 (Bahcheli 2000, Theophanous 2000, 2004).

Two major points must be stressed in relation to the high level agreements. First, for the Turkish Cypriot side these agreements nearly met their maximalist positions while for the Greek Cypriots they were considered a painful concession. Second, the mainstream interpretation of what was actually agreed in the high level agreements was diametrically different in each community.

Different interpretations did not only revolve around the size of the area that should be under Turkish Cypriot administration; for Makarios and the Greek

Cypriots the rights of property, return of the refugees to their homes and settlement of all Cypriots throughout the island were (and remain) inalienable. For the Greek Cypriots it was logical to demand their properties back, and for the Turkish Cypriots' demand to live in an area under their own administration to be satisfied without violating the rights of Greek Cypriots. The Republic of Cyprus could construct on state land new homes for Turkish Cypriots living on Greek Cypriot property. Significantly, arrangements could be made so that even if all Greek Cypriots returned under Turkish Cypriot administration, there would still be a Turkish Cypriot majority in the northern part of Cyprus.

The Turkish Cypriot positions were diametrically opposite. Denktash who in 1983 declared unilaterally the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" ("TRNC") which is not internationally recognized was clear: there would be "global" exchange of properties and compensations; the region administered by each community would preferably be ethnically homogeneous. The Turkish Cypriot interpretation of the new state structure had multidimensional implications. The central government would be very weak and the source of power would be the two ethnically homogeneous entities; these were later to be described as "constituent states" in Annan Plan V in 2004.

There were different perspectives on the decision-making processes too. The Turkish Cypriot demands stressed the concept of political equality in all aspects. That meant that no decision could be taken without Turkish Cypriot consent. And the idea of a rotating presidency was put on the table by the Turkish Cypriot side. For the Greek Cypriots this was excessive. It was one thing for Turkish Cypriots to have autonomy in the region under their administration; it was another to demand a 50-50 share in the central government. Greek Cypriots agreed that there could be effective Turkish Cypriot participation in government, but this did not translate arithmetically to participation on a 50-50 basis. Greek Cypriots stressed the supremacy of the central government in contrast to the Turkish



Cypriot position that most power should emanate from the two zones which were regarded as political entities of equal, almost sovereign status.

On 4 July 1990 the Republic of Cyprus submitted its application for EC membership. It was generally believed that this move would facilitate the solution to the Cyprus problem (Theophanous 2002). The intercommunal negotiations under UN auspices continued. In the summer of 1992 the UN Secretary General B. Ghali encouraged by the US and the UK, submitted a Set of Ideas for the solution to the Cyprus question. These ideas became the major focus of the 1993 presidential elections in Cyprus.

This was the first time the bizonal bicomunal federation model took substance. The debates were bitter and often personal. The veteran politician G. Clerides defeated G. Vassiliou by a narrow margin in the 1993 elections, challenging the Ghali Set of Ideas and calling for "a European solution".<sup>2</sup>

President G. Clerides in cooperation with Athens paid greater attention than his predecessors to the European prospects of Cyprus. The steps taken were gradual but steady. One and a half years after the start of Cyprus' accession negotiations with the EU (March 1998), UN Secretary General K. Annan, encouraged by the US and UK, began a new process in the Fall of 1999 for the solution of the Cyprus problem. This time the stakes were higher. In Washington the dominant strategic thinking was that the EU could offer incentives for addressing several issues. Three major objectives were:

- (a) solution of the Cyprus problem and accession to the EU of a unified island in 2004;
- (b) candidate status for Turkey and subsequently accession negotiations with the EU with the objective of full membership; and

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<sup>2</sup> Even if G. Vassiliou had won the elections it is questionable whether there would have been a positive outcome since the then Turkish Cypriot leader R. Denktash had been negative all along.

(c) resolution of all Greco-Turkish problems by 2004 and the advancement of peace, security and cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The US had its own strategic objectives and priorities. This was understood by President G. Clerides and Greek Prime Minister C. Simitis who still thought that there was room to satisfy Cyprus' objectives. At the Helsinki EU Council in December 1999, the Union encouraged a solution to the Cyprus problem prior to accession, but it did not make the solution a requirement for accession. Simultaneously, Turkey was given candidate status. Ankara was expected to contribute toward the resolution of the Cyprus question and to resolve its differences with Greece by December 2004.

Despite difficulties the UN process continued. After 10 years in power G. Clerides lost the presidential elections in February 2003 to T. Papadopoulos who campaigned on the premise of achieving major changes to the Annan plan which had been submitted on 11 November 2002. The final version of the plan, Annan V, which was submitted to simultaneous referenda to the two communities on 24 April 2004 was not balanced. This was reflected by the outcome: 76% Greek Cypriots voted No and 65,9% Turkish Cypriots (together with Turkish settlers) voted Yes. And this despite the fact that all along it was the Greek Cypriot side which sought reunification while the Turkish Cypriot side opted for a more separatist approach.

The Greek Cypriot rejection of the Annan Plan – by 76% - stemmed from a fundamental disagreement with its philosophy. The Plan did not call for an integrated society and economy but instead embedded division. Furthermore, the strict bizonality in essence legitimized the ethnic cleansing carried out by Turkey and the usurpation of Greek Cypriot properties. On top of that, the plan guaranteed that Turkey would have a strategic presence on the island. Greek Cypriots considered the strategic presence of Turkey on the island was unacceptable and detrimental. The US, UK and Turkey wanted the Annan Plan to

succeed and since its rejection they have sought to revive it. The major issue at stake was the potential European path of Turkey. A solution to the Cyprus problem would have facilitated Turkey's accession process. However, if there was not going to be a solution of the Cyprus problem, it would have seemed more convenient if the Greek Cypriots were the ones to reject it, making them, and not the Turkish side, the rejectionists.

The discussions on the Annan Plan were intense and bitter and drastically transformed the political landscape of Cyprus. Following the failure of the Annan Plan, President T. Papadopoulos lost a historic opportunity to clearly redefine the Greek Cypriot positions in the aftermath of the referendum and with the accession of Cyprus in the EU on 1 May 2004.

The moral high ground of the Republic of Cyprus was shaken in the aftermath of the referendum. There were several factors which contributed to this outcome:

- (a) an effective Turkish communications campaign;
- (b) the lack of a respective day-after strategy on the part of the Republic of Cyprus; and
- (c) the stance of the strategic allies of Turkey which essentially wanted Ankara to be absolved of its responsibilities over Cyprus so as to open the way for EU accession negotiations.

Despite the continuation of its occupation of the northern part of Cyprus and the perpetuation of the problems with Greece, on 17 December 2004 the EU granted Turkey a date (October 3, 2005) for commencing EU accession negotiations. Ankara was expected to sign and implement the Customs Union Protocol (ironically entitled the Ankara Protocol) with the ten new member countries, including the Republic of Cyprus. Turkey never met this obligation.

Two years later, on July 8, 2006 there was an agreement between President Papadopoulos and the Turkish Cypriot leader Talat under the auspices of the Secretary General of the UN; this agreement constituted in essence a road map toward a framework for a settlement. In December 2006 the EU reached a

decision in relation to Turkey's accession process. Eight major negotiating chapters were frozen while the completion of each of the remaining chapters would have to be confirmed by all member states. The message was clear: Turkey would have to abide by its obligations it had undertaken toward the Republic of Cyprus.

The victory of D. Christofias in the presidential elections of February 2008 raised expectations about the prospect of rapid developments. The implicit assumption was that the major obstacle for a breakthrough had been President T. Papadopoulos. This assumption proved to be simplistic and misleading. D. Christofias adopted a different approach to that of former President T. Papadopoulos calling for "a Cypriot solution". One of his main objectives was to prevent arbitration as had been the case with the Annan plan. Implicitly, however, a substantive side effect of this approach was that it minimized Turkey's responsibilities for the stalemate and violations of fundamental rights of Cypriots and of international law.

### **III. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND CHALLENGES**

When Cyprus applied for EU membership there were high aspirations and expectations. In addition to joining a family of nations with a common value system, it was expected that EU accession would move Cyprus toward a new geopolitical architecture and redefine the terms of the solution of the Cyprus problem. On 1 January 2008 Cyprus joined the Eurozone as part of its conventional obligations. This decision was expected to contribute to a new approach toward fiscal discipline, banking prudence and a solution of the Cyprus problem within an integrationalist framework. Unfortunately, these were not realized.

For years, Cyprus took pride in the economic miracle it had achieved after the Turkish invasion. Nevertheless, complacency, nepotism, unrestrained spending at

all levels, and a series of exogenous factors eroded the foundations of its economic model and led to the economic crisis. Cyprus fell into a deep recession and needed assistance.<sup>3</sup> Instead of helping the March 2013 Eurogroup decisions dealt a final blow to the prospects of a recovery, throwing the country into a deep depression. We are still not in a position to predict the exit from this predicament under the Memorandum of Understanding signed with its lenders [The Troika: The IMF, the European Commission and the European Central Bank], and the current architecture of the Eurozone. In assessing the consequences of Cyprus' own faults we must also consider the EU's short-sightedness in dealing with the situation.<sup>4</sup>

Cyprus has to work hard to get out of the crisis-depression, address the Cyprus question, utilize effectively the newly found energy resources and find its place in the regional and broader international environment. Inevitably there is currently a growing Euroscepticism in Cyprus.

One key concern is whether there are plans outside Cyprus to push for a package-deal involving the economic crisis, the newly found energy resources and the Cyprus problem. President N. Anastasiades, who was elected in February 2013 (and who had supported the Annan Plan in 2004), seems not to rule out addressing these issues comprehensively provided the outcomes are acceptable. On the other hand, many Greek Cypriots worry that the current weakness of Cyprus may be exploited.

The Eastern Mediterranean has always been a particularly significant geostrategic region. At this historical moment there is an upheaval in the broader area as well as new opportunities following the discovery of huge amounts of hydrocarbons. Cyprus should have been in a position to play a substantive role in the broader

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<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, participation in the Eurozone left Cyprus with fewer policy tools and option as Germany continued to pursue a very strict fiscal policy.

<sup>4</sup> A. Theophanous, "The Way out of the Cyprus Economic Crisis", policy paper 96 *Notre Europe - Jacques Delors Institute*, September 2013.

region. And this could be done in a way that EU interests are also served. But the current predicament of Cyprus may create difficulties in promoting these objectives. Indeed, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Spain M. Moratinos criticized the stance of the EU, accusing it of political and geostrategic myopia.<sup>5</sup> He also indicated that the Eurogroup completely disregarded the energy potential of Cyprus, its geopolitical position and the associated implications.<sup>6</sup>

The major objective of Greek Cypriot policymakers is the reestablishment of the territorial integrity and unity of the country. The question is what model could lead to reunification, intercommunal peace, security and cooperation (Theophanous 2008: 75-86). Since the 1980's negotiations have been taking place on the basis of a bizonal bicomunal consociational federal model. The record of such models is not encouraging. For example, Bosnia is facing serious problems (McMahon and Western 2009) while even Belgium has been repeatedly experiencing government crises; when allowed to freely decide, Czechoslovakia opted for a velvet divorce in 1993. This is not to suggest that Cyprus should pursue partition. It is important to note that Cyprus is no longer a bicomunal country. It is a hub of many peoples from other EU and third countries.

One cannot underestimate the economic issues and challenges of reunification in the event of a solution to the Cyprus question. These range from issues of socioeconomic convergence, legal harmonization, and property arrangements (Theophanous 2002, 2008). At this juncture, given the fiscal requirements for participation in the Eurozone, it will be extremely difficult for a bizonal bicomunal federal Cyprus to have annual balanced budgets.

Additionally, Cyprus must address the problem of illegal immigrants. Most enter the government-controlled areas from the occupied northern part. Despite

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<sup>5</sup> See M., Moratinos, "En defense de Chipre", El Pais, 28 March, 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

difficulties to monitor the long ceasefire line, Cyprus has not yet applied to join the Schengen Area due to perceived political complications.

Cyprus has major issues to address that may require a comprehensive paradigm shift. One element that must be addressed is the role of the EU.

#### **IV. THE NEGOTIATIONS FRAMEWORK: CONTEXT, SUBSTANCE AND PROCEDURE**

Although the negotiations have been taking place between the two major ethnic communities the Cyprus question also has other dimensions which are even more important. Greek Cypriots consider the conflict above all as an issue of invasion and occupation of a small country by a strong neighbour. Turkey does not recognize the right of the Republic of Cyprus to exist. As recent efforts were underway to agree to a common statement between the two sides for the start of a new round of negotiations, the Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan declared that there is no country called Cyprus.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the Turkish Cypriot leader D. Eroglu insists that there cannot be a solution within the framework of the evolution of the Republic of Cyprus.

The Cyprus question has also a European dimension. Cyprus is a member state of the EU, while Britain and Greece, two of the three guarantor countries are also members of the EU. The third, Turkey, is a candidate for membership and commenced EU accession negotiations in 2005. It is therefore a paradox that Turkey which aspires to join the EU occupies a substantial part of the territory of an EU member and does not recognize this state.

There is also a geopolitical dimension. Historically Cyprus was controlled or was under the influence of the dominant power in the Eastern Mediterranean. Be that as it may, what are the thorny issues in the negotiations?

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<sup>7</sup> Erdogan made this statement while speaking on 10th of November, 2013 on the conclusions of a meeting in Poland about Turkey's – EU Relations.

- 1) Constitutional Issues - There are serious disagreements between the two sides. The Greek Cypriot position is that the bizonal bicomunal federation and the new partnership will evolve as an outcome of the transformation of the Republic of Cyprus which is recognised by all countries except Turkey. The Turkish Cypriot position is that the new partnership will involve a new state entity. Furthermore, while the Turkish Cypriot positions are nearer to a confederation or at best to a very loose federation, the Greek Cypriots have in mind a bizonal, bicomunal federal arrangement with a rather strong government.
- 2) Governance – Greek Cypriots stress the importance of a unified state, society, economy and common institutions. Turkish Cypriot positions revolve around entrenching a new state of affairs based on ethno-communal lines. Bridging this gap would be difficult given that the positions reflect two opposing philosophies.
- 3) Property Issues – Greek Cypriots stress the primacy of the legal owner of properties while the Turkish Cypriots insist on giving priority to the current user. The Turkish Cypriot positions entail the legitimization of the usurpation of Greek Cypriot properties in the Turkish-occupied area of Cyprus. It should be stressed though that a significant portion of Greek Cypriot refugees have sold their properties in the northern part of Cyprus in recent years primarily due to the economic crisis.
- 4) The Three Fundamental Freedoms – Freedom to own property, freedom of settlement and freedom of movement (throughout the island). The two sides agree on the freedom of movement but not on the other two. The Turkish Cypriots insist on strict bizonality clauses which imply that the freedom to own property and to settle



throughout the island are compromised. The Greek Cypriot positions are in line with the European *acquis communautaire*. The Turkish Cypriots insist on derogations from EU law on these issues.<sup>8</sup>

- 5) Security Issues – The Turkish Cypriots insist on having Turkey as a guarantor power in accordance with the arrangements of the 1960 constitution. The Greek Cypriots believe that the system of guarantees has been part of the problem and also see it as an anachronistic arrangement. In essence, the system of guarantor powers and the presence of foreign troops will lead to a protectorate rather than an equitable member state of the EU.
- 6) Settlers – The Greek Cypriots consider the issue to be political although they recognize that it may also entail a humanitarian dimension. They also believe that most settlers should be repatriated. In addition, Greek Cypriots see the Turkish policy of colonialism as an attempt of Ankara to change the demographic character of the island and consequently a security issue. The Turkish Cypriot side insists that most settlers are citizens of the "TRNC" and will not be repatriated.
- 7) Territorial Issue – The Greek Cypriot side envisions the return of territory in a way that most Greek Cypriot refugees would be resettled under Greek Cypriot administration. It remains to be seen what the Turkish Cypriot side would be prepared to agree on. Over time it was assumed that the return of territory would convince Greek Cypriots to make concessions on other vital domains.

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<sup>8</sup> Another relevant concern for the Greek Cypriots is that it is inconceivable for the illegal settlers to enjoy the fundamental freedoms as it may endanger the demographic structure of Cyprus.

- 8) Economy – Although there was progress in the previous round of negotiations which began in 2008, the Turkish Cypriot side reversed most of its positions. The Turkish Cypriot side does not seem ready to accept the concept of an integrated economy. This creates further complications.

President N. Anastasiades has tried to introduce new elements to the process. He stressed that it is important for the two communities to also engage Greece and Turkey. There has been agreement that the Greek Cypriot chief negotiator would meet with officials of the Turkish government and the Turkish Cypriot chief negotiator with officials of the Greek government. President N. Anastasiades indicated that this process would imply the engagement of Turkey. His critics state that this arrangement promotes the Turkish position for a four-party process which supports Ankara's long standing stance to upgrade the Turkish Cypriot regime. This process equates the responsibilities of Turkey and Greece and, moreover, ignores the Republic of Cyprus. This particular procedure entails specific implications which affect substantive issues.

President N. Anastasiades has also indicated his preference for an evolutionary process to resolving the Cyprus problem. Within this framework in the absence of a comprehensive settlement there may be efforts toward an interim agreement involving Famagusta and other issues. The perceived merits of such a process are economic benefits for both sides and the creation of a better climate which eventually will lead to a lasting settlement.

## **V. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Despite past failures, the Republic of Cyprus' EU membership provides a framework for a breakthrough. In an era of multiple identities, the EU can provide for all Cypriots the context for a common European identity that would make a unified Cyprus work. In addition, respect for the political structure of a

unified Cyprus would be another common bond. Simultaneously, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots can also nurture their own ethnic and cultural identities. The EU in this respect may play a significant contextualizing role even though it has not yet reached its full potential in addressing major regional and international problems. For this to happen the EU must overcome its own weaknesses and thereafter address the growing Euroscepticism.

Since 1974, Greek Cypriot policymakers have been faced with increasingly maximalist positions from the Turkish side, which has averted any substantive change in the *status quo*, despite their serious and often painful concessions. Turkish demands over time amounted to the legitimization of the *status quo* post-1974, which marked the strategic control of Cyprus by Turkey and the gradual change of the island's demography by a policy of colonization.

Turkey pursues a policy of double standards, particularly when comparing how it would like to resolve its own Kurdish question and what it insists on in relation to the Cyprus problem. Ankara would like to merely "offer more rights" to the 15 million Kurds within the framework of a policy of integration. But in Cyprus, for about 100.000 Turkish Cypriots (and almost 180.000 Anatolian settlers) Ankara wishes to advance a completely different philosophy: a loose federation/confederation based on ethnocommunal lines.

Although the bicomunal dimension of the Cyprus question is an important one, the problem entails other aspects which are far more important. The occupation of the northern part of Cyprus creates immense complications as does Ankara's insistence to retain guarantor rights over a full EU member state.

A multi-regional functional federation based on an integrationalist approach may indeed lead to a unified state with viability and sustainability. Nevertheless this option is not on the negotiating table. For years, the basis has been a bizonal bicomunal federation on whose definition and interpretation have been serious

intercommunal and intracommunal disagreements. Furthermore, the role of Turkey in the equation is overwhelming. The dilemmas for the Republic of Cyprus in relation to the form of a solution are indeed great. This debate is also greatly influenced by the fact that on the one hand Turkey does not recognize the right of the Republic of Cyprus to exist and on the other there is consistent and sustained effort on the part of Ankara to change the demographic structure of the island.

Last but not least it has been pointed out that addressing simultaneously the Cyprus problem, the current economic crisis in the island as well as the utilization of the newly found energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean could create a window of opportunity. Although this perspective has its merits, Greek Cypriots are sceptical that the current economic crisis could be used to pressure them toward unfavourable outcomes at a time of changing geopolitics in the Eastern Mediterranean and the broader Middle East.

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