



The Cyprus Referendum: An Island Divided by Mutual Mistrust

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The people of Cyprus have spoken. And as often happens in the annals of history, whenever bold designs for grand solutions to contentious and complex issues such as the unification of Cyprus, devised in secret by powerful political elites, are subjected to the free-will decision of a free people, the experts suffered a surprise. The international community was stunned not so much by the defeat of the referendum on the warmed-over final settlement plan proposed by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan; there had been signs of impending failure. Contrary to general prognostications, however, it was not the Turkish Cypriots, usually maligned for allegedly impeding a peaceful resolution of the Cyprus question, but the Greek Cypriots who resoundingly rejected the referendum on the reunification of the island.

Consistent with his harsh prerferendum rhetoric opposing the Annan Plan, Tassos Papadopoulos, the president of the Republic of Cyprus, remains unapologetic for his role in handling coordinated U.S., U.K., and UN diplomacy a serious blow. Criticizing the rejected Annan Plan as “unworkable”¹ and “lacking functionality,” he soberly stated, “there are no winners or losers.” Yet, in keeping his options open, the president observed that the result of the referendum must act as a catalyst for unification and not as a pretext for further division. Emphasizing that Greek Cypriots have not turned their backs on their Turkish Cypriot compatriots, he continues to assure the international community that the voter has not rejected a solution to the Cyprus question but the particulars of the Annan Plan “for obvious reasons.”

In his letter to the secretary general dated June 7, 2004, Papadopoulos reprimanded Kofi Annan for allowing those whom he had entrusted with the role of “honest brokers” to become “active participants” throughout the process. “Through this report they assess effectively the outcome of their own effort while at the same time attempting to portray and evaluate the attitude of the parties involved. In other words, the authors of the report play essentially the role of judge and jury in the overall outcome of the negotiation process they presided over.”

When efforts to reach a settlement on the reunification of Cyprus failed during the last round of negotiations in Buergenstock at the end of March, in the presence of Greek Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a referendum on the fifth version of a still seriously flawed Annan Plan was set arbitrarily for April 24, 2004, to exert added pressures on negotiators on the eve of Cyprus’s accession to the European Union (EU) on May 1, 2004.

Concerned about anticipated adverse consequences for the status of Cyprus that would result from the implementation of the Annan Plan, the parties to the conflict vigorously argued that because of the format of the UN-sponsored venue—an ill-guided revival of previously unproductive “proximity” talks²—no real negotiations could be conducted in Switzerland. Under considerable time constraints, compounded by major outstanding substantive issues, the Annan Plan came across as an all-or-nothing proposition, just short of a *diktat*. Although assembled in the same place, the parties were never afforded an

opportunity to discuss, let alone negotiate, the contested “core” issues face to face. Among issues on which an equitable resolution to the Cyprus question depends are these:

- **Security:** The timely repatriation of Turkish troops hindering the full sovereignty and genuine independence of Cyprus and the necessity of providing big-power security guarantees.
- **Refugees:** Compensation for displaced persons and the restitution of property.
- **Settlers:** The early return of “illegal” Turkish settlers in order to preserve the country’s ethnic identity.
- **Governance:** The confounding question of governance within a federal bizonal, bicomunal structure providing political equality for a minority of 18 percent in order to bridge the ethnic divide.

Russia Vetoes the U.S./U.K. Draft Resolution on Security Guarantees

Desperate to succeed, the vociferous British and American proponents of the unrealistic plan attempted to force the issue in a last-ditch effort that came to an end on April 21. Sharply condemning any opposition to the 200-page basic document and its attached 9,000 pages of laws and technical material relentlessly promoted by the EU as the “last chance” to save the reunification process, the UN Security Council drafted a resolution pledging to guarantee the security of Greek and Turkish Cypriots provided that both parties to the conflict consented to endorse the Annan reunification plan.

It was not the first time the Security Council had acted in the contentious Cyprus issue. During a major crisis as far back as 1964, when a UN peacekeeping force was introduced to Cyprus to keep the ongoing conflict between the majority Greek Cypriots and the 18 percent Turkish Cypriot minority from exploding, the Council sprang into action, passing a resolution affirming its resolve to treat the island as one entity.

In this latest effort to spur Council action, the United States and the United Kingdom actively supported the EU in order to effect reunification and facilitate the accession of a united island.

This gambit might have paid off had it not been for a surprise, last-minute reversal in the Russian position. Having for weeks placated all sides, Sergey Lavrov, the newly appointed Russian foreign minister, saw the Cyprus question as a welcome opportunity to reclaim lost stature in Russia’s international relations. Mindful of Russia’s considerable commercial interests in Cypriot offshore banking and shell companies, Lavrov asserted Moscow’s political clout with the argument that the plan was “unceremoniously imposed” on the island’s two ethnic communities and bound to influence the “free will” of the people. Arguing that Council action on the U.S./U.K. draft resolution prior to the referendum was inappropriate, Moscow exercised its veto on April 21, 2004. It was the first Russian veto in 10 years. The Annan Plan was in limbo.

The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) Emerges as an “Acknowledged” International Actor

Notwithstanding the best diplomatic efforts on the part of the United States, the EU, and the UN, Greek Cypriot voters catapulted the Annan Plan into the ash heap of history on April 24, 15 months after its ill-fated initiation in November 2002. Even though President Bush had succeeded

in enlisting the support of the key antagonists, Prime Minister Erdogan of Turkey and Prime Minister Karamanlis of Greece, the referendum as an alternative venue to the faltered reunification talks proved a bridge too short. Against diplomatic practice, largely at U.S. insistence in order to strengthen Turkey's position in Europe, Secretary General Annan permitted the plan to be presented to the voters. Responding to the rejection of his diplomatic effort, he issued a scathing report to the UN Security Council in late May summarily blaming the Greek Cypriot political leadership for defying Europe and the international community.³

On the other hand, lauding the positive attitude of Turkish Cypriots, the framers of the document swiftly moved to recommend an immediate end to the international isolation of the breakaway Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, which is "recognized" only by Turkey. After decades when it was shunned by the international community, the TRNC, with U.S. and EU support and the acquiescence of the secretary general, had at long last voted itself into a position that would allow it to enter the international community as an "acknowledged" actor. Although the European Council's refusal to admit the TRNC presented a profound disappointment, the UN report calling for an immediate improvement in Northern Cypriot economic and social conditions was welcome news. Starting with an end to trade and shipping restrictions, as well as increased foreign aid, a marked shift in the political climate in which the TRNC may now conduct its affairs was set in motion.

Accusations hurled by the Greek Cypriot leadership questioning the "fairness" of the Annan Plan will do little to affect the TRNC's new stature in multilateral diplomacy. Turkish Cypriots, backed by Turkey, were willing to play the American card. They won and now stand to reap the political benefit, as manifested by the fact that for the first time officials of the TRNC found doors opening in Washington while, at least for the time being, the president of the Republic of Cyprus was kept out of town.

President Papadopoulos's criticism, however legitimate, that the Annan Plan, continuously revised to address last-minute amendments by the Turkish Cypriot leadership, was neither "just" nor "viable" will do little in the short run to overcome Nicosia's estrangement from Washington. Criticism, however informal, of open U.S. support for Turkey's quest for EU accession based on geostrategic reasons will only widen the rift further. The *entente cordiale* between Turkey and the United States on "stabilizing Iraq" is too important to a beleaguered White House in an election year to permit the Cyprus question to cloud relations between Washington and Ankara.

An analysis of the failure of the Annan Plan to gain popular support suggests considerations of varying differentials in underlying long-term versus short-term precipitating causes. Because the Cyprus question is a dispute involving third-party entanglements in a conflict involving power politics, it should be addressed within the context of changing national interests as well as the regional and global realignments of forces. In the ongoing search for answers as to why the Annan Plan failed this critical test, a number of important questions must be addressed. Did the secretary general go too far in accommodating parochial big-power interests in order to regain lost luster for the world organization or perhaps to position himself for a third term at its helm? Have the Greek Cypriots, assured of their admission to the EU years ago, lost interest in the reunification of their prosperous part of Aphrodite's Isle with the economically strapped North? Has the status quo not proved manageable in terms of advancing Cyprus's international standing at the juxtaposition of a potential Greek-Turkish military confrontation, which at any time could seriously jeopardize European and NATO relations?⁴

Coached by an eloquent leadership, an overwhelming 76 percent majority of Greek Cypriots came to resent the undue outside pressure and, worried about their security and national identity, turned the tables on the referendum with a resounding *no* vote. On the other hand, contrary to expectations, 64.91 percent of the voters

in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus voted yes, even though veteran negotiator Rauf Denktash had advised circumspection. To be sure, not all Turkish Cypriot voters were focused on the lure of the EU that promised economic advantages, a deliberation that, without doubt, was foremost on the minds of a frustrated younger generation.

Accused of being out of touch, Denktash made it abundantly clear that the people who are really out of touch are those who pin their hopes on a settlement with the Greek Cypriots, whom he declares to know best. Stressing that it was the Turkish Cypriot side that opened “our borders,” he asked to deal with Greek Cypriots on the basis of mutual respect and mutual benefit. The intrepid Denktash, ever cautious of Greek Cypriot intransigence and power grabs, also voiced the opinion that many people voted yes not because they liked the Annan Plan but out of “frustration with the international isolation imposed upon them by the Greek Cypriots without any kind of justification.”

In contrast, his son Serdar, the TRNC’s conciliatory new deputy prime minister and minister for foreign affairs, set a positive tone by assuring the public that even though the Annan Plan is off the agenda, Turkish Cypriots should be at the forefront of an active policy aimed at reaching a settlement based on mutually enforcing confidence-building measures. His immediate objective is to restart intercommunal contacts between the ethnically divided Turkish and Greek Cypriots in order to advance an informal joint decision-making process based on a “new partnership.”

The EU Rewards the TRNC

Even though the TRNC was prevented from formally acceding to the EU on May 1, 2004, Turkish Cypriot officials gratefully accepted congratulations for their “constructive stance” from EU Enlargement Commissioner Gunther Verheugen and applauded his announcement pertaining to

the opening of a EU office in North Cyprus. The diplomatic maneuverings underlining the continued partition of the island because of a lack of settlement by the Greek Cypriot political elite and thereby automatically eliminating the potential veto threat of Greek Cypriots and Greece with regard to Turkey’s controversial accession negotiations scheduled to commence in December were not lost on this audience.

Turkish Cypriots carefully listened to the promise of initiatives to be advanced to benefit the economic development of the TRNC and immediate steps to be taken to ease its political isolation by a number of measures enabling TRNC and EU citizens to cross over to the Greek Cypriot side without the mandatory visa, EU citizens to travel directly to the TRNC, and citrus producers to sell their products freely in the Republic of Cyprus. In addition, the EU Commission started a process of preparing a list of goods the TRNC will be allowed to export to the EU, as well as goods that could be exported directly from TRNC ports and airports. Disappointed with the Greek Cypriot no vote, the EU awarded the TRNC 259 million euros in financial aid—a small amount considering that, according to experts, implementation of the Annan Plan would have required \$3.8 billion (U.S.) and the U.S. Agency for International Development estimated overall capital expenditures on the economic development front at approximately \$1.7 billion over five years.

After 40 years of economic stagnation caused by physical restrictions on the free movement of people and goods across the island, early and strong financial support by the international community is essential for the TRNC’s sustainable development. In seeking private-sector investment and direct access to world markets through open ports and airports, however, Prime Minister Mehmet Ali Talat, the first representative of the TRNC received officially by a U.S. secretary of state and the UN secretary general, wants it to be known that his government is not looking for handouts. The funds, he explains, will not be used solely for infrastructure projects and cul-

tural, social, and legal initiatives but for the historic opportunity to integrate his systematically isolated people into international systems, institutions, and organizations in order to regain self-confidence and become a political actor, signaling to the world the reality of two people and the fact that one part of Cyprus does not represent the other. Talat's ambitious outreach program began with an aggressive schedule to formalize relations with the EU, with the objective of lifting existing embargoes, among them sports embargoes that have prevented Turkish Cypriots from participating in international sporting events.

Disavowing responsibility for the division of the country, Talat maintains that the Republic of Cyprus has no right to "continue the enslavement"⁵ and the international discrimination suffered by the North. He insists on political equality for the Turkish minority occupying 36 percent of the territory. Talat argues that because the EU cannot guarantee the security of his people, the contested presence of Turkish troops, having guaranteed the security of the Turkish minority for more than 30 years, presents no threat to anyone. In contrast to Greek Cypriots, the continuing presence of Turkish soldiers in the North, he asserts, will not impede future initiatives to reunite the island, which has been thrown into a situation that cannot be maintained forever. Viewed from this perspective, his declaration that the self-styled ministate would not seek formal diplomatic recognition sounds sincere.

The Security Issue

The confounding security issue has always emerged as a major impediment to the many rounds of unification talks convened over the years. Seventy-five percent of Greek Cypriots are said to have exercised a no vote because of security concerns, primarily the continued long-term presence of Turkish troops stationed on the island under the Annan Plan. Their complaint that the plan was not acceptable because it constitutes

an ex post facto recognition of Turkey's invasion and thus would seem to legitimize Turkey's 36,000-strong occupation force in Northern Cyprus did not come as a surprise. To date, ever skirting the contentious issue of who precipitated the 1974 invasion of Cyprus, the Greek Cypriot leadership only tacitly acknowledges its coresponsibility.

Still fresh in the annals of the turbulent history of changing fortunes in the *Mare Nostrum* is the argument, only too eagerly advanced by Turkish Cypriots, that the insertion of Turkish troops came in response to a failed coup by the Greek junta in hot pursuit of *enosis*, the union with Greece first advocated by the island's Greek Orthodox Church in 1825, and the brutal persecution of the Turkish population of the island that had been under Ottoman rule for 300 years. The result was an open ethnic divide. Although in recent times latent ethnic prejudice and mistrust were masked by British colonial rule (1878–1960), they gained considerable momentum when Cyprus achieved independence in 1960 and the call for *enosis* was allowed to get a foothold.

The proposal clearly contradicts the EU's *acquis communautaire* prohibiting any member state from placing invasion troops on the soil of another European country.

What happened to the stated goal of demilitarizing the island, ask Greek Cypriots. Under the plan Turkish troops would have been reduced only incrementally and in stages until 2018, from current troop levels of 36,000 to 650. Even following an eventual accession of Turkey to the EU, would Turkish troops be permitted to remain for the protection of Turkish Cypriots?

Another question of fundamental fairness to Greek Cypriots is the issue of the new protocol to the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee and Alliance granting Turkey special rights as one of the guarantor powers, including the right to unilateral military intervention. Too well does the Greek Cypriot community remember the breakdown of this treaty in 1974, when the guarantor powers and the United States stood silently by during the violent years of civil strife, marked by serious

human rights infractions on both sides, starting in 1963, which finally culminated in the invasion by Turkish troops for the protection of the Turkish minority. Mindful of Turkey's strategic position on NATO's southern flank, the guarantor powers, including the United Kingdom, acquiesced. Why, it is argued in Nicosia, should such a Turkish Damocles sword be forever hanging over a future "United Cyprus Republic"?

Agreement also proved elusive on the complex refugee question. Under the Annan Plan, land in the North, administered by the TRNC, would have been handed over to Greek Cypriot authorities within three and half years, when 80,000 to 85,000 displaced Greek Cypriots could return. In the end, the proposal to put the refugee issue on hold until some 40,000 Turkish Cypriots had been relocated and rehabilitated was rejected. Furthermore, it was decided that the land, up to that time, would remain under Turkish Cypriot control, although the government of the Republic of Cyprus had insisted on a takeover by a neutral UN caretaker organization.

Divergent positions also proved unbridgeable on a cumbersome bureaucratic quota system, carelessly attached to the "right to return" process, scheduled to be completed by 2023 or even later. Assurances that the contemplated transfer of responsibility to unbiased UN authorities would ease the legitimate concerns of Greek Cypriots about the return of property and outstanding adjustments were muted by the Security Council's refusal to provide specific guarantees and insistence that the lion's share of costs associated with UN involvement, including UN peacekeeping forces, would have to be borne by the Greek Cypriot community.

Unfavorably received was yet another divisive section of the Annan Plan dealing with the politically charged requirement for Greek and Turkish Cypriots to give up their right to legal recourse in the European Court on matters of access and possession and ownership of private property. Adjudication issues regarding property and compensation, it was decreed by UN bureaucrats,

would henceforth be handled *unisono* in Cyprus by special "court boards."

Also unresolved was the highly contentious issue of Turkish settlers from Anatolia, viewed as much as a security matter as a demographic issue that would forever transform the country's ethnic-religious composition. Estimated at about 110,000, this number constitutes a figure that is higher than that of the actual Turkish Cypriot population. Greek Cypriots cannot understand why, under the plan, 45,000 Turkish settlers, considered "illegals" by Greek Cypriots and "citizens" by Turkish Cypriots, were to be given citizenship and another 20,000 were to be granted permanent resident status. Equally disregarded remained their demands that only those settlers shall be exempted from the requirement to return home who are able to prove humanitarian reasons.

President Papadopoulos personally led the fight for the popular rejection of the Annan Plan's stipulations on governance of the united island. Scrutiny and vigilance notwithstanding, in drawn-out negotiations Greek Cypriots found their principled position on this critical issue consistently being downgraded to the point at which, in the final document, the governmental structure envisioned for a unified bizonal and bicomunal federation transcending ethnic differences and tailored to guarantee independent participation in the EU began to resemble more and more the unwanted loose confederation envisioned by the Turkish Cypriot leadership.

Characterizing this concept as a blueprint for a "complicated and dysfunctional state," Papadopoulos minced no words in pointing to the danger of continuous deadlocks on clearly defined political issues unsuitable for judicial arbitration. Expounding on the "high degree of certainty," he warned of the paralysis of such a government, which could easily disintegrate into irrelevance.⁶

Although the Greek Cypriots are extremely uncomfortable with the prospect of a rotating presidency, above all they appear to have a problem with the interpretation of the concept of political equality. The "end of Cyprus, as we know

it” became a clarion call for those opposed to the Annan Plan and dominated the public debate before the referendum. At less dramatic moments, the president evoked the prospect of an integrated economy, including harmonized monetary, fiscal, and economic policies, as he asked the rhetorical question whether a small state like Cyprus or any state could live with a policy that, on the one hand, pursues an austerity program in the South in order to decrease the fiscal deficit, while the North follows an expansionist deficit spending policy, freely borrowing money in international markets to be guaranteed by the federal state.

The Fairness Factor

A number of diplomats involved in the negotiations have complained that the protagonists of the Annan Plan were too eager to bring Turkey on board in order to ensure a yes vote by the Turkish Cypriot community. Although the need to assuage Turkey because it holds the key to the unification of Cyprus had been quietly accepted, following the failure of the Annan Plan a sense of resignation permeates the diplomatic discourse. It is said that negotiators were willing to yield too much to Turkish demands for too little in return.

A spokesman for the Republic of Cyprus has identified the “fairness” issue as a key to looking at and resolving international disputes.⁷ Viewing the island as a defenseless, small state caught up helplessly in big power politics, he has highlighted the island’s strategic importance as a pivot at the crossroads between the Western Christian and the Near Eastern Islamic worlds.

Located between Greece and neighboring Turkey, two NATO members ill at ease with each other, Cyprus serves as an important conduit to the vast oil and gas resources in Central Asia and has thus always been a pawn in the enactment of big power aspirations in the region. Pointing to the Republic of Cyprus’s role as one of the 10 new members of the EU, a high-ranking Greek Cypriot diplomat quietly admitted that both the

international standing of the Republic of Cyprus and popular opinion in the EU had been impaired in Buergenstock.

It is, consequently, not surprising that Andreas Mavroyiannis, the Greek Cypriot ambassador to the UN,⁸ expressing his personal view in a commentary entitled “Cyprus and Europe: Hostage to Turkey,” criticized the Annan Plan for perpetuating the terms of Cyprus’s near indefinite dependence on and subjugation to Turkey. Cyprus’s support of Ankara’s accession to the EU, he asserts, “is not as a matter of policy” but a duty “under treaty and constitutional obligation,” irrespective of “whether Turkey is under a dictatorial or an Islamic regime, whether she respects human rights or not.”

It is common knowledge, Mavroyiannis maintains, that the Annan Plan satisfied practically “all the demands” of Turkey—the reason being that this was the only way to convince the Turkish military to contemplate consideration of the settlement talks.

“Not even the most pessimistic among us who had long pointed out that the target of third parties was not the solution to the Cyprus problem, but to facilitate Turkey’s course to Europe, could imagine what finally happened,” he observed realistically.

EU control of the use of the island’s territory for military operations and the ban on Cyprus’s participation in military affairs are listed as further manifestations of the extent to which the Annan Plan favoring Turkey highlights Ankara’s growing influence behind the scenes in EU decision making even before commencement of accession negotiations in December.

Regarding Turkey’s manifest influence on Brussels as an undesirable potential impediment to a Common European Foreign and Defense Identity, the author contends that the particulars of the Annan Plan would have equipped Turkey with the leverage needed to promote its heavily challenged accession to the EU on its own terms. As a hostage to Turkey, the argument goes, the future “United Republic of Cyprus” would have been Ankara’s fifth column in the EU. Un-

der those circumstances, Cyprus would have turned into the gate through which the Trojan horse of those opposed to the creation of a Common European Foreign and Defense Identity independent of NATO could have passed. The Greek Cypriot no vote is said to have derailed this hidden agenda.

Dismissing U.S./U.K. support for Turkey's willingness to subjugate EU aspirations to NATO's quest to reposition itself in the changed European and global realignment of forces as a "shortsighted" policy toward Europe, the diplomat emphasized that the accession of Cyprus without a resolution of the Cyprus question is deemed highly unwelcome by Turkey. In this context, one is reminded that the "investment of Greek Cypriots in the accession to the EU as a catalytic factor for the solution of the Cyprus problem was never intended to be sacrificed for the sake of Turkey consenting to a solution on her own demands."

The perception that if Turkey became an EU member after all, it would torpedo the Common European Foreign and Defense Identity upheld by "old Europe" in order to play the American- and British-backed NATO card casts the whole Cyprus reunification issue onto a different political trajectory by adding a hitherto conveniently overlooked strategic dimension.

A Deficiency of Mutual Trust

Ankara and its Cypriot "colony" are not trusted in Nicosia. One attitude stands out in the negative response to the Annan Plan: a deep-seated, almost palpable distrust of each other on both sides, resulting in a profound lack of confidence in the other side's good-faith efforts and intentions.

Rooted in historic and contemporary hostilities, however real or perceived, the ethnic divide has, far beyond mere cultural differences, left noticeable psychological scars on the older generation and an overdose of skepticism displayed by a divided political class. Looking at the island's

stormy past, third parties can never fully appreciate the breaking point that occurred in the horrendous events of 1974. It is the still unforgotten year when the Turkish minority suffered another onset of ethnic cleansing by *enosis* fanatics. Help came only from the Turkish guarantor in the guise of some 40,000 troops who captured 36 percent of the territory and have protected its population ever since.

So deep are the psychological wounds, so pervasive the rift in a shared national identity that intercommunal relations severed three decades ago have virtually come to a halt. Attempts to promote even limited confidence-building measures, including a policy of small steps advocated by the National Committee on American Foreign Policy in 2000,⁹ with the objective of helping to advance the diplomatically feasible rather than the politically desirable, have in the past been hindered by political intransigence and bureaucratic inertia.

It is regrettable that few seem to want to remember the threatening incident that took place only a few years ago, when then Greek Cypriot President Glafcos Clerides felt obligated to order 40 antiaircraft missiles from Russia in response to growing tension precipitated by a massive Turkish military buildup. This deeply ingrained angst was yet again adamantly displayed by his successor, President Papadopoulos, when he objected to the obligations of the Republic of Cyprus under the Annan Plan, which would have required Nicosia to implement agreed on measures up front in exchange for Ankara's promise to hold up its end of the bargain at some indeterminate future date. Citing the difficulty of holding the Turkish side accountable for possible inaction, he further expressed grave misgivings about making concessions on propositions ranging from enhanced security to displaced persons and governance that would take years if not decades to execute.

Papadopoulos never tires of reminding his people that under the Annan Plan Cyprus would have had to fulfill Turkish Cypriot demands immediately, within 48 hours after the referendum

was passed, whereas whatever benefits Greek Cypriots would reap in the future could stretch out as far as 18 years. Failing to convince the United States to help advance a revised, equitable, and nondiscriminatory Annan Plan, he asked time and again for measures to hold his Turkish Cypriot partners accountable for security and political assurances that the areas to be returned would be returned on time and that the rights of refugees to return in fixed percentages over a fixed period within the 18-year “window” would be guaranteed. The right of guarantee became an important issue during talks held to resolve differences over the withdrawal of Turkish troops, originally scheduled to take place within 14 years.

Papadopoulos did not appreciate the insertion of the Treaty of Guarantee into the Annan Plan for the indisputable reason that the treaty had failed to stop the Turkish invasion in 1974. How much protection could such a legal instrument be expected to guarantee now, he asked.

Trust remains a rare commodity in Cyprus. Yet, according to the polls, Cypriots born after 1974 are less prejudiced than their parents toward the other side. Although not certain about the benefits to be derived from EU membership as a motivating factor, this generational aspect is especially germane to the voting pattern of the younger Turkish Cypriot generation who voted overwhelmingly for the Annan Plan. Not surprisingly, the younger generation of Cypriots is far more appreciative of changing political and economic conditions in an increasingly integrated Europe of open borders and the free movement of people and goods than their elders. Searching for economic opportunity and opportunities for growth in open European markets and beyond, this younger generation, characterized more by pragmatism dictated by commerce than by hard-line positions based on specific ideologies, may in time move to repair intercommunal relations for mutual economic benefit and tolerance. A serious effort, for example, to expedite the Alarko underwater pipeline project on a bicomunal basis could serve as an essential catalyst to cut through the thicket of Greek and Turkish en-

tanglement, historical grievances, and conflicting interests that in the past has impeded collaboration on such ambitious hydraulic works in order to redress the island’s chronic water shortage. Contrary to the perception given by disenchanted Euro fans, Cyprus is not headed for a “Mediterranean endgame.”

Where Do We Go from Here?

Diplomacy, the late Hans Morgenthau observed, is the advancement of the possible, where the desirable remains, at least for now, unattainable. After years marked by the lack of movement in failed proximity talks, the Annan Plan was an ill-guided attempt by the UN secretary general, in collaboration with the president of the United States, to use the accession of the Republic of Cyprus to the EU as an arbitrary deadline to force acquiescence in what ostensibly amounted to a big power play. The UN pushed too hard too far in too little time. Even though Nicosia was aware of the imminent adverse consequences for Cyprus’s international standing should Greek Cypriots reject the Annan Plan, the no vote proves yet again the realist credo that issues of vital national interest leave governments little room for compromise.

The failure of the Annan Plan has demonstrated that on the future of Cyprus positions are not shared and reciprocal interests do not necessarily intersect. Yet by proving that the time had not yet come to advance the core issues surrounding unification itself, the failed referendum highlighted the fallibility of the approach taken to date. For now it is anybody’s guess whether and when a new round of reunification talks would be feasible. Signs of “Cyprus settlement fatigue,” as John Stilides reports in a commentary for UPI,¹⁰ are highly visible in New York, Washington, and Brussels. Although there seems little prospect for the resumption of a substantive dialogue prior to the determination of whether Turkey will in fact get to join the EU, it remains an open question

when, how, and under whose auspices the estranged parties to the conflict could be swayed to return to the negotiating table.

A house divided against itself will not long be able to compete with the allure of the common European home of open borders. Forced to coexist during a period when the international community has allowed them to enter the international stage as an acknowledged actor, the Turkish Cypriots realize that their strained relationship with their Greek Cypriot counterparts is bound to undergo profound changes. Basking in their newfound status short of formal recognition as a sovereign state, the TRNC has been strengthened in a number of ways. Aside from the fact that demands for the return of its settlers have been dismissed and issues pertaining to refugees and property rights have been kept in abeyance, Turkish Cypriots retain control of 36 percent of the island. That would have been slashed to 29 percent under the Annan Plan. Appreciative of the economic, political, and diplomatic benefits being derived from the Turkish Cypriot yes vote, TRNC politicians will remain distrustful of outside powers until they see the promises made good by the EU, UN, and others. "We are heard now," commented Osman Ertug, the TRNC's representative in Washington, "but we will have to see whether we are heeded."¹¹

Rapprochement, conducive to reconciliation based on an equitable and nondiscriminatory resolution of issues of national identity, was also on the mind of President Papadopoulos when he declared that "yesterday's confrontation should be followed by the unity of tomorrow."

The need to match the rhetoric of concern with goal-oriented realistic action in order to calm anxieties has now been recognized by both parties. Indeed, the Republic of Cyprus is stable and so is its counterpart in the North. In a new spirit of mutuality, which recognizes that what affects one side directly affects the other indirectly, Nicosia let it be known that it was the Greek Cypriot government that was responsible for the proposal of a number of measures aimed at benefiting the Turkish Cypriot community. They

were ultimately adopted by the EU Council during the complex negotiating process of the Annan Plan.

Notwithstanding promises that Greek Cypriots shall not walk alone the "avenue the EU has opened up to them" and that Nicosia stands ready to share the multitude of advantages offered by EU accession, Turkish Cypriots remain skeptical. They make no secret of their concern that the other side may support political actions that are incompatible with their own objectives. Therefore, they are eager to let the world know that one side does not represent the other.

Notwithstanding the emergence of separatist tendencies, I came away from recent consultations with a sense that both sides seem to be signaling a willingness in principle, once the dust has settled on the Annan Plan,¹² to consider a new framework for settlement talks under different terms and conditions. Absent such a new framework in the near term, it seems feasible that momentum on core issues could be gained by a discreet dialogue on soft issues. For too long tangible progress on less ambitious soft issues has been held hostage to more ambitious resolutions during final settlement talks.

Contrary to recent diplomatic history, core and soft issues must be viewed as codependent. Without prejudice to a final settlement, a dual-track approach between governmental and nongovernmental levels of action based on a constructive parallelism between core and soft issues could improve the political climate and minimize the escalatory prospect of hardening positions in light of a lack of dialogue. Immediately one could envision various interlocking intercommunal activities and exchange programs in order to help overcome age-old enmities. If successful, preparatory, back-channel exploration of technical, developmental, and economic aspects could further help test whether the political and social climate warrants a new initiative on core issues.

Overcoming persistent tension caused by a precarious balancing act performed by Turkey, Greece, the Republic of Cyprus, and the TRNC will not be an easy endeavor in the years to

come. Turkish aspirations may challenge such a scenario with a continued unwillingness to relinquish control over its Turkish Cypriot “colony.” In the sense of clearing the air, the Annan Plan has been useful. At least it exposed to the various political actors the benchmarks of the impossible.

Confidence-building measures in the near term, however, will not serve as a substitute for reunification, if, indeed, that is what the people of Cyprus determine their national goal to be. Nevertheless, a new willingness to engage in a dialogue would help advance bicomunal coexistence in a house divided and in dire need of repair in an era when the world community is determined to work together for the common good and envisions a future based on mutual interests advanced in an alliance of reason.

All in all, the lesson to be learned by the popular rejection of the Annan Plan, which has for now reordered priorities and upset the international community, is a simple one: It reveals for all to see that heavy outside pressure in international affairs has its limits.

About the Author

Viola Drath, a member of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy’s (NCAFP’s) Executive Committee, is the director of the NCAFP’s project on Cyprus. She has written nine books, among them *Willy Brandt: Prisoner of His*

Past. A long-time correspondent and commentator for *Handelsblatt*, she has taught at American University and writes a column on foreign affairs for *The Washington Times* and numerous publications here and abroad.

Notes

1. Press conference with foreign media, Nicosia, April 24, 2004.
2. Op. cit.
3. Statement by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, April 24, 2004.
4. *TRC News*, April 26, 2004.
5. Address to the Heritage Foundation, Washington, D.C., May 5, 2004.
6. In the National Interest, April 28, 2004.
7. Fifteenth Annual PSEKA Conference, Washington, D.C., May 14, 2004.
8. Address in Kathimerini, Athens, April 18, 2004.
9. Presentation of NCAFP draft to President Glafcos Clerides by Viola Drath, New York, January 3, 2000.
10. John Stilides, UPI Outside View Commentary, May 12, 2004.
11. One-on-one talk with Osman Ertug, representative of the TRNC to the United States, May 2004.
12. Private discussion with Euripides Evriviades, ambassador from Cyprus to the United States, April 2004.

