

**THE POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY OF THE CYPRUS  
CONFLICT AND CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURES  
SUSTAINING PEACE EFFORTS**

Yrd.Doç.Dr.Muzaffer Ercan YILMAZ\*

**ÖZET**

Bu makale, Kıbrıs'ta Türk ve Rum etnik grupları arasında devam eden uyuşmazlığı, adadaki geçmiş acılar ve geniş anlamda travmatik Türk-Yunan tarihinden kaynaklanan ilişki sel problemler konte ksinde inceleyen bir çalışma ortaya koymaktadır. Makale, Kıbrıs sorununu daha çok yasal ve politikal açılardan analiz eden geleneksel yaklaşımların bir kritiğidir. Eserde, Kıbrıs'ta kalıcı bir çözümün Kıbrıs toplumlarının ilişkilerinin iyileştirilmesinden geçtiği, bunun da uzun dönemli, travma giderici önlemlerle mümkün olabileceği öngörülmektedir. Bu bağlamda, bir takım güvenlik artırıcı önlemler önerilmekte ve bunlar detaylı bir biçimde tartışılmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Kıbrıs, Kıbrıs uyuşmazlığı, Kıbrıs Türkleri, Kıbrıs Rumları.

**ABSTRACT**

This article examines the ongoing conflict on Cyprus between Greek and Turkish ethnic groups in the context of relational problems, resulting

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\* Yard. Doç. Dr. Muzaffer Ercan Yılmaz, Balıkesir Üniversitesi Bandırma İ.İ.B.F, Kamu Yönetimi

from past hurts on the island, as well as unresolved traumas in the larger Greek-Turkish history. It is a critique of the traditional analyses of the conflict which pay more attention to legal and political problems. The study suggests that a durable settlement on Cyprus requires overcoming psychological barriers between the Cypriot communities and that necessities longer term trauma-healing efforts. In this respect, many confidence building measures are proposed and discussed in detail.

Keywords: Cyprus, Cyprus conflict, Turkish Cypriots, Greek Cypriots.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Mediterranean island of Cyprus, also known as the birthplace of Aphrodite, the goddess of love, ironically turned into a battle ground between the Greek and Turkish ethnic groups. Particularly since the negotiated accession to independence of the Republic in 1960, the history of the island has been a sad and complex sequence of events in which promises have been broken, the lives of families and communities have been under strain, and the various efforts of third-parties to mediate the parties to put Cyprus together again have as yet proved unsuccessful.

The conflict has received great scholarly attention. Numerous books and articles have been written on many different aspects of the "Cyprus problem" since the violent events of 1963, and particularly, the Turkish military intervention in 1974. These, however, have usually explored the issue either from a legalistic perspective or from one focusing on international relations and power politics. The political psychology of the conflict has rarely been studied systematically. The aim of the present work is to contribute to this gap, to explore psychological barriers between the two Cypriot communities and to discuss the root causes of them. The second goal complementing the first is to talk about an infrastructure that may sustain the peace process by helping the parties overcome their psychological barriers.

The special emphasis on psychological barriers is, however, not to argue that the conflict has no other variables. In fact, there are other dynamics. Legal and political opinions, traditional diplomacy, the need to keep a balance of power, expectations for economic or political gains, and many other “real world” issues are certainly present in the conflict. However, it is also true that the dictates of such issues do not actually fit the emotional refusal of the Cypriot Greeks and many Cypriot Turks to utilize the benefits of togetherness.

At present, the international community, in general, and the United Nations (UN), in particular, do not seem to have understood the psycho-dynamics of the conflict well, hence tend to push the Cypriot parties to solve their problem as quick as possible. This intention is especially clear in the latest UN effort, the so-called Annan Plan<sup>13</sup>. But considering the Cypriots’ psychology, an immediate solution on the island is neither possible nor desirable. The April 24, 2004 referendum also showed this fact one more time. So long as existing psychological barriers continue, a united Cyprus, realized with outside pushes, even if succeeds, would bring not a durable peace but bloodshed again. This work emphasizes the need for an adequate psychological and social preparation before the conflict is negotiated in terms of legal, political, and substantive issues.

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<sup>13</sup> For details of the Annan Plan, visit <http://www.cyprus-un-plan.org>.

## II. THE POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY OF THE CONFLICT THROUGH A HISTORIC LENS

Due to its strategic position on the main routes between Europe and Asia, Cyprus has long been the focus of political conflict and cultural interaction. It was invaded, bought and sold, and transferred from one ruler to another without the inhabitants ever being consulted. The occupying forces can be listed as the Assyrians (707-650), Egyptians (570-546), Persians (546-333), Ptolemies (320s-58), Romans (58 BC-330 AD), and Venetians (1489-1571). There was a resurgence of Hellenism during the Byzantine period, and the Hellenic culture survived over the centuries, although those adhering to Hellenism did not rule the island, but were under rulers of other origin.

### A- THE OTTOMAN PERIOD

The island was conquered by the Ottoman Turks in 1571. The Ottomans abolished feudalism and serfdom, and terminated the Latin persecution of the Greek-speaking Christians. They officially recognized the Greek Orthodox Church as an autocephalous, self governing Archbishopric. Under the *millet* system, Greek Cypriots enjoyed self-government, mainly through the church, which regulated their social, educational, and religious affairs. This system, for many

scholars, fortified the cohesion of the ethnic Greek population (Necatigil, 1982: 1).

Under the Venetians, from whom the Ottoman Turks took over the island, the island's population had dwindled to little more than 200,000, consisting almost entirely of the Greek-speaking people. After the Ottomans' triumph, the original Turkish settlers were drawn from among the soldiers; they were given fiefs (*timars*) on the island by Sultan Selim II. The sultan also issued an imperial order for certain towns in Anatolia to send one family out of each ten engaged there in any given trade. Tailors, cobblers, cooks, carpenters, stone masons, etc., were relocated. The settlers were guaranteed protection and forgiven their taxes for two years (Volkan and Itzkowitz, 1994: 133). By the end of the seventeenth century, approximately 30,000 Turks settled on Cyprus, and a sizable Turkish community was formed, eventually composing about 20 percent of the total population.

In the beginning of togetherness, there was no sign of overt troubled relations, but differences over ethnic origin, religion, language, and customs inevitably led to a very low level of interaction. Both communities preferred to live in separate quarters in towns and mixed villages, and most villages were either completely Greek or completely Turkish. Each community set up its own system of education conducted in its own language. Cypriot children attended these separate schools where they learned a strong sense of patriotism.

The political system in the Ottoman Empire also encouraged the existing tendency towards separation. Under the *millet* system, the Greek and Turkish communities were institutionalized as distinct *cemaats* (communities), electing their own judicial and administrative officials, such as *muhtars* (village headmen). This exclusive political socialization over a long period of time contributed to the crystallization of separate ethnic identities and aspirations.

But such separation was mainly reinforced by the traditional tendency of both communities to identify themselves with the larger Greek and Turkish nations. This meant that the two communities' perceptions of each other, and their relations with each other, were greatly influenced by the historically adversarial relations between the Greek and Turkish nations. Although not all disputes between the motherland Greeks and Turks were replicated in inter-communal violence on Cyprus, they had the impact of perpetuating separate self-views and inhibiting any disposition to Cypriot national identity.

As a consequence, throughout the Ottoman period, it was hardly possible, even impossible, to talk about a distinct Cypriot identity. Few, if any, Cypriots felt and considered themselves Cypriots. But nonetheless, although the origin of Greco-Turkish hostility goes back to the fall of Constantinople in 1453, most historical accounts indicate that the Greeks and Turks of Cyprus co-existed relatively peacefully during three centuries of Turkish rule. On several occasions, they even collaborated to help oust governors or

other high officials who were accused of excessive taxation (Bahçeli, 1990: 23).

The first significant event with the greatest consequence for both communities was the Greek war of independence. This event heightened the national feelings of Greek Cypriots, while widening the existing gap between the two communities further. The Greek Cypriots sympathized with the Greek war of independence, which started in the Greek mainland in 1821. Some volunteers participated in the mainland uprising; some others donated money and provisions. Evidence of links between the Greek Cypriots and the mainland insurgents, though tenuous, prompted the Ottoman governor to execute the Archbishop, other clergy, and various leading members of the Greek community in 1832. These executions became a chosen trauma for the Greek Cypriots, initiating an overt hostility, perhaps for the first time, against their Turkish compatriots. In the nineteenth century, the idea of uniting Cyprus with Greece was also implanted, but the island Greeks had no power to initiate a military process. Increased demands and agitation for *enosis* would wait for British rule over the island.

## **B- CYPRUS UNDER BRITISH RULE**

British rule on Cyprus started in 1878. At the Congress of Berlin of 1878, the Great European Powers endorsed an agreement between Great Britain and the Ottoman Empire, whereby Cyprus was put under



British control, to be used as a base from which to protect the Ottoman Empire against the ambitions of Russia. Control of Cyprus was now regarded as vital by the British, for the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 had made the eastern Mediterranean an area of great strategic importance. Under the agreement of 1878, Cyprus remained legally a part of the Ottoman territory, to which a tribute was paid. Yet when the Ottoman Empire joined the Central Powers in World War I, the British would unilaterally annex the island (1914).

The replacement of Ottoman rule with British rule encouraged those Greeks Cypriots who looked to Greece as the motherland. In welcoming the first British High Commissioner, the Archbishop of Cyprus declared in 1878 that "We trust that Great Britain will help Cyprus, as it did the Ionian islands, to be united with mother Greece, to which it is naturally connected"(Orr, 1953: 160). Under British rule, the Turkish community not only lost their Ottoman legal privileges but also faced the possibility of a real domination by the Greek Cypriots, even becoming a subject of Greece, namely *enosis*.

The Greek word *enosis* refers to a political ideology aimed at union with Greece. But it contains a greater dynamism than it seems. It can be well interpreted as part of a wider movement of the *megali idea*. The Greeks' inability to mourn over the lost Byzantine Empire and the transmission of this past trauma from one generation to the next, combined with the irredentist nationalism of the nineteenth century, found its expression in the term of *enosis* on Cyprus. The

Greek *megali idea* failed to recover Istanbul and western Anatolia, but it did not necessarily die with the Anatolian defeat in 1922. It continued to stir Greek passions, and at least some Greeks saw the prospect of Cyprus' union with Greece as partial fulfillment of the national dream. Greece, not surprisingly, supported the Greek Cypriot demand for *enosis*, but it was also careful to avoid any overt confrontation with the British. Thus, notwithstanding periodic statements of support for *enosis*, Greek governments waited for more favorable conditions before pressing for the island's union with Greece.

Parallel to the Greek's inability to mourn and their idealization of the past was the Turkish Cypriot's inability to mourn over losing power on the island. The fact that they had come to the island as the ruling party, combined with shared longing to be part of the "total body" of the motherland, caused the Turkish Cypriots to reject *enosis*. The pattern of confrontation emerging over *enosis*, and the increasing alienation of the Turkish community, caused both peoples to grow further apart. Hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of Cypriots demonstrated for or against *enosis*. In one of the worst communal clashes in 1912, 5 people died and 134 were injured (McHenry, 1981: 29). Accordingly, much before the intensification of the *enosis* struggle in mid-1950s, it was evident that the Greek and Turkish Cypriots were already on a collision course.

In view of the continuing strategic value of Cyprus, the British, too, opposed *enosis*, although they once offered the island to Greece in 1915 in an unsuccessful bid for its support in the war. Hence, the British authorities and the Turkish Cypriot representatives formed an invisible alliance against the enosist claims of Greek Cypriots, which inevitably caused Greek Cypriot resentment.

#### The Involvement of the Motherlands

Following the Greek-Turkish war of 1919-1922, both Greece and Turkey also developed closer ties with their respective communities on Cyprus. During the Lausanne peace negotiations (1923), Turkey sought, and received, the right for the Turks of Cyprus to opt for Turkish nationality and emigrate to Turkey. But because Turkey's primary concern, after the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, was domestic economic and social reconstruction, Ankara was careful to avoid any interference in Cyprus under British rule. Nevertheless, Turkey's relations with the Turkish Cypriot community had far-reaching consequences, both for that community and ultimately for Cyprus as a whole. For the Turkish Cypriots, the new Turkish Republic replaced the world of Islam as a source of their collective identity. By identifying with Atatürk's vision of Turkish nationalism, the Turks of Cyprus were also asserting their sense of separate identity from their Greek Cypriot neighbors. They voluntarily accepted most of the reforms introduced by the sanction of the state in Turkey. For instance, when Atatürk replaced the Arabic script with the

Latin alphabet for the Turkish language in 1928, the new alphabet was speedily adopted by the Turkish Cypriots. Similarly, European dress was adopted voluntarily. Soon after the establishment of the Turkish Republic, the Turkish Cypriots began celebrating the same national holidays of the new state, including those recalled Turkish victories against the Greek invasion. Turkey also started to extend assistance to Turkish Cypriot education, albeit on a modest scale. It sent teachers and provided easy access to Turkish universities for Turkish Cypriot students. All this helped inculcate Turkish nationalist ideas among Turkish Cypriot youth. Further, Ankara constantly monitored developments on the island through its consulate and gave discreet support to the Kemalist elements (Bahçeli, 1990: 28).

The concerns which the British had regarding the growth of Kemalism and Turkey's stake on Cyprus were mild compared with the challenge posed to their rule by the *enosis* movement on the island and the prospects of Greece's involvement in the struggle for union. While Turkey accepted British rule as a reality, Greek policy was aimed at eventual *enosis*. On the other hand, hellenic nationalism was spread through education. Diplomatically, Greece adopted a "low-keyed" campaign aimed at persuading the British to surrender their predominant position on the island in exchange for strategic guarantees and base rights. The strategy was to keep Cyprus alive as a diplomatic issue without needlessly antagonizing the British" (McHenry, 1981: 24). But the Greek policy was not entirely risk-free.

It could spill into open violence. As a matter of fact, anti-British riots by the Greek Cypriots took place throughout the island in 1931. Afterwards, harsh measures were taken designed both to strengthen British control and to curb Greek nationalism among the Greek Cypriots.

Although political activity was severely restricted on the island after 1931, enosis activity and propaganda flourished in mainland Greece. In Athens, former president Admiral Koundouriotis founded the Cyprus Central Committee, whose motto was *long live Greek Cyprus*, and had most of the prominent Greek politicians and academics as members. Also active were the Cypriot Students Brotherhood, the Society of Friends of Cyprus, and the Cyprus National Bureau (Panteli, 1984: 156-157). These groups kept Cyprus alive as an issue in Greece and garnered growing popular support for *enosis*.

In short, three decades of involvement by Greece and Turkey in the Cyprus issue after Lausanne may be summed up as follows: Greece strengthened its existing ties with the Greek Cypriot community and, encouraged by the persistence of the *enosis* movement, increasingly viewed Cyprus' ultimate union with Greece as a realizable national goal. Though Turkey renounced its sovereignty over Cyprus in favor of Great Britain at Lausanne, and even sought to encourage the bulk of Turkish Cypriots to emigrate to the mainland, its interest in the island's affair and future destiny grew as it

developed closer ties with an increasingly secular and nationalist community on the island.

#### The Violent Campaign for Enosis of the 1950s

The post-war (World War II) Greek demand for *enosis* coincided with the period of accelerating de-colonization. The argument made by Greece and the Greek Cypriots was that Cyprus deserved her freedom as much as any other Afro-Asian colony attaining its independence from British rule. The British and Turkish opponents of *enosis*, on the other hand, asserted that the Greek aspirations differed from those of other colonial peoples: rather than independence as such, the Greeks envisaged the transfer of sovereignty from one state to another, from Great Britain to Greece. In any case, British governments believed that their possession of Cyprus served important strategic interests and were unwilling to yield. Therefore, in the period after World War II, the desire to achieve *enosis* began gradually turning into a violent campaign.

The very intensification of the *enosis* campaign came in the wake of the election of Makarios III as Archbishop in 1950. In that year, Makarios, who would later become the first president of the Republic of Cyprus, organized an island-wide plebiscite in Greek Cypriot churches. This action would serve two purposes: it would harass the legitimacy of British rule, and it would help publicize the Greek Cypriot case to the world. The result of the plebiscite was

amazing: 96 percent of eligible Greek Cypriots voted for *enosis* (Bahçeli 1990: 33).

Encouraged by this result, Greece's UN representative formally requested that the subject of self-determination pertaining to the people of Cyprus be included on the agenda of the General Assembly's next meeting. Archbishop Makarios later seconded this formal request by a petition to the UN. Contrary to the expectations of the Greeks, however, the UN General Assembly decided that it did not appear appropriate to adopt a resolution on the question of Cyprus. Thereupon, the Greek Cypriot leaders called for a general strike and massive violence broke out. Makarios returned from New York, where he attended UN meetings, and founded an underground guerrilla organization, with the acronym EOKA (*Ethnici Organosis Kyprion Agoniston*- National Organization of Cypriot Combatants). George Grivas, an extreme nationalist Greek army colonel who was Cypriot by birth, also accompanied him.

In the mid-1950s, terrorism prevailed on Cyprus as the EOKA started its campaign of violence against the British and Turkish Cypriots. During the EOKA activities between 1955 and 1958, hundreds of Turkish Cypriots were killed or wounded, and 6,000 of them became refugees as 32 villages were destroyed by the organization (Volkan and Itzkowitz, 1996: 137). The British exiled Makarios in 1956 to the Seychelles after charging him with complicity in the EOKA. One year later, he was released but not allowed to

return to Cyprus. He went to Athens and received a hero's welcome there.

Initially, the Turkish Cypriots reacted to the new *enosis* campaign with anti-union pronouncements and demonstrations. They lodged the usual appeals to Britain and Turkey to stand firm against *enosis*, hoping that the campaign would run its course. However, by the end of 1956, when large-scale intercommunal killings began and the Greek intercommunal campaign to present the issue as a colonial struggle for liberation registered some successes, they changed their position and began urging *taksim*, that is the division of the island between the two communities. They argued that since Cyprus was made up of two national groups, each with its distinct language, religion, and national identification, the Turkish community was entitled to exercise the right of self-determination as much as the Greek Cypriot community. At the same time, as a reaction to the EOKA activities, they founded their counter underground organization called *Volkan* (Volcano), which would later be replaced by the better-led TMT (*Türk Mukavemet Teskilatı*-Turkish Resistance Organization).

Meanwhile, Turkey also intensified its involvement in the issue. Turkish leaders began to express themselves in stronger terms, particularly after Greece put Cyprus on the agenda of the UN and the EOKA began its violent campaign on the island. Turkey was certainly concerned about the fate of the Turkish community. If *enosis*



happened, the Turkish community would be treated poorly, much as the Thrace Turks had been in Greece. But her concern was also strategic. Already feeling hemmed in by Greek islands in the Aegean Sea, the mainland Turks felt that Greece's sovereignty over Cyprus would enable it to control access to its southern ports of Mersin and Iskenderun, thereby completing Turkey's encirclement. Accordingly, Turkey also adopted the policy of *taksim* and supported, overt or covert, the Turkish Cypriot underground organization working for this purpose.

#### The Question of Identity Before the Birth of the Republic of Cyprus

Previously, it was mentioned that under Ottoman rule the Cypriots had an underlying tendency of identifying themselves with the motherland Greeks and Turks due to ethnic, religious, linguistic ties, as well as separate administrative and educational systems. In other words, there was no Cypriot identity other than Greek or Turkish identity on the island. This tendency grew even further under British rule. First of all, the motherland countries fought each other in four full-fledged wars during the British period- 1880, 1897, 1912, and 1919-1922. Volunteers from both communities participated in these wars and inevitably brought their psychological effects to the island. At the same time, the growing political and cultural ties of Greece and Turkey with their respective communities enhanced the interests of the mainland governments on the island. These links played a major

role in the subsequent reappraisal of policy by the two countries towards Cyprus and provided the bases of their deeper involvement on the island from the 1950s onwards.

But more importantly, it was the Greek Cypriot agitation for union with Greece, and Turkish Cypriot opposition to it, which gradually turned into a violent fight in the 1950s, what really widened the psychological distance between the two Cypriot communities. Had the Greek Cypriots not started a nationalist move towards union with Greece, co-existence on the island would have been possible to some degree. But that move destroyed any possibilities. As Markides astutely noted in his book, "the national consciousness of Turkish Cypriots grew in direct proportion to the rise of *enosis*. As the Greek Cypriots intensified the struggle for union with Greece, the Turks began feeling more nationalistic and declared their own ethnic interests and aspirations" (Markides, 1977: 23). As long as the Turkish Cypriots were confident that the British were determined to remain on the island indefinitely, they might have limited their political activism to reminding the governor of their loyalty to the colonial status quo and their opposition to *enosis*. But when the *enosis* movement took a more activist turn beginning in the late 1940s, and there were signs that *enosis* could become reality, the Turks launched their own militant opposition through clandestine operations, such as the creation of *Volkan* and TMT. Once intercommunal fighting started, the old hatred and mistrust that had characterized Greco-

Turkish relations since the fall of Constantinople were revived with increasing intensity. As a result, at the time of the creation of the Republic of Cyprus, there were two psychologically-separate communities deeply mistrusting each other, and perhaps hating each other.

### **C- THE BIRTH OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS: THE “RELUCTANT REPUBLIC”**

When Xydis Stephen called the Republic of Cyprus the “reluctant Republic” in his study (Stephen, 1973), perhaps he was not wrong. The Republic was born in the midst of intercommunal violence and against the real wishes of the Cypriots. Cyprus was perhaps the only post-colonial country that was forced into independence, representing a compromise between the Greek demand for union with Greece and the Turkish counter-demand for partition between two communities.

In 1959, the British decided to leave the island. By that time, it was clear that both Greece and Turkey were pursuing their own goals with respect to Cyprus, *enosis* and *taksim*, with increasing intensity. Yet both countries eventually understood that neither could succeed in achieving its preferred goal. *Enosis* was not feasible given the determination of Turkish opposition, nor was *taksim* in the face of adamant Greek resistance.

That aside, there were other incentives, as well, which played a role in encouraging the Greeks and Turks towards a compromise. As Robert H. Stephen explained:

The outlook was black not only on the island but internationally. Khrushchev, flushed with the success of Russia's first sputnik, was putting pressure on the Western powers over Berlin. There was a call from Washington for a closing of the ranks in NATO to meet the new Soviet threat. Cyprus was drifting into a civil war which threatened to involve Britain, Greece, and Turkey- all NATO members- in deepening conflict. All of the parties concerned found they had reasons for considering a compromise (Stephens, 1996: 175).

Ultimately, then, the representatives of the British, Greek, and Turkish governments came together to negotiate the Cyprus problem in Zurich in February 1959. They rejected *enosis* or *taksim*, and instead found another formula. That was to create an independent Cyprus. The constitution of Cyprus was designed by these three powers. It was decided that the president would be a Greek Cypriot and the vice-president a Turkish Cypriot, and that there would be a Council of Ministers (7 Greeks, 3 Turks) and a House of Representatives (70 percent Greek, 30 percent Turkish) elected by a universal suffrage for a term of five years. Zurich agreements were later confirmed by the London Conference in 1960, and the Republic of Cyprus eventually came into existence on 16 August 1960, with Makarios its first president.

Although the birth of the Republic brought about a temporary halt in intercommunal violence, "there were no festivals, no ringing of church bells, no parades, no dancing people in the streets of Cyprus celebrating independence", as Markides describes in his book (Markides, 1977: 25). The mood of both communities was somber, almost depressed. For the Greek Cypriots, the Republic meant, at least temporarily, the abandonment of *enosis*. After decades of struggle, this dream could not come true. Also, very few Greek Cypriots viewed the constitution as legitimate. Most Greeks felt that the imposed constitution by foreign powers discriminated against them- the majority, composing 76 percent of the population- in favor of the Turkish minority, which composed 20 percent of the population. Further, since Great Britain, Greece, and Turkey guaranteed the preservation of status quo, as the signatories of the agreements, the Greek Cypriots complained that the Cypriot parliament was denied the right to amend its own constitution without prior consent from the guarantor powers.

The Turkish Cypriots, too, remained intransigent, suspicious, unaccommodating, and predisposed to adopt, in regard to constitutional and governmental issues, a rigid posture that divided them even further from their Greek compatriots. They were convinced that the Greeks would never give up their ultimate aim to unite the island with Greece. As the Greek Cypriots made inflammatory speeches referring to the continuity of the *enosis* struggle, the Turkish

Cypriots similarly urged the partition of the island, enforcing Greek Cypriot suspicions that their compatriots had not abandoned the idea of *taksim* either.

Consequently, while an outsider may consider the creation of the Cyprus Republic as an ideal togetherness of two ethnic groups, the Republic was indeed born on very fragile bases. The new state could not erase old hostilities. Mutual suspicions remained and continued, perhaps with increasing intensity. The Republic could have evolved towards a nation-state if the two communities had embraced the new state and seen the advantages of becoming a nation. But things evolved the other way and from the very beginning of independence, at least one of the sides, and perhaps both, did not desire a partnership.

Nor was the creation of the Republic able to produce a distinct Cypriot identity. "Greekness" and "Turkishness", with strong total body identification with the mainland nations, remained. This is perhaps best exemplified by the attitudes of the Cypriots towards the official Cypriot flag that Vamik Volkan, a professor of psychiatry with Turkish Cypriot origin, describes as follows:

When my artist brother-in-law was asked to design a flag for the newly-constituted Republic of Cyprus, he was told that he could use white, which appears on both the Greek and Turkish flags, but that he had to avoid using red, which appears on the Turkish flag, and blue, which is

used on the Greek flag. Accordingly, he used yellow with some green, these relating to no country in question. This yellow-green-and-white banner is still the official flag of Cyprus. When the Republic was established, however, Cypriot Turks raised the red-and-white flag of Turkey, and the Greeks flaunted the blue-and-white one of Greece. The official yellow-green-white one appeared only at certain locations, such as Makarios' presidential palace- as an ornament. The story of a Cypriot flag, designed for an imaginary Cypriot nation, and the population's response to it, indicates that *Realpolitik* found no echo in the psyche of either Cypriot Turk or Cypriot Greek (Volkan, 1989: 308).

Under these circumstances, a good observer could fairly predict the fall of the Cyprus Republic, and this would actually happen with the constitutional breakdown in 1963, three years after the birth of the Republic.

#### The Fall of the Republic of Cyprus

The practical difficulty from the beginning of independence remained the implementation of the constitution, particularly the 70:30 ratio which the Turkish Cypriots insisted must be put into effect immediately, whereas the Greek Cypriots urged a more gradualist approach. Quarrels over the basic taxation, over the establishment of municipalities, and over the insistence of the Turks that the police and

the army should constitute ethnically separate organizational units brought the governmental machinery to a virtual standstill.

In short, successive constitutional crises eventually spilled over into inter-communal fighting. In 1963, large-scale violence broke out again and the Cypriot state *de facto* collapsed. A buffer zone marked by “the green line” was drawn between the opposing groups, and in 1964, UN peacekeeping forces were sent in, most of which still remain there.

The period between 1963 and 1974 can be described as the period of Turkish suffering. The Turkish Cypriots were forced to live enclaves on their own and during that period, they controlled no more than 5 percent of the island’s territory, whereas they had owned 35 percent at the time of the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus (Volkan and Itzkowitz, 1994:140).

In July 1974, the National Guard of Greek Cypriots, with the support of Greek military regime governing Greece since 1967, staged a successful coup. The common plan was to realize *enosis*. President Makarios fled to London and Nikos Sampson, a former EOKA member, pro-claimed himself new President. Fearing of *enosis*, Turkey militarily intervened immediately and justified its action based on its guarantor-state status, which was – and still is- actually the case according to Zurich and London agreements of 1959-1960. The Turkish forces seized about 38 percent of the island’s territory,



dividing the island into two as well: southern section is Greek, northern section is Turkish, a status that has been continuing to date.

Following the Turkish intervention, there were numerous efforts to negotiate a new state structure between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots with the assistance of Dr. Kurt Waldheim, former UN Secretary General, but none succeeded. The Turkish side demanded a Greek-Turkish bi-regional federation with strong regional governments, whereas the Greek side favored a multi-regional or cantonal federation with a strong federal government.

With the talks ended without solution, on February 13, 1975, a "Turkish Federated State of Cyprus" (TFSC) was proclaimed in the northern part of the island. Greece protested this move and denounced it as a threat to peace, while Turkey recognized it. Afterwards, inter-communal talks were resumed and continued throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s, but as in the earlier efforts, no agreement was reached.

On November 15, 1983, the TFSC made a unilateral declaration of independence as the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" (TRNC). Like the TFSC, the TRNC was recognized only by Turkey and in April 1984, full diplomatic ties were established between Turkey and the TRNC.

Since then, further efforts have been made, some of which with the help of third-parties. Especially important was former UN Secretary General Dr. Boutros Boutros Ghali's "set of ideas", which,

at least, motivated the parties to initiate more serious efforts to work on a solution, whereby several summit meetings were actually arranged between the Cypriot leaderships.

As known, the latest, and perhaps the most popular effort, is Annan's peace plan, commonly-called as Annan Plan. This plan generated great hopes for the international community as it received a certain degree of support from many Cypriots, as well as Athens and Ankara. It also succeeded in arranging a referendum on April 24, 2004 between the parties for the first time. But the result of the referendum was not positive as the majority of the Greek Cypriots rejected the plan.

### **III. CONTENDING VIEWS OF THE PARTIES AND THE PROBLEM OF DEEP MISTRUST**

Since the fall of the Republic, the conflict over reunification has revolved mainly around the problems of state structure, displaced persons, territory, and security guarantees. In this respect, the Greek Cypriots traditionally argued that:

- The unity of the country should be preserved, but the Republic would be federally organized, composing of two regions called provinces.
- The president should be elected by voters of the Greek Cypriot community and the vice-president by voters of the Turkish Cypriot community. Participation in

public services, including the government, should be proportional.

- All non-Cypriot military forces should withdraw. The Republic of Cyprus, as a sovereign independent state and member of the UN, can only have security guarantees in accordance with the UN charter.
- Displaced persons should be considered as a priority issue.

The Turkish Cypriots, on the other hand, argued that:

- A federation should come about through the expression of the free will of the two equal peoples based on the right to self-determination, to be exercised through separate referenda. If there is going to be a federation, this federation should be bi-communal and bi-zonal, built on the political equality of the two constituent republics representing the Turkish Cypriots in the north and the Greek Cypriots in the south.
- The presidency of the federal republic should rotate, and the federal government should contain equal members of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot ministers.
- The 1960 Treaty of Guarantee and of Alliance should be maintained and updated.

- The issue of displaced people is not an urgent problem, since no agreement has yet been achieved on the whole integration.

Recently, some of these major differences, such as those on political equality, residual powers, rotating presidency, and security and guarantees have been narrowed with Kofi Annan's peace efforts. Yet the real issue of deep mistrust continues to separate the two parties. When the Cypriot Greeks and Cypriot Turks get together for negotiations, inevitably the Turks refer to their chosen trauma- the period between 1963 and 1974 when they were physically restricted and felt imprisoned-, while the Greeks similarly refer to their own one, which has begun with the Turkish military intervention in 1974. The relatively long history of intercommunal violence, combined with larger Greco-Turkish enmities, has penetrated in the minds of the Cypriots to such an extent that each side, as a group, fears that it would become victim once again.

Accordingly, the conflict on Cyprus is not simply a conflict of substantive issues, such as territory, refugees, etc., but mostly a conflict of mistrust, fear, and suspicions. Because of that, a durable peace between the Greeks and Turks of Cyprus might not be achieved by "logical", traditional approaches alone. Any peace initiative should acknowledge that there are psychological forces that are in fact at the hearth of the problem. Without realizing, and adequately addressing such dynamics, it might be impossible to establish new channels

towards an enduring solution. This neglected dimension manifested itself once again in the latest referendum in April. Not being psychologically ready for partnership, the majority of the Greek Cypriots rejected the Annan plan. On the other hand, the acceptance of the plan on the Turkish side by the majority was due mainly to economic expectations and the desire to become part of the European Union. Otherwise, not counting few Turkish Cypriots, the "yes" result did not mean an urge for intimate partnership with the Greek side, as the international community would us have to believe.

### **CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURES**

Then it becomes necessary that a climate of confidence must be established between the two Cypriot communities if the conflict is to be carried forward. This is the key for a durable, negotiated agreement as well. As former UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali astutely observed during the summit meetings between the two Cypriot leaders in 1992, "it is difficult to envisage any successful outcome to negotiation efforts as long as this situation (of deep crisis of confidence) prevails."<sup>14</sup>

Confidence building is, of course, not an easy task. It requires a great deal of time, as well as great efforts from many directions. But

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<sup>14</sup> Quoted in *Denktash's' Proposals of January 20, 1995*, <http://www.access.ch/turkei/grupf/proposal.htm>.

under the existing realities on the island, it should be done somehow. The following suggestions concentrate specifically on this subject.

### I. Breaking Enemy Images

In almost all violent conflicts, the parties develop a distrust of one another in the form of negative (enemy) images. Due to these images, they see and acknowledge negative aspects of each other that fit or support the stereotype and simply ignore other aspects that do not fit. The conflict on Cyprus is not an exception. Particularly given the long history of rivalry between the Greeks and Turks, the Cypriot parties, like the mainland nations, have expectedly developed distorted images. American sociologists Marvin Gerst and James S. Tenzel, who studied the perceptions of the Cypriot communities towards each other in the early 1970s, found that the Greeks would see the Turks overly suspicious and less inclined to be trustworthy, while the Turks would similarly see the Greeks' actions as being facile and manipulative, and thus also untrustworthy (quoted in Volkan, 1979: 34).

Despite the fact that there has been little or no intercommunal violence since 1974, distorted images continue to exist because they are deeply embedded in group identities. So long as each side stereotypes the other in a less humanized way, it is not difficult to imagine what the outcome would be in, for example, a political negotiation. Thus, it is vital that such images be broken before constructive dialogues take place. In his classical study on prejudice,

*The Nature of Prejudice*, Gordon W. Allport sets out several ways that mirror images could be reduced. The main strategies include acquaintance programmes (i.e., neighborhood festivals, community conferences, etc.); group retraining methods; positive action by the mass media; exhortation by community leaders such as religious leaders, politicians, etc.; and individual therapy (Allport, 1959: 310-325).

C. E. Osgood also developed a strategy called "gradual reduction in tension" (GRIT) to reduce negative images and build up trust between adversaries. The key features of GRIT are as follows: One side unilaterally makes an unambiguous concession to the other side, which is, ideally, open to full verification. This action is accompanied by a clear signal that a reciprocal action is expected. If the other side responds positively, and also makes a concession, the process is continued through a series of bilateral efforts. If no reciprocal action is forthcoming, no one really loses anything because the initial concession is chosen; that is, it does not affect the security of the community making it. Osgood suggests that unilateral initiatives by one side should be continued over a period regardless of the unresponsiveness of the other side in an effort to change aggressive interpretations into conciliatory responses (Osgood, 1985). Dean G. Pruitt and Jeffrey Z. Rubin agree that such action can build confidence, especially when the behavior is seen voluntary and

involves some costs (material, psychological) for the gesturing party (Pruitt and Rubin, 1994: 39).

However, at the governmental level on Cyprus, very few unilateral initiatives to promote intercommunal understanding have so far taken place. Although Cypriot leaders and politicians occasionally come together to negotiate on certain issues, they are unwilling to make concession, particularly over a long time period, either because they do not want to lose "face" or because they fear that they will be criticized by hard-liners.

Due to these concerns, inter-ethnic friendship on Cyprus can be developed from the bottom-up, rather than top-down, and one way to do that would be track-two diplomacy. Joseph Montville defines track-two diplomacy as "an unofficial, informal interaction between members of adversary groups or nations aiming to develop strategies, influence public opinion, and organize human and material resources in ways that might help resolve their conflict" (Montville, 1990: 162). Indeed, people-to-people meetings and discussions, oftentimes working through problem-solving workshops mediated or facilitated by psychologically sensitive third-parties, may provide an opportunity for the Cypriot parties to examine the root causes of their conflict, to explore possible solutions out of public view, and to identify obstacles to better relationships. What is more, by allowing face-to-face communication, they may help them arrest the dehumanization process, overcome psychological barriers, and focus on relation



building. As a result, reason, rather than emotion, would become the dynamic factor of their interaction. Best of all, any success in informal meetings would spill over into formal ones because those who change their negative images about the other side would push the formal negotiation process with a new perspective, or they may become formal negotiators in later life.

Herbert Kelman, who conducted many problem-solving workshops between the Jews and Palestinians, observed that the workshops allowed the participants to gain insights into the perspective of the other party, and to create a new climate of trust between the adversaries (Kelman, 1996: 501-519). Edward. E. Azar, who also organized several workshop exercises around the Lebanese and Sri Lankan conflicts, claimed, in the same way, that the workshops allowed the parties to discover their common needs and values, to establish informal networks, and to widen their agendas towards a mutually acceptable solution (Azar, 1990). If well organized and exercised for a reasonably long time, similar positive effects would be seen on Cyprus as well. In fact, the Chairman of the Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy, John McDonald, who organized several problem-solving workshops between Greek and Turkish Cypriot teenagers on Cyprus, as well as in the United States in the late 1990s, told me, during a personal interview in May 2000, that they made certain progress in terms of creating a climate of confidence between the two sides' younger generations, while also expressing his sincere

belief that the continuity of such works would eventually bring the Cypriots together under a single state.

## II. Creating Superordinate Goals

The idea of creating superordinate goals, the goals that can only be achieved by cooperation between the conflicting groups, to overcome mutual hostility was invented by Muzaffer Sherif, in the course of a series of experiments conducted in the 1950s on children who were attending summer schools in the US (Sherif, 1967). In their experiments, Sherif and his colleagues divided a group of boys into two groups, and conflicts between them were then encouraged. As inter-group hostility increased so did intra-group solidarity. The mutual hostility was only overcome when the two groups were brought together to engage in cooperative acts for common ends that they could not obtain on their own. This led Sherif to conclude that only the pursuit superordinate goals can overcome stereotyping and reduce hostility (Sherif, 1969).

Can this insight into group dynamics be applied to the Cyprus conflict? It is certainly advisable to avoid over-optimism, for the differences separating the Cypriot communities are deeper than differences created by artificially dividing up school-kids in an American summer camp. But nonetheless, having and working on common goals would enhance bonds between the parties in a number of ways. One would be reducing the salience of group boundaries; people who are working towards common goals are in some sense members of the same group, and thus are not so likely to be antagonistic towards one another. Another would be by a reinforcement mechanism; as the two parties work together, each of them rewards the other and produces a sense of gratitude and warmth in the other. Pursuing superordinate goals also means that each party sees itself as working on behalf of the other, a view which is likely to foster positive attitudes (Pruitt and Rubin, 1994: 136-137).

On Cyprus, there were actually few examples of micro-level superordinate projects. One was in the early 1970s. The Cyprus

Resentment Project, made up of volunteers from the American Friends Service Committee and the Shanti Sena,<sup>15</sup> developed a project in collaboration with the International Peace Academy to rebuild villages destroyed by intercommunal warfare so as to allow refugees to return their homes. It was hoped that work camps involving Greek and Turkish Cypriot young people could be created to do the actual construction work. But unfortunately, this phase of the project started in July 1974, and had to be abandoned following the overthrow of President Makarios by the Athens-engineered junta and the subsequent Turkish intervention.

Another attempt was made in the early 1980. That was a joint sewerage scheme and municipal development plan for Nicosia sponsored by the UN Development Programme (UNDP). This plan involved continuous cooperation between the city's two civic administrations and ensured that Nicosia could be readily reintegrated following a settlement. Although George Vasiliou, former Greek Cypriot leader, strongly endorsed this attempt, the Turkish leadership was rather reluctant, and hence the plan was largely unsuccessful.

Consequently, although creating superordinate goals would greatly contribute to the resolution of the conflict on Cyprus by easing ethnic antagonism and encouraging cooperation between the parties, there is no easy answer to the question of how to do that. Small-scale projects may be attained through the help of third-parties, for example

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<sup>15</sup> The Indian peace brigade inspired by Gandhi..

with NGO helps, but their effects will be rather limited with certain individuals. What is actually needed is large-scale attempts whose effects can be seen at the community level. This certainly requires more physical contact between the communities, as well as more sincere political will on both sides.

### **III. ADDRESSING THE ISSUE OF ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES**

The economy of Cyprus in the 1960s and early 1970s averaged an annual growth rate of 7 percent. This trend was entirely disrupted by the 1974 hostilities. Although both communities suffered from severe economic difficulties after 1974, the Greek side was able to recover in a relatively short period, whereas the Turkish side was not. The Turkish side's economy faced even greater problems following the independence declaration in 1983, which brought about economic embargo by the Greek Cypriot government, as well as EU and other international actors. Accordingly, there has been a considerable growing asymmetry in the well-being of Greek and Turkish Cypriots since 1974. The Greek Cypriot per capita income has gone up from \$1,500 in 1973 to an impressive \$16,000 (roughly) in 2003. The south has enjoyed sustained economic growth and low levels of unemployment. In contrast, the Turkish Cypriot per capita is about a fourth of what it is in the south. Even though Turkey channeled

considerable amount of aid (about \$300 - 400 million annually), the north's economy has intermittently experienced major difficulties, such as economic slowdown, high unemployment, and high inflation.

This economic asymmetry creates additional difficulties to the peace process on Cyprus. On the Greek side, paradoxically, there is a growing sentiment that the existing separation is perhaps not such a bad idea at all. A reunited Cyprus will undoubtedly require some redistribution of wealth that now the Greek Cypriots enjoy far more than their Turkish compatriots. On the Turkish side, the issue is more problematic. Growing economic difficulties create more incentives for the Turkish Cypriot leadership to strengthen economic, and subsequently political, ties with Turkey. This, in turn, exacerbates the existing ethnic polarization on the island further. Although ethnic identity is valued in and of itself, the economic dimension is important, for a multi-ethnic state that is characterized by an uneven distribution of wealth is a state where ethnic antagonism is likely to grow. Economic well being, on the other hand, may contribute to a sense of security, and give people a stake in the system.

Thus, the economic gap between the Greeks and Turks of Cyprus also needs to be overcome if the conflict on the island is to be carried forward. Turkey, the only country who recognizes the TRNC, is willing to provide the Turkish Cypriots with technical assistance and capital, but its aid is rather limited and not likely to sustain a long-term development. Economic development on the Turkish side mainly

#### **IV. CONCLUSION: THE NEED FOR A COMPREHENSIVE PEACE STRATEGY**

All of the confidence building strategies discussed above are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, it has been already hinted that they can be mutually supporting. Encouraging track-two diplomacy, creating superordinate goals, narrowing economic inequalities, eliminating nationalistic education, and similar other efforts would be powerful tools in the hands of any peace builder, particularly if the various strategies can be combined. Since the problem is many sided, and obviously there is no single formula, the wisest thing to do is to attack on all fronts simultaneously. If no one single attack has large effect, yet many small attacks from many directions can have large cumulative results over time.

Frustrating in its efforts and being concerned more and more about the expense of the UN peacekeeping forces on the island, the UN tends to push the Cypriot parties to reach a compromise as quick as possible, as exemplified by the latest Annan Plan. But considering the Cypriots' psychology outlined above, an immediate solution is not feasible, nor desirable. Centuries of suspicions and rivalry, combined with decades of bitter armed conflict, have brought huge psychological barriers to the Cypriot communities. Both sides have outstanding claims against one another, and deeply mistrust one another. What can be done, however, is to help the parties to create an

infrastructure that sustains present and future negotiation efforts. This infrastructure should especially target the issue of deep mistrust and devote more attention to confidence building measures. Although the UN has been relatively successful in keeping the conflict calm by deploying peacekeeping forces for about four decades, very few initiatives to promote intercommunal understanding have so far taken place. This should be the area in which future peace efforts must go.

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