

# The 'Pragmatic Idealism' of Russia's Post-Cold War Policy towards Cyprus

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(with Marina Salvaridi<sup>1</sup>)

## Abstract

*Stereotypically, Moscow's policies towards Cyprus, like those of the UK and the US, have been treated diachronically via the hegemonic analytical paradigm, especially during the Cold War, namely 'Political Realism'. And yet, primarily since 1991 – but arguably even earlier – Moscow's Cyprus policies have been quite distinct, being marked by such 'idealistic' characteristics, as sustained support for the UN Resolutions, for international law (including respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity) and international ethics (including solidarity, protection of human rights, and opposition to illegality and injustice). Therefore, whereas the 'power-political' reading of Washington and London's Cyprus policies remains valid, the identical reading of Moscow's policies needs to be transcended. Thus, the concept of 'Pragmatic Idealism', first introduced regarding Canadian foreign policy, is applied here to the sui generis Russia-Cyprus relationship which, after all, has been thoroughly affected by historical, political, religious, cultural, and axiological affinities and bonds.*

**Keywords:** Political Realism, great powers' antagonism, political culture, 'idealistic policies', interests and values, Pragmatic Idealism

## Introduction

This essay will present a radical departure from 'mainstream bibliography' on Russian policy towards the Republic of Cyprus. It will argue that all through the post-1991 period, this policy differs substantially from the classic 'Political Realism' typically associated with great powers and superpowers and, paradigmatically, with the USSR and the USA during the Cold War. Moreover, it will show that, during the last 20 years, Moscow's Cyprus policy antagonises Washington and

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1 I collaborated with Marina Salvaridi (PhD, ABD) from St. Petersburg State University for an earlier, much shorter and far less 'theoretically-oriented' essay, entitled 'Russia's Policy towards Cyprus: A Case of "Pragmatic Idealism"?', published in Russian, in Moscow's *Obozrevatel/Observer* No. 8 (259), in August 2011, pp. 34-45. Therefore, although Ms Salvaridi did not participate in the present thorough revision, it is my pleasure to acknowledge here our fruitful collaboration (signalled by the 'we/our' in what follows). I also wish to thank two anonymous reviewers of this journal for their perceptive observations and comments.

London's Cyprus policies in a distinct and novel way: that is, by combining the unavoidable elements of 'Political Realism' with authentic characteristics of 'Political Idealism'. Such a synthesis is what a book analysing Canadian foreign policy has called '*Pragmatic Idealism*'?<sup>2</sup>

It is widely documented that during the Cold War, Washington and its NATO allies were treating Cyprus as, essentially, 'a piece of real estate'.<sup>3</sup> Moscow's Cyprus policy, on the other hand, was far more empathetic toward Cyprus' inhabitants. 'Cold War considerations', however, although not exclusive as we shall see, certainly predominated in the Soviet calculus. Conversely, the *post-Cold War* picture is clearly distinct: for Moscow appears self-consciously to defend and protect the (legal and moral) rights of the Republic of Cyprus, 37% of which remains under Turkey's military occupation since 1974. For their part, Washington and London have been pursuing energetically a power-political – hence essentially amoral – policy whose primary goals are the satisfaction of self-regarding (and Ankara-regarding) geopolitical, geo-strategic and geo-economic interests.

Moscow's *sui generis* pro-Nicosia post-Cold War policy calls for a novel explication, away from the traditional 'realist' stereotypes. Arguably, its *differentia specifica* ought to be sought in dimensions that transcend the narrow (power-political) conception of 'interests'. Our evidence will show that Moscow's Cyprus-related statements and actions derive *also* from a rich nexus of friendly attitudes and bonds, resulting in political and ethical values and choices, which qualify for the denotation 'idealist'.

To account for Russia's special post-Cold War relationship with Cyprus, my working hypothesis is premised on Moscow's characteristic verbal and non-verbal actions and on revealing statements by Russian and Cypriot observers and practitioners. The pragmatic-idealist hypothesis received strong verification from our elite interviews, including those with three former Cypriot Foreign Ministers.<sup>4</sup> Simultaneously, we encountered neither any interlocutors prepared to falsify our hypothesis nor other types of evidence contradicting our theses. Finally, by juxtaposing Moscow's idiosyncratic Cyprus policy to Washington and London's power politics, our case is strengthened by implication even further.

Needless to say, I am far from asserting that Russian foreign policy in its entirety manifests *pragmatic idealism*.<sup>5</sup> Having said that, other analysts may find numerous actions and decisions of

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2 See C. Melakopides (1998) *Pragmatic Idealism: Canadian Foreign Policy 1945-1995*, Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

3 See text to footnote 24, p. 78.

4 These interviews were conducted in English by Marina Salvaridi in Nicosia, spring 2011.

5 Moscow's current stance *vis-à-vis* the Assad regime seems to me a tragic paradigm of primarily self-regarding considerations perpetuating the misery of the Syrian people. However, for two readings 'understanding' Russia's policy, see F. Lukyanov (2012) 'Why is Russia so Resolute on Syria?', *Russia Today*, 3 February 2012, and E. Burke (2012) 'Russia's Not Completely Wrong About Syria', *RealClearWorld*, 18 February 2012. Available at [[http://www.realclearworld.com/articles/2012/02/18/russias\\_not\\_completely\\_wrong\\_about\\_syria\\_99910.html](http://www.realclearworld.com/articles/2012/02/18/russias_not_completely_wrong_about_syria_99910.html)], accessed on 21 February 2012.

Moscow's evolving post-1991 international behaviour that may be subsumed under its rubric. For instance, there is strong evidence that Russian foreign policy toward Greece and Serbia is comparable in source and motivation to Moscow's Cyprus policy, the difference, arguably, being *of degree* but not of kind.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, Moscow's constant appeals to international law and the UN Charter to justify its actions and decisions represent a cardinal characteristic of the pragmatic idealist worldview.<sup>7</sup> In any event, concentration on the Russia-Cyprus bilateral relationship – that is, of a superpower with a small state – may help to undermine the cynical cliché that 'states have no permanent friends *but only permanent interests*'.<sup>8</sup> Manifestly, such an outcome will entail serious implications for the Theory of International Relations.

### A Note on Pragmatic Idealism

Pragmatic Idealism (hereafter PI) constitutes both an *empirical description* of actual foreign policies of states as well as a *normative stance* in IR theorising. Melakopides' aforementioned book provided a detailed factual exposition of 'Canadian internationalism'<sup>9</sup> and further showed that PI was also self-consciously pursued during the Cold War by a group of 'like-minded middle powers', which included Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Australia and New Zealand.

PI rejected the two extremes of the IR theoretical spectrum, that is, Realism and Idealism, as conceptually problematic and analytically inadequate. It tried, however, to retain what it regards as valid in both extremes. Thus, like Realism, it accepted as self-evident the need of any state to

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- 6 For a positive exploration of the strong Russian-Greek historical, cultural and religious ties and bonds, see D. Konstantakopoulos (2010) 'Historical and Geopolitical Foundations of a Greek-Russian Strategic Collaboration', in C. Melakopides (ed.), *The Cyprus Yearbook of International Relations 2008-2009*, Nicosia: Power Publishing, pp. 105-113.
- 7 For an analysis that identified some 'idealist' elements in Moscow's policies towards Cyprus and Greece (namely, *religion and international law*), see A. Pisiotis (2001) 'Greece and Turkey in the Concentric Circles of Russian Post-Cold War Foreign Policy', in Ch. Yiallourides and P. Tsakonas (eds), *Greece and Turkey after the end of the Cold War*, Athens: Caratzas, pp. 407-461.
- 8 Formulations of this kind have had – and continue to have – many sponsors. One classic version originated with Palmerston: 'We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow'. Quoted in J. Dickie (1992) *Inside the Foreign Office*, London: Chapmans, p. 42. Needless to say, I will not argue here for any 'eternality' of Russian-Hellenic alliance or the uninterrupted (or unqualified) harmony of their interests. The latter would be to ignore, for instance, the Bolsheviks' support to Kemal Atatürk's army in response to Venizelos' 'rash policies' and even instances of Soviet Moscow's pro-Turkey policies against the interests of the Cypriot Republic (including its response to the 1974 invasion). In any event, my principal focus in the present essay is on post-World War II and especially post-Cold War relations of Russia and Cyprus, where the evidence for the *co-habitation of interests and values* seems to me overwhelming.
- 9 'Canadian Internationalism' was the established denotation of the 'philosophy' of Ottawa's post-war foreign policy. Given, however, that 'internationalism' is an open-ended and therefore deeply ambiguous concept, Pragmatic Idealism was introduced to clarify the matter.

safeguard security, but emphasised *deterrence* as far more reasonable and rational. Similarly, it adopted the idea of increasing power, but was careful to oppose it as an end in itself: instead, it embraced it as a means to raise the quality of life of society and its citizens. Likewise, PI endorsed the fundamental notions of Political Idealism – justice, human rights, caring, sharing, ecological sensitivity and so forth – but resisted the utopian open-endedness of these concepts.

In addition, the PI fusion acquired a moral or ethical penumbra, which issues from the clear endorsement of the essential values of International Ethics and the norms of International Law. As *Pragmatic Idealism* has argued, the foreign relations of the aforementioned states that had endorsed the PI synthesis continued to demonstrate during the Cold War an authentic commitment to international law, multilateralism, the principles and values of the UN Charter, moderation, solidarity with countries in need, and the emphasis on diplomatic solutions to international problems. In the end, reflection on the probable sources of these states' pragmatic-idealist behaviour showed its issuing primarily from their *political culture*, which celebrated a combination of caring, sharing, solidarity, generosity, and humane sentiments and bonds.

A few additional characteristics of PI will help to situate it *vis-à-vis* neighbouring IR theories or worldviews. Thus, Pragmatic Idealism has affinities with the Social Constructivism of Alexander Wendt, since PI also believes that States/Individuals interact with Institutions and are consequently, 'mutually constituting entities'. In addition, like Wendt and others, our theory believes that the world system is not only Hobbesian (as most IR Realists hold), but also Lockean and at times even Kantian (hence the EU may well qualify).<sup>10</sup>

Also in harmony with Social Constructivism, we have accepted as self-evident that there are social facts besides material facts. Values, then, belong to these social facts and should be studied differently from those of the natural world. Accordingly, endorsing the notion that Knowledge is 'justified true belief', PI studies the (social/political/legal/ethical/cultural) data aspiring to Knowledge. But PI rejects a Positivist conception of truth and knowledge, holding that facts and values are not so distinct and also believing that values can be demonstrated and defended.<sup>11</sup> In the same way, PI rejects Relativism, because it can demonstrate that human beings and societies, states, groups of states, etc., do share a wealth of universal values.

Epistemologically speaking, PI is grateful to John Stuart Mill for his insight that 'There is no such thing as absolute certainty, but there is assurance sufficient for the purposes of human life'.<sup>12</sup> In addition, PI recognises that, when (strict) Knowledge seems unachievable given the nature of

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10 See Alexander Wendt (1999) *Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, especially Ch. 6, pp. 246-312. Incidentally, *Pragmatic Idealism* was published a year earlier than Wendt's remarkable opus.

11 I have developed this argument in *Is There an Ethics in International Politics? An Introduction to Theory and Practice* (Athens: I. Sideris, 2003) [in Greek].

12 J.S. Mill (1989) *On Liberty*, in J.M. Robson *et al.* (eds), *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, 33 Vols (1963-1991), Toronto/London: Toronto University Press/Routledge and Kegan Paul, Vol. 18, p. 231.

certain subject matters, then *Understanding* has a legitimate and perhaps sufficient role to play. And PI is also indebted to Jürgen Habermas for having explored the conditions of developing rational consensus among reasoning human beings and societies.<sup>13</sup> By the same token, Pragmatic Idealism has built normative bridges with Critical Theory, given its salutary stance on emancipation and its axiological protestations against injustice, exploitation, domination, and other flagrant violations of International Ethics and International Law.

Finally, by appealing to *political culture* as a cardinal force shaping a state's foreign policy, PI explicitly embraces the notion that friendly and even 'brotherly' sentiments are frequently present in Lockean and Kantian zones of international society, deriving from religious, historical, cultural, political and ethical influences, similarities and bonds. In other words, the policies opted for by states on regional and systemic levels are inevitably affected by the ideas, values, sentiments, beliefs, self-perceptions, etc., which form the political culture of decision-making elites and of society at large.

In what follows, I will attempt to show how and why Moscow's post-1991 support of the Republic of Cyprus demonstrates many essential characteristics of Pragmatic Idealism: that is, the cultivation of 'material' interests co-exists with 'idealistic' principles and values, sentiments and bonds. And since the former ('realist' or 'power-political') dimension has been stressed exclusively by the relevant bibliography, the present essay will give pride of place to the role of international legal norms and ethical principles as well as the positive psychological attitudes and sentiments, as capable of explaining far better the idiosyncrasies of Russia's policy towards Cyprus. Indeed, the verbal actions of Russian actors to be quoted in this essay, in tandem with Moscow's political decisions and their perceptions by Cypriot diplomats and politicians, all seem to emphasise (and at times to celebrate) the emotional and cultural bonds and even the 'brotherly' sentiments shared by Russians and Greek Cypriots. Besides, as most of our sources have either implied or stated explicitly, the 'idealist' side of the pragmatic-idealist synthesis derives from a host of religious, historical, political, ethical and other axiological empathies and affinities, all of which represent an authentic part at the heart of Russian political culture.<sup>14</sup>

### General Considerations

That Moscow's Cyprus policy has been faithful to the original values and norms of the United Nations is demonstrated both by explicit and implied support for crucial UN resolutions and by various initiatives that 'protected' Nicosia from some controversial actions and intentions of

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13 See, for instance, Jürgen Habermas (1987) *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

14 Illuminating references to recent Russian political culture, including the reinvigoration of Orthodoxy and the search for new forms of national identity – all of which support our main hypothesis – can be found in M. Stuermer (2008) *Putin and the Rise of Russia*, London: Phoenix.

Ankara, Washington and London.<sup>15</sup> What is more, Moscow not only keeps declaring that it recognises only the legitimate government of the Republic of Cyprus but also behaves accordingly.<sup>16</sup> This Russian stance contrasts with the two western powers' policies which seem to be at pains to *exculpate* Turkey for the 1974 aggression and the continuing occupation of 37% of Cyprus.<sup>17</sup> Thus, while London and Washington were protagonistic in the 2002-2004 campaign to persuade all Cypriots to adopt the notorious 'Annan plan', Moscow's role, as we will see, coincided with the stance of Nicosia and the perceptions and anxieties of 76% of the Greek Cypriots to the effect that the plan was unfair and unworkable and, therefore, hostile to their interests.

The fact that Moscow has not developed any relations with the 'TRNC' manifests Russia's principled rejection of Cyprus' *de facto* partition. Moreover, by the April 2004 veto at the UN Security Council *inter alia*, Moscow has consistently opposed all efforts to legitimise *post facto* the invasion. It follows that Moscow continues to reject Turkey's invasion-related rationalisations – primarily that the invasion was a 'peacekeeping operation' which has resulted in 'two states and two governments'<sup>18</sup> whereas the US and the UK seem committed to 'forgiving' the invasion in order to rehabilitate Turkey on the way to EU membership. In fact, the UK and the US are acting as though oblivious of the fact that, given the plan's massive rejection by the Greek Cypriots in the

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15 Characteristic examples, to be discussed in this essay, include Khrushchev's warnings against Ankara's invasion threats in 1964; Moscow's decisive support for Security Council Resolution 186 (1964); the April 2004 Russian veto at the Security Council; Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov's persistently positive verbal actions regarding the Republic of Cyprus; and recent official Russian statements in defence of Nicosia's right to explore for hydrocarbons in its Exclusive Economic Zone.

16 One of the most explicit official statements on this cardinal matter was provided by Ambassador of the Russian Federation in Cyprus, Georgy L. Muradov. During his interview with Turkish Cypriot newspaper *Kıbrıs*, on 3 July 1998, he stated: 'I want to tell the Turkish Cypriots openly: the recognition of an independent state, which was created in a military way with the help from the armed forces of a foreign country, regardless under what pretext this military action was done, is impossible and unacceptable for the modern world'. G.L. Muradov (2000) *Russia-Cyprus: Our Common Way*, Nicosia: M.S. Satellite Publication Ltd, p. 171. Similarly, Andrey Nesterenko, Russian Foreign Ministry's spokesman, declared during his 17 September 2009 media briefing: 'It goes without saying that Russia was never going to recognise the so-called "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus"'. See 'Russia-Japan: towards reaching a compromise', *Russia Today* Website, 18 September 2009. Available at [<http://rt.com/politics/nesterenko-media-briefing-politics/>], accessed on 6 February 2012.

17 Turkey's 1974 aggression has been treated as 'invasion' (i.e. *illegal* military intervention) by all independent experts, while the 1983 Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) has been condemned repeatedly by the United Nations, the EEC/European Union, the European Court of Human Rights, and the Court of the European Communities. This explains why the so-called 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' ('TRNC') is recognised by Turkey alone.

18 The former was Ankara's leitmotiv until the early 2000s and the rise to power of the AKP government; the latter is the stubborn refrain of Turkey's current policy-makers, including Premier Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Minister Engemen Bagis.

2004 referendum, it should have been totally abandoned. According to the text of 'Annan V', 'Should the Foundation Agreement not be approved at the separate simultaneous referenda ... it shall be null and void, and have no legal effect'.<sup>19</sup> Washington and London, however, in close cooperation with the UN Secretariat, have been orchestrating the post-2008 'inter-communal negotiations' which, according to solid indications, seem to uphold the rejected 'Annan plan'. As a matter of fact, these negotiations are clearly not 'inter-communal', since Ankara is demonstrably determining the stance of the Turkish Cypriot representatives; and, as a recently published book has famously revealed, the 'machinations' of Special Adviser to the UN Secretary General, Australian Alexander Downer, are clearly inspired by his close collaboration with Washington, Ankara, and London.<sup>20</sup>

Contrariwise, Moscow's repeated verbal assurances to Cyprus as well as its tangible actions constantly demonstrate that the Russian government regards the established principles of international law and international ethics as necessary and sufficient both for the condemnation of the Cypriot *status quo* and for the fair and functional settlement of the Cyprus problem in accordance with the UN Security Council resolutions. As a result, since Moscow's post-Soviet policy towards Cyprus seems to incorporate authentic 'idealistic' features, it follows that it sponsors 'pragmatic idealism' given the simultaneous pursuit of its interests-based 'pragmatism'.<sup>21</sup>

The remainder of this essay will survey schematically Moscow's relations with the Republic of Cyprus from 1960 to 1991 and then, less laconically, Russian-Cyprus relations in the new era.

19 'Annan V', Annex IX, 'Coming into being of the New State of Affairs'. The grounds for the GCs' rejection of the plan and the 'power-political' motives and designs of Ankara, Washington and London are discussed in the 'pragmatic-idealist' mode in C. Melakopides (2006) *Unfair Play: Cyprus, Turkey Greece, the UK and the EU*, Centre for International Relations, Queen's University, Kingston, Canada. See also V. Coufoudakis and K. Kyriakides (2003) *The Case Against the Annan Plan*, London: Lobby for Cyprus; and C. Palley (2005) *An International Relations Debacle: The UN Secretary General's Mission of Good Offices in Cyprus 1999-2004*, Oxford/Portland Oregon: Hart Publishing. For 'pro-and-con' chapters on the Annan plan, see A. Varnava and H. Faustmann (2009) *Reunifying Cyprus: the Annan Plan and Beyond*, London/New York: I.B. Tauris.

20 See A. Emilianides, Y. Kentas and M. Kontos (2010) *Simademeni Trapoula: Ta aporita eggrafa tvn diapragmatefseon Christofia-Talat* [Marked deck of Cards: the top secret documents of the Christofias-Talat negotiations], Nicosia: Power Publishing, esp. pp. 85-126 ('The role of the Downer group'). Two years ago, well-known journalist Helena Smith reported *inter alia* for an Australian newspaper: 'Downer's image here was never good but after the Ban [Ki-moon] visit it has really suffered', said Hubert Faustmann, a seasoned Cyprus watcher who teaches political science at the University of Nicosia. 'What happened in the north was not only a huge blow for Greek Cypriots, it was highly offensive. He has lost a lot of points by being seen as the mastermind behind Ban's visit to the "presidential" palace ... Greek Cypriots consider him ignorant and arrogant and there's a perception that he only wants a solution for his own glory'. 'Hostility towards Downer grows in Cyprus', *Sydney Morning Herald* (22 February 2010).

21 By 'pragmatic' Russian interests I will refer to commerce, finance, banking, defence, energy, tourism, as well as Moscow's need to remain a protagonist in the international system and the region of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East.

And since my working hypothesis contradicts the stereotypical power-political assumption – viz, that these relations are based *exclusively* on interests – my main emphasis will be placed on demonstrating the ‘idealist’ side of Moscow’s Cyprus-related pragmatic idealism of the last 20 years.

### Moscow and Cyprus during the Cold War

Perhaps without exception, all discussions of the Superpowers’ policies towards Cyprus have been premised on the norms of (interest-based) ‘power politics’ that are assumed to be self-evident.<sup>22</sup> Especially regarding Moscow, it is predominantly argued that, during the Cold War, Cyprus’ geostrategic value rendered it an apple of discord within NATO and a golden opportunity for the Soviet Union to exploit the Western Alliance’s tensions and conflicts. More particularly, Charalambos Tsardanides has identified the following specific goals in (Soviet) Moscow’s consistent support for the independence of the Republic of Cyprus: to prevent ‘the entrapment of the Cyprus problem within the narrow limits of the Atlantic Alliance’; to strengthen its image as a world power through its support of Cyprus as yet another Non-Aligned state; to cultivate strong ideological and political ties with the fully pro-Soviet AKEL communist party; to attempt a possible complete removal of Cyprus from the West that could eventually also remove from Cyprus the British bases; and to provide further evidence to the Arab states – such as Syria and Egypt, Moscow’s two close allies in the Eastern Mediterranean – that their own independence and territorial integrity could also be protected.<sup>23</sup>

Regarding Washington, former Under-Secretary of State, George Ball, was brutally honest regarding his country’s – manifestly power-political – perception of the 1964 domestic Cypriot crisis:

‘Viewed from Washington, the issues were clear enough. Cyprus was a *strategically important piece of real estate* at issue between two NATO partners: Greece and Turkey. We needed to keep it *under NATO control*.’<sup>24</sup>

Unsurprisingly, when Turkey threatened another invasion in 1964, Moscow declared her ‘protection’ of the new Republic. Hence, President Lyndon Johnson sent Ankara his notorious

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22 This applies *par excellence* to T.W. Adams and A.J. Cottrell’s (1968) *Cyprus between East and West*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, Chapter IV, ‘Soviet Policy toward Cyprus’, pp. 29-54. ‘Political Realism’ can also be said to mark such more recent analyses as Ch. Tsardanides (1993) ‘The Soviet Union and the Cyprus Problem, 1960-1991’, in C. Yialourides and P. Tsakonias (eds), *The New International Order, Greece, Turkey and the Cyprus Problem*, Athens: I. Sideris [in Greek], pp. 265-286; and A. Stergiou (2007) ‘Soviet Policy Toward Cyprus’, *The Cyprus Review*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Fall), pp. 83-106, and ‘Les Russes à Chypre dans l’après-Guerre froide’ [The Russians in Cyprus in the post-Cold War], *Outre-terre: Revue européenne de géopolitique*, Vol. 27 (2011), pp. 121-128.

23 Ch. Tsardanides, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

24 G. Ball (1982) *The Past has another Pattern*, New York: Norton, p. 342, emphases added.



June 1964 Epistle, which warned Turkey against any military action. What infuriated the Turks was Johnson's statement that Washington would not run to help its fellow-NATO member should the Soviets intervene. In fact, Turkish anger and frustration entailed the eruption of perceptible anti-Americanism in the country and even a nascent rapprochement between Ankara and Moscow that took the form of an increase in commercial and even some military cooperation.<sup>25</sup>

By mid-1964, Moscow had repeatedly assumed President Makarios' position against the Turkish threats. And on 9 August, Nikita Khrushchev 'assured the Greek Cypriots of the sympathies of the Soviet people and government to the Archbishop's position in the dispute, which now involved military hostilities.'<sup>26</sup> A week later, Premier Khrushchev declared yet again that the Soviet Union could not stand idly by given the threat of conflict south of its borders. As Adams and Cottrell reported, quoting *Pravda* (17 August 1964):

[Khrushchev] charged that the Turkish air attacks on Cyprus were part of an "imperialist plot" led by the US and Great Britain. He warned that Turkey could not "drop bombs on Cyprus ... with impunity" and that the "harm inflicted on others may act as a boomerang".<sup>27</sup>

Following the Turkish bombardment, both the Soviets and some of their Warsaw Pact allies rushed to provide moral support and humanitarian assistance to the Cyprus government and the Greek Cypriot victims. Hence, as Andreas Stergiou has noted, among the goodwill gestures of the GDR, was 'humanitarian assistance in the form of equipment to the victims of Turkish bombardments (coverlets, blankets, etc.) plus construction material for the rebuilding of ruined villages', in addition to 'official statements to Makarios and foreign minister Kyprianou, condemning the intervention plans of NATO and West Germany and expressing "solidarity with the struggle of the Cypriot people for self-determination"'.<sup>28</sup>

Cypriot domestic instability and associated violence led Washington and the NATO allies (including Canada's Lester Pearson) to agree with President Makarios on the need for UN involvement in the form of a Peacekeeping Force on the island. 'The Soviet Union strongly supported Makarios' request and enabled the Security Council to adopt the resolution recommending the deployment' of what was to become UNFICYP.<sup>29</sup>

Cypriot Foreign Minister, Dr Erato Kozakou-Markoulli, emphasised to us the Republic's deep gratitude for Moscow's support at the UN Security Council. Having stated that 'These [UN] resolutions remain the backbone in defence of our foreign policy, since without them we

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25 Stergiou, 'Soviet Policy toward Cyprus', *op. cit.*, p. 95.

26 Adams and Cottrell, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 39.

28 Stergiou, 'Soviet Policy toward Cyprus', *op. cit.*, pp. 93-94.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 94.

might not survive as a country', she singled out the aforementioned resolution:

'For example, there is Resolution 186 of 1964, which established the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus. The very reference to the Government of the Republic of Cyprus in that resolution, saying that the Peacekeeping Forces would be acting with the approval of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus, was very important. Some countries reacted negatively, but the Soviet Union stood by us and by this very important wording ... That is to say, the international community through the Security Council recognizes the government of Cyprus as representing the whole Republic of Cyprus and all the people of Cyprus. So Moscow's support was vital at a very critical moment.'<sup>30</sup>

Needless to say, the Colonels' dictatorship in Greece profoundly affected the Soviet Union's relations with all Hellenism, if only because of the Greek junta's violent anti-communism and servility to Washington. Before 1967, however, Moscow had provided sustained political support and tangible material assistance to Cyprus. The supply of military hardware by Moscow and later by Czechoslovakia strengthened the Republic's sense of security against Turkey's ominous threats.<sup>31</sup> The 'brotherly' ties that the Cypriot Communist party, AKEL, continued to cultivate with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) clearly played a facilitating role, as they involved direct communication between Moscow and the government of President Makarios on issues of 'high politics'. Furthermore, Nicosia's energetic participation in the Non-Aligned Movement also ingratiated it to Moscow politically and emotionally since it also served one of its cardinal goals, as suggested by Tsardanides earlier. In addition, Moscow and Nicosia were taking 'low politics' initiatives with a far distant horizon such as the university studies of thousands of AKEL supporters, who enjoyed generous Soviet scholarships which they still recall gratefully today.

By 1971, the Soviet Union was prepared to strengthen further its special ties with Nicosia, hence Makarios was accepted for an official visit to Moscow while the latter took the opportunity to reaffirm its full support for Cyprus against any foreign interference. The communiqué resulting from the visit talked of the Cypriot people rather than two communities and called for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Cyprus.<sup>32</sup>

When Turkey's double invasion took place in July and August 1974, Moscow reacted *in tandem* with the entire UN Security Council and the General Assembly. As former Cypriot Foreign Minister, Giorgos Iacovou, stated to Marina Salvaridi, the entire international community was initially confused: 'The Soviet Union was interested but possessed no "key".'

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30 Interview by Marina Salvaridi on 24 March 2011 in Nicosia. At that time, Dr Markoulli spoke as a former Foreign Minister. She returned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the 5 August 2011 government reshuffle.

31 A.R. Norton (1992) 'Soviet Union and Cyprus', in N. Salem (ed.), *Cyprus: A Regional Conflict and its Resolution*, London/New York: Macmillan/St. Martin's Press, p. 105. And as Adams and Cottrell noted (*op. cit.*, p. 40), 'Supplies of conventional arms, fighters, torpedo boats, anti-aircraft artillery, radar equipment and rockets were promised' to the Greek Cypriots in September 1964.

32 Stergiou, 'Soviet Policy toward Cyprus', *op. cit.*, p. 96.

Turkey had presented the invasion as a "peace operation" in order, allegedly, to return to the Constitution ...'.<sup>33</sup> And yet, it transpired that in contradistinction to its 1964 responses, the Soviet Union was now unwilling to oppose Ankara's actions. Among other apparent reasons, the invasion prevented Cyprus from becoming united with NATO-member Greece; Moscow did not wish to jeopardise its developing new relations with Turkey; and such action was bound to upset dramatically NATO's Southern Flank.<sup>34</sup> Over and above this, as Stergiou has recently argued, it has become known 'that the Soviets had realised through intelligence satellites the Turkish preparations for invasion, but undertook no action to stop it. The Soviets obviously signalled non-opposition to intervention'.<sup>35</sup>

In any event, as American professor Norton has shown, 'Soviet commentators have described the Turkish army in Cyprus as an *occupation force*. For instance, a 1988 commentary referred to 1974, when "foreign military occupation severed the island like a painful scar".<sup>36</sup> Moreover, as Norton also wrote in 1990, the USSR 'has denounced any political framework that would partition the island'.<sup>37</sup>

Moscow could not but denounce immediately the November 1983 Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) by the 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' (TRNC), as contradicting blatantly the UN principles, norms and resolutions. On 18 November 1983, a *Pravda* article quoting 'Soviet ruling circles' stated that the Turkish Cypriot leadership was advised to revoke its decision.<sup>38</sup> In addition to the need for consistency in supporting international law, Moscow's behaviour was also affected by the new Cold War, the deterioration of USSR-Turkey relations and the fact that Greek-Soviet relations were now steadily improving.<sup>39</sup>

Throughout the 1980s, Moscow called repeatedly for an international conference to address the fair and final settlement of the Cyprus problem in accordance with international law. The proposal was first made in 1982 during the official visit of then President Spyros Kyprianou to Moscow. When it was reiterated in January 1986, Nicosia endorsed it enthusiastically. A year later, President Kyprianou, visiting the UN headquarters, took the pulse of the UN Security Council regarding Moscow's idea, only to discover its rejection by the Western permanent members.

Then, in February 1989, Gennady Gerasimov (Chief of the Information Administration of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs) visited Nicosia for a period of four full days. Gerasimov then declared that the 'Republic of Cyprus must remain independent, territorially integral, and united, that all foreign troops on the island must be withdrawn, and that there must be

33 Salvaridi interview, Nicosia, 23 February 2011.

34 Tsardanides, *op. cit.*, p. 276; and Stergiou, 'Soviet Policy toward Cyprus', *op. cit.*, p. 98.

35 Stergiou, *ibid.*

36 Norton, *op. cit.*, p. 106, quoting *Pravda*, 31 August 1988.

37 Norton, *ibid.*

38 *Ibid.*, p. 107.

39 Cf. Stergiou, 'Soviet Policy toward Cyprus', *op. cit.*, p. 100.

international guarantees'.<sup>40</sup> This statement, premised on Moscow's diachronic commitment to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions regarding Cyprus, reflected almost verbatim Nicosia's own formulation.

Russia's statements and non-verbal actions have emphasised continually its devotion to the territorial integrity and independence of Cyprus ever since. This stance, besides Moscow's aforementioned 'pragmatic' interests, represents the legal, political, ethical, and even logical equivalent to the explicit condemnation of the illegal *status quo*. Moscow, therefore, has demonstrated solid support for the fundamental principles and norms of international law which Turkey has been violating since the 1974 invasion.

Overall, Moscow's Cyprus policy for the first 31 years of the Republic (1960-1991) has been essentially favourable to it. This policy, as we have seen, has been universally viewed exclusively through Cold War lenses. And yet, an intriguing puzzle arises from the fact that – as this study hopes to show in what follows – the deep roots of the *positive sentiments and bonds* arising from the historical and cultural similarities and ties between Hellenism and the Russian people cannot be denied. As a consequence, further research may be needed to clarify whether pragmatic idealist elements played a far larger role than previously assumed. Here, the author resists the temptation to sponsor the 'pragmatic idealist' thesis for the Cold War era and concludes instead that, given the notorious fears, insecurities and anxieties of the Cold War years, the 'idealism-related' Russian-Hellenic sentiments and bonds were *quasi-dormant*. This meant that Soviet Moscow exhibited here *primarily* 'power politics' in view of the ongoing global competition with the West. Simultaneously, in whatever way we look at it, the errors and sins committed by the Anglo-Saxon treatment of Cyprus facilitated Moscow's standing as an overall defender of UN principles and a protector of the rights of a victimised small and weak state. A distinct state of affairs, however, characterises the nature, the sources, and the implications of Moscow's *post-Cold War* Cyprus policy to which we may now turn.

### **Affirming Pragmatic Idealism since 1991**

This essay aims to demonstrate principally that, besides the mutuality of interests shared by Russia and free Cyprus, the intriguing sentiments and emotional bonds of their peoples constitute an additional dimension. After all, if Moscow had wished to embrace the concept of power politics towards Cyprus exclusively, sharing thereby the 'worldview' of Ankara, Washington, and London, it could easily have done so to no-one's surprise, given the hegemonic Hobbesian stereotype regarding great powers and superpowers. In that case, Moscow would have assumed ambiguity or 'neutrality' on the Cyprus problem instead of opting for the *idealist* principles and norms of the UN Charter and International Law.

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40 Norton, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

It is submitted here that such 'idealism' springs from Russia's deep historical experiences with Hellenism; from the strong bonds of Orthodox Christianity; from their cultural, aesthetic, and linguistic similarities and links; from the long exposure to, and deep appreciation of, each other's literary and artistic production; as well as the tangible, cordial *affection* shared by the peoples of Russia, Cyprus and Greece. This conclusion has been expressed explicitly by all persons with whom we shared our hypothesis since February 2010.

Former Ambassador to Cyprus, Georgy L. Muradov's, illuminating book, *Russia-Cyprus: Our Common Way* provides sustained verification for our hypothesis. Throughout this collection of interviews and lectures, Ambassador Muradov celebrates various dimensions of the aforementioned sentiments and bonds. For instance, when asked whether 'Hellenism and the Russian people have additional connecting features beyond religion', he replied:

'Certainly! I think we also have the same mentality, as peoples, but also the same ethical spirit. Of course, since times past, there is the economic, the political and the cultural connection. I am talking of the ancient years when the first Tsars or the princes were getting married to Greek women.'<sup>41</sup>

In June 1999, in a discussion over whether the Greeks – of both Cyprus and Greece – appreciate and enjoy the great Russian cultural tradition, Mr Muradov noted:

'From what I hear and see, I can reach one conclusion only. That both in Greece and Cyprus, the Russian civilization has great effect and impact. It is popular in literature, in music, and [in] the other arts! I realize this when I see the Russian folklore groups performing in Cyprus. They literally enjoy an apotheosis. And this proves that the connection of our peoples has deep roots which go back in centuries.'<sup>42</sup>

Similarly, when his Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation interviewer noted the deep gratitude for Russia's literary heritage, Georgy Muradov replied in unmistakably pragmatic-idealist terms:

'Thank you very much. I believe that our two civilizations are very much interconnected. Mentality, tradition, Orthodoxy unite[s] us as peoples very closely. And I must say that culture provides peoples with the same ethics, and I see that the evaluations, the values of Cypriots and Greeks, of Hellenism generally, and of the Russians are almost the same. I am talking about the values of today's world.'<sup>43</sup>

As regards 'the new world order' (immediately associated with NATO's bombing of Serbia), Ambassador Muradov seemed to speak again, on behalf of his values and those of his government and the Russian people, as a pragmatic idealist:

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41 Georgy L. Muradov, *Russia-Cyprus: Our Common Way*, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

42 *Ibid.*

43 Interview given to CyBC's Aleka Preka, 18 May 1999, p. 123.

'In my opinion, politics cannot exist without ethics. We hear sometimes people say that politics is a dirty game, that politics is not something moral. I think that if things go that way, we as humanity will not go far in our development, we will be lost. International relations are also a form of social relations, and in social life ethics plays a very great role. The same must occur in international relations ...'<sup>44</sup>

Given that international law and international ethics stand at the heart of pragmatic idealism, and given that Moscow officials and elites appeal constantly to UN principles and associated norms, the observation of Dr Pisiotis is welcomed regarding Moscow's penchant to opt for legal solutions to international problems. As he noted regarding the 1990s, the positions of Greece and Russia coincided on a number of international issues, two of which were of special interest to Greece: namely, the ratification of the Law of the Sea Convention and the Cyprus question.<sup>45</sup> Needless to say, this coincidence meant that Moscow was bound to favour the legal arguments of Greece against Turkey, *inter alia* regarding the Imia crisis of 1996: 'Thus, like Greece, Moscow stated a preference for a "legal" solution to the bilateral problems that caused the Imia confrontation'.<sup>46</sup> In addition, Moscow adopted International Law against the 'dialogue' proposed by Western governments, which (dialogue) 'implicitly backed the political solution favoured by Turkey'.<sup>47</sup>

In what might also be counted as yet another 'supporting Cyprus versus Turkey' case, this time in the sector of defence, 'Russia openly defended the right of the Republic of Cyprus to upgrade its air-defence through the purchase of Russian S-300 missiles',<sup>48</sup> despite Ankara's intense lobbying against their installation. To be sure, in view of the eventual cancellation of the system's installation in Cyprus, this labyrinthine case may well generate equally plausible contradictory readings. That is, it might be argued that the non-installation demonstrated Russia's initial post-Soviet weakness. But it may also be asserted that it represents a case of convoluted pragmatic idealism since, in responding to Nicosia's relevant request, Moscow combined legitimate commercial interests with the legally (and even morally) principled support for Cypriot defence against the ever-present Turkish threat. Be that as it may, when Moscow signalled that it was bent on delivering the missiles, 'Turkey threatened to strike the Russian vessels carrying the missiles to Cyprus. In response, Moscow described the Turkish threats as an outright provocation and a *casus belli*'.<sup>49</sup>

More broadly now, the pragmatic-idealist hypothesis was verified repeatedly during Marina Salvaridi's interviews in Nicosia in early 2011. She addressed two former Presidents, most of the

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44 *Ibid.*, p. 124.

45 A. Pisiotis, *op. cit.*, p. 412.

46 *Ibid.*

47 *Ibid.*

48 *Ibid.*, p. 413.

49 Stergiou, 'Les Russes à Chypre dans l' après-Guerre froide', *op. cit.*, p. 125.

former Cypriot Foreign Ministers and other former and acting Cypriot politicians. The following are three representative excerpts:

'Russians, like many during the Middle Ages or the Renaissance, had to come to Cyprus before going to the Holy Land. There is this historical relationship which is a common Christian tradition. It is very deep and so many years of atheistic philosophy did not really affect the souls of the people. In any case, there has always been a relevant interest in Cyprus, and the Soviet Union adopted an anti-imperialistic and anti-colonial attitude and therefore supported very warmly the struggle for independence of the Cypriots.'<sup>50</sup>

As regards the level, the duration, and the sources of the Moscow-Cyprus special relationship, Dr Erato Kozakou Markoullis had this to say:

'I cannot find another country, apart from Greece, with which we have a relationship of such a high level and long duration. The first is Greece, the second best I would say is Russia ... Cyprus always had the support of the former Soviet Union and now the Russian Federation for, I think, many historical, political, economic and other reasons that bring the two countries, the two peoples, together. We really value very, very highly our relations, which we developed over the years to today's high point. So, all in all, I would say that we have more than excellent relations with the Russian Federation. And definitely there are many areas to develop still further. Let us say, now, in the energy sphere. There are plenty of ways.'<sup>51</sup>

Similarly, Honorary Leader of the Social-Democratic Movement (EDEK) and former Speaker of the Cypriot House of Representatives, Dr Vassos Lyssarides, made, *inter alia*, the following 'pragmatic-idealist' comments:

'Traditionally, relations between Russia and Hellenism have been very positive. For historical and may be for religious reasons, because religion plays a role in people's relations. The fact that they are both Orthodox – despite some rare disputes between our Churches – I believe to be one of the reasons why there has been a traditional friendship between Russia and Greece and Cyprus. At the time of the anti-colonial struggle, although there was no relation between the then Soviet Union and the national liberation movement of Cyprus, their [the Soviets] attitude was positive all the time. And it was positive towards Makarios all the time as well.'<sup>52</sup>

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50 Salvaridi interview with Giorgos Iacovou, 23 February 2011.

51 Salvaridi interview of 24 March 2011.

52 Interview to Marina Salvaridi, 4 April 2011.

### The April 2004 Russian UN Veto

As regards additional empirical illustrations of the political-diplomatic protection extended to Cyprus by Moscow, a most revealing recent instance was Moscow's Security Council veto of April 2004. This was the first Russian veto in 10 years. It took place only days before the twin referenda on the 'Annan plan', after UN Secretary General Kofi Annan had urged the Council to adopt a resolution on proposed security arrangements for Cyprus in case the Cypriots would vote for 'reunification'. The accumulated pressure by the UN Secretariat on the Greek Cypriots (GCs) was quite rude, and crude, and therefore intolerable: as all public opinion research had demonstrated, the GCs' overwhelming majority had long decided to reject that plan as unfair and unworkable. Thus, Russia's Deputy Ambassador to the UN, Gennady Gatilov, declared Moscow's position that the proposed resolution was attempting to influence the referendums of 24 April. He, therefore, vetoed the resolution, stating: 'The [referendums] must take place freely, without any interference or pressure from outside'.<sup>53</sup>

That this was a well thought-out and entirely rational move in support of the Nicosia government is also shown by Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov's statement following the meeting with Giorgos Iacovou on 20 April 2004. Mr Lavrov had expressed Moscow's concerns about the fate of the Annan plan in the forthcoming referendum and stated Russia's opposition to any UN decisions before the referendum's results. In fact, as Mr Iacovou revealed to us, the UN Secretariat had delivered different 'versions' of the final plan to the members of the Security Council:

'It is scandalous that only the British and American delegations were given a full text (several days before it was given to the Greek and Turkish Cypriots!). But to the Russians, the French and the Chinese they only gave a summary of 14 pages! When I arrived in Moscow, and having known Mr Lavrov for many years, I made a point: "How come the Security Council would be working only with British and Americans and would not even give you a copy?" This question seemed to infuriate him. And after our private conversation, I left the visit quite happy: I was certain that Russia would support us in the Security Council.'<sup>54</sup>

Finally, Mr Iacovou confessed to us another 'para-historical' anecdote:

'Secretary of State, Colin Powell, telephoned Sergei Lavrov on the eve of the Security Council vote and bided him not to raise a veto (indeed, rumours had been circulating that

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53 BBC News 'Russia has Blocked the UN Security Council Resolution', 22 April 2004. For further information see BBC News (2011) Republic of Cyprus Press and Information Office. Available at [[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/russian/news/newsid\\_3648000/3648405.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/russian/news/newsid_3648000/3648405.stm)], accessed on 23 February 2011. For an excellent discussion of Moscow's April 2004 veto, see I. Torbakov's essay: 'UN Veto Sparks Debate on Russian Policy Aims'. Available at [[http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=26456](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=26456)], accessed on 6 April 2012.

54 Salvaridi interview, as in note 33 above.



Russia would use her veto). Lavrov replied: "Colin, don't get upset. Russia follows in its Cyprus policy what my friend George Iacovou says"<sup>55</sup>

### **Multidimensional Cooperation: Pragmatism Meets Idealism**

Throughout the post-Cold War era, the political dialogue between the superpower and the small island-state has been constant, as are the mutual visits by their leaders, their foreign ministers and other officials, from the Parliamentary level to that of local government.<sup>56</sup> Among the most fruitful, was the November 2008 Moscow visit by President Demetris Christofias who signed with President Dmitry Medvedev a Joint Declaration entitled 'On Further Intensification of the Relations of Friendship and Comprehensive Cooperation between the Republic of Cyprus and the Russian Federation'.<sup>57</sup>

Beyond political cooperation, that declaration covered many additional dimensions, from economic relations to cooperation of Local Authorities, continuing military-technical cooperation, collaboration in addressing 'new threats and challenges' (such as terrorism and other criminal phenomena), ending with a long section on 'Cultural, Religious and Humanitarian Fields'. This section begins in clearly pragmatic-idealist terms: 'The Sides confirm that the development of bilateral cooperation in the humanitarian field has a strong foundation with regard to historic, cultural and religious closeness of the peoples of the two States'.<sup>58</sup>

Given that the economic relations constitute a solid foundation for the 'pragmatic' dimension of the bilateral relationship, some representative relevant facts are worth recording. Thus, for many years Cyprus steadily retains its position among the top three countries investing in the Russian economy.<sup>59</sup> According to the Russian State Statistics Committee, Cyprus was in the first place in 2001, representing 16.3% of the total foreign investments' income, followed by the United States (11.2%) and Great Britain (10.9%).<sup>60</sup> As at August 2010, the total Cypriot cumulative investment

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55 *Ibid.*

56 Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, a frequent and very popular visitor to Nicosia, interviewed by the Cyprus News Agency before his official trip to Cyprus in December 2007 stated *inter alia*: 'At the base of our traditionally friendly relations with the Republic of Cyprus lie *strong historical and spiritual bonds*... What brings us closer to each other is the common understanding of the necessity to be guided in international relations by *universal principles and legal norms*'. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Information and Press Department, 26 December 2007 (emphases added).

57 The Joint Declaration can be found at the Republic of Cyprus Press and Information Office (20 November 2008). Available at [<http://www.cyprus.gov.cy/MOI/pio/pio.nsf/All/60895A8B06E9435CC2257507003E3507?OpenDocument&print>], accessed on 6 April 2012.

58 *Ibid.*

59 Official website of the Russian Federal State Statistics Service (2010) Available at [[http://www.gks.ru/bgd/regl/b10\\_39/IssWWW.exe/Stg/14-13.htm](http://www.gks.ru/bgd/regl/b10_39/IssWWW.exe/Stg/14-13.htm)], accessed on 6 April 2012.

60 Russian Foreign Ministry's official website (25 November 2002) 'Trade and Economic Relations'. Available at [<http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/ns-reuro.nsf/348bd0da1d5a7185432569e700419c7a/f5afbc990361f97dc32576bf0048bfb5!OpenDocument>], accessed on 6 April 2012.

in Russia amounted to US\$ 52 billion, which incorporated 38 billion of foreign direct investment.<sup>61</sup> Now it is well known that these funds are mostly of Russian origin and going back to Russia using the extremely favourable terms of Cypriot legislation, including the previous intergovernmental agreement for the avoidance of double taxation,<sup>62</sup> which was the revised version of the 1982 agreement. However, among the other factors that attract Russian businessmen and their money to Cyprus are the propitious opportunities offered by Cyprus. For it is (1) an EU Member-State; (2) a regional and world business centre; and (3) – equally important – it offers stability and safety coupled with traditionally friendly attitudes.

For instance, (3) above was a central point raised by Natalia Kardash, Editor-in-Chief of the Russian weekly newspaper, *Vestnik Kipra*, during a recent conference on Russian-Cypriot relations in Nicosia. Characteristic was Ms Kardash's reply to 'Why do Russians choose Cyprus?':

'You probably know the reasons that are mentioned during business conferences. Taxes, weather ... But the most important reason is people. Cypriots like Russians. Russian people feel very comfortable here. There are many countries with good weather and similar business conditions. But Cyprus – I know it for sure – is the best country in Europe if you take into consideration how people treat Russians here ... Many people say that in Cyprus they feel that they live a full life, they learn to enjoy every day.'<sup>63</sup>

These very reasons explain the increasing numbers of Russians choosing Cyprus as their place of residence. As Ms Kardash noted, there are currently around 50,000 Russians living in Cyprus. The majority, 46%, are visitors, earning money abroad and spending it in the Republic. The remainder are counted as follows: Russian businessmen and their families, 26%; employees of local and international companies, 13%; wives of Cypriot citizens, 11%; and Russian students welcomed at the various Cypriot Universities, 4%.<sup>64</sup> Finally, the following selected data illustrate further the progressive incorporation of the Russian people in Cypriot life: Russian-speaking children number between 25-30,000; four Russian schools operate in the Republic; 'there are more than 10 educational centres where children go in the afternoon'; and about 20 music and dancing schools use Russian as the main language.<sup>65</sup>

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61 **Данные Всероссийского научно-исследовательского института потребительского рынка и маркетинга** [Data of the All-Russian Consumer Market and Marketing Research Institute] Available at [[http://www.vniiprim.ru/news/show.php?news\\_id=519](http://www.vniiprim.ru/news/show.php?news_id=519)], accessed on 6 April 2012.

62 Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Cyprus and the Government of the Russian Federation for the avoidance of the double taxation with respect to taxes on income and on capital. Nicosia, 5 December 1998.

63 N. Kardash (2010) 'Russian Community in Cyprus: Advantages and Challenges', paper presented during the Conference entitled, 'The Republic of Cyprus and the Russian Federation: Past, Present and Future Challenges', University of Nicosia, 2 November 2010, p. 1.

64 *Ibid.*

65 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

For all these reasons, the exuberant presentation of Natalia Kardash – which reflected her celebration of Russian-Cypriot affinity and affection – ended in four cardinal conclusions:

- Russians choose Cyprus because of Cypriots
- Russians truly love Cyprus
- Russian community contributes much to Cyprus economy, and
- Russian people are ready and willing to integrate in the life of Cyprus<sup>66</sup>

During the aforementioned conference, I asked Dr Nadia Arbatova if she could endorse the 'pragmatic idealism' hypothesis. The distinguished Russian analyst and frequent visitor to Nicosia's academic institutions answered with a clear 'Yes!' A few minutes earlier, she had concluded her own presentation as follows: 'Russia and Cyprus are natural allies!'<sup>67</sup>

In addition, the regional cooperation with Moscow and Moscovskaya oblast, Krasnodar region and Tatarstan is developing successfully. Since October 1999, a joint Cyprus-Russian Investment Bank of Kuban works in Krasnodar, offering new opportunities for business cooperation. Incidentally, when Ambassador Muradov was asked back in February 1999 by *Russian Business and Trade Connections* to comment on recent Cyprus-Russian commercial relations and flourishing economic cooperation, as well as 'Why are Russia and Cyprus so close?' he replied first in terms of well-developed treaties and legal agreements between the two countries. He then added:

'Other advantages of Cyprus as a business centre are its convenient location, good climate, political stability ... favourable tax policy towards foreign companies and the sophisticated banking and business infrastructure. The geographical proximity of Russia and Cyprus also plays an important role, *but for us it is more important that Cyprus is a traditionally friendly country, spiritually close to us and connected by strong historical ties.*'<sup>68</sup>

Similarly, the increasing importance of Russian tourism for Cyprus deserves special mention: for beyond its manifest economic significance for the Republic, it is also a tangible demonstration of inter-people friendship and affinity – if not affection – of the kind celebrated above by Georgy Muradov and many others.

The rise in the number of Russian tourists visiting Cyprus annually is quite impressive: from 130,000 in 2000, the figures reached around 181,000 in 2008; and with the increase of 50% – following a decline during the 2009 crisis – the numbers rose to 224,000 arrivals in 2010, placing Russia among the island's largest sources of holidaymakers.<sup>69</sup> Mutual interest helped to subdue

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66 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

67 N. Arbatova, 'Russia and Cyprus in the context of Regional and European Security', in the conference mentioned in note 63 above.

68 G. Muradov, *Russia-Cyprus: Our Common Way*, *op. cit.*, p. 177, emphasis added.

69 For figures see Statistical Service of Cyprus (CYSTAT) (2012). Available at [[http://www.cystat.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/services\\_7Imain\\_en/services\\_7Imain\\_en?OpenForm&sub=1&sel=2](http://www.cystat.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/services_7Imain_en/services_7Imain_en?OpenForm&sub=1&sel=2)], accessed on 6 April 2012.

obstacles connected with the introduction of the visa regime as a result of the 2004 full membership of Cyprus in the EU. They were softened by a number of agreements directed at simplifying the visa formalities and so the 20% decline in arrivals in 2004 was almost 'reimbursed' with a 16.4% increase in 2005 and was easily overcome in the years that followed.<sup>70</sup>

In early 2012, Cypriot enthusiasm concerning the aforementioned trends was strengthened further, following the visit of representatives of the Cyprus Tourism Organisation (KOT) to Moscow. As KOT President, Alecos Oroudiotis, stated, Russian tourist arrivals in Cyprus in 2012 are expected to exceed 400,000. He added that, starting this year, seven more Russian airports will be added to the ones linking the Russian Federation with Cyprus resulting in flights from a total of 16 cities.<sup>71</sup>

In closing, an observation by Argyrios Pisiotis on the subject of Russian tourism to Greece and Cyprus deserves to be placed in the pragmatic-idealist context: that is, in the 1990s, not only Russian tourism to the two countries had been clearly revived but this applied also to 'spiritual tourism'. As he noted, the latter was taking place along 'the traditional routes which nineteenth century Russian pilgrims followed to Greece': that is Moscow-Odessa and then by ship to Constantinople, Thessaloniki, Mount Athos, Athens and Palestine.<sup>72</sup>

In October 2010, President Medvedev paid an official visit to Cyprus, a first by the head of the Russian state to the Republic. During the visit, 15 different agreements were signed, which will, in President Medvedev's words, 'create a solid foundation for the future business development'. Here, the new accord for the prevention of double taxation acquired particular meaning: 'Cyprus is perceived by our businessmen as a very convenient platform to make investments', noted Medvedev.<sup>73</sup> He then added: 'The amendments to the agreement on avoiding double taxation that have just been signed are aimed at making this area more predictable, transparent and understandable for the authorities regulating it'.<sup>74</sup> Thus the new tax deal effectively removed Cyprus from a Russian 'black list' of jurisdictions where authorities failed to cooperate adequately with Russian tax collectors.

In the course of his Nicosia visit, President Medvedev reiterated Moscow's support for the ongoing reunification talks, stating once more that support from Moscow for a reunified Cyprus with a single sovereignty remained unchanged, and he assured his listeners of the steadfastness of Moscow's Cyprus policy. Over and above this it is hard to gauge whether Medvedev's own proclivity – like that of numerous other Russian officials – for verbal assurances to Cyprus is a

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70 *Ibid.*

71 'Russian tourists will reach 400,000 in 2012', *Phileletheros* (Nicosia daily), 11 February 2012, p. 13.

72 A. Pisiotis, *op. cit.*, p. 421.

73 'Medvedev Resolves Cyprus Taxation', *Moscow Times*, 8 October 2010. Available at [<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/medvedev-resolves-cyprus-taxation/418969html>], accessed on 5 April 2012.

74 *Ibid.*

possible throw-back to erstwhile communist internationalist rhetoric of brotherhood and it may not be so important, as long as it is accompanied by solid non-verbal actions.

To be sure, a delicate question surfaced anew during the historic visit: could this ever-flourishing bilateral relationship continue to thrive unaffected by Turkey's ever-strengthening material embrace of Russia? Put differently, could Moscow resist the inevitable pressure that Ankara might exercise on it, in view of the increasing Turkish self-confidence and manifest geopolitical and geo-economic ambition?

Beyond the wide-spread Hellenic conviction that such abandonment *need not* happen, it is certainly arguable that Turkey needs Russia far more than the latter needs the former. Moreover, the constant assurances by Russian officials, and the statements of our distinguished interviewees, point to the same conclusion, i.e. that the cultivation of material interests in Russia's relationship with Turkey can co-exist with Moscow's persistent promotion of the international legal principles and ethical values in the case of Cyprus. During his Cyprus visit, President Medvedev, alluded, in fact, to this very question when he declared that Russia's growing commercial and political relations with Turkey 'do not pose a threat' to Cyprus.<sup>75</sup> He then added:

'Our relations will remain just as friendly and mutually beneficial, and Russia will not change its position regarding the Cyprus question. This position is that Cyprus must be a single sovereign state with two communities. (...) We will continue to work towards this goal.'<sup>76</sup>

Given its significance, I addressed the 'predictive' question to Dr Igor Torbakov, an established expert on Russia-Turkey relations: 'Can you possibly foresee that, in spite of the increasing "material embrace" with Turkey, Moscow can resist a change of the [special relationship] with Cyprus?' Dr Torbakov responded as follows:

'My take on this issue is that the enhanced economic ties and massive gas trade notwithstanding, the relationship is ambiguous as in almost every sphere Turks and Russians compete as much as they cooperate. Most Turkish analysts agree that the two important foreign policy issues where Moscow and Ankara do not see eye to eye are Nagorno-Karabakh and Cyprus – the fact that, naturally, makes Turks unhappy ... I don't think the situation is going to change any time soon.'<sup>77</sup>

Analogously, the author submits that Russia and Cyprus need not become imprisoned in a zero-sum game but can well envisage a genuine win-win state of affairs. For one may rationally hold that Turkey-Russia relations can benefit from material motives and results, while Russian-

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75 *Moscow Times*, 8 October 2010, *op. cit.*

76 Official web site of the President of Russia (2012). Available at [<http://eng.news.kremlin.ru/transcripts/1099/print>], accessed on 5 April 2012.

77 Correspondence with this author, 15 September 2010.

Cypriot relations need not be endangered and could even *celebrate* pragmatic idealist principles and values.

Finally, these very principles and values made their presence felt in various ways over the past few months. First, when Ankara renewed its threats against the Republic following the announced start of hydrocarbon explorations in the Cypriot Exclusive Economic Zone, Russian Ambassador to Cyprus, Vyacheslav Shumskiy, defended the Republic's rights by stating that Moscow's position was 'absolutely clear' on the matter: 'We were among the first countries to comment on that, and we totally support the sovereign right of the Cypriot people for exploitation of natural resources; this is totally in accordance with international law and with the EU regulations, so there is no doubt about that'.<sup>78</sup> Second, when the international and EU economic crisis had definitely reached the Cypriot shores by mid-2011, rendering difficult the country's borrowing in the international markets, Moscow rushed to promise a generous loan of €2.5 billion at an interest rate of only 4.5%.<sup>79</sup> And when the Cyprus-Russia Friendship Association was holding its 50th anniversary in Nicosia in November 2011, Georgy Muradov, in his present capacity as deputy director of the Organisation for International Cooperation in the Russian Foreign Ministry, read out a message from Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov which declared in veritably pragmatic idealist terms: 'Russia is interested in close and fruitful cooperation with Cyprus on the basis of sincere friendship, mutual sympathy and common interests'.<sup>80</sup>

## Conclusions

The manifold evidence for the 'idealist' dimension of the Russia-Cyprus special relationship seems impressive. Besides the dramatic contrast of Russia's chosen style and content with London and Washington's transparent power politics, there is rich testimony embracing the historical and cultural experiences, the religious and spiritual ties, the emotional and affective socio-psychological bonds, and the shared principles and ethical values of Hellenism and Russia.<sup>81</sup> Given then that

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78 'Greece and Russia Rally behind Cyprus', *Cyprus Mail*, 2 October 2011.

79 The delivery of this loan, which began in late 2011, demonstrated the wise 'pragmatism' of Nicosia policy-makers, as opposed to the abject failure of the George Papandreu administration to follow the same route in 2009 so as to avoid the well-known humiliating consequences for Greece.

80 'Russia Interested in Close Cooperation with Cyprus – Russian ForMin', ITAR-TASS News Agency – 9 November 2011. Available online at [<http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c154/267267.html>], accessed on 9 November 2011.

81 It is highly noteworthy that the terms 'spiritual bonds' and 'spiritual heritage' are being used especially by Russian officials who also articulate both the associated principles and values and their implications for Russian-Hellenic relations. Another telling example in this connection was provided by Russian Ambassador to Greece, Mr Vladimir I. Chkhikvishvili, in an article he published in Athens in May 2009, and began as follows: 'Russia and Greece have deeply rooted ties of friendship that span a history of over a thousand years. From the era of Greek Byzantium, we adopted Christianity, an influential force for philosophy, the arts and the state structure of ancient Russia. The Cyrillic character is based on the Greek language. The common Orthodox faith resulted in the

'pragmatic idealism' argues for the *balanced co-existence* of pragmatism and idealism without specifying percentages or degrees, analysts may freely 'negotiate' these degrees. For instance, Igor Torbakov seems to have largely endorsed our hypothesis.<sup>82</sup> He then added the following broader points:

'First, the way the policy is being elaborated and pursued is a pretty tangled one. Once, in the mid-1990s, the former Russian Ambassador to Washington Vladimir Lukin has colourfully described the post Soviet Russia's foreign policy as a 'multi-entrance diplomacy' [*mnogopod'ezdnyaya diplomatiya* in Russian], whereby the whole host of interest groups and lobbies (including business interests, energy companies, powerful 'oligarchs', Russian Orthodox Church, etc.) are pursuing their own 'foreign policies' without proper inter-agency coordination. Under Putin, this situation has been streamlined a little but in places like Cyprus, where a number of vested interests intersect, the 'multi-entrance' conduct still persists. And second, as Russia tends to cast itself as a great power vying for geopolitical influence with the USA and the EU, its stance on Cyprus should be viewed within a grander scheme of things – i.e. Russia's relations with other global centres of power.'<sup>83</sup>

Assuming now that it is hard to deny the 'idealistic' evidence for the two peoples' multiple special ties and bonds, if one wonders how the 'pragmatic' dimension of the bilateral relationship can be strengthened even further, the following are some modest suggestions:

1. Cyprus, like Greece, is a solid bridge for Russia to the European Union, now that Russia is striving to come closer to the EU and to fortify and expand manifold relations including political, economic, energy-related, and even those concerning security. Thus, former Cypriot Foreign Minister, Giorgos Lillikas, revealed to us that, following the Defence Cooperation Agreement with France in 2006, 'we were [with the late President Tassos Papadopoulos] preparing to sign a similar agreement with Russia, offering our facilities to it'.<sup>84</sup>
2. Regarding these EU-Russian relations, the exercise of creative and constructive involvement in Cyprus will arguably help Russia better understand Europe and the ways it operates and functions, particularly concerning decision-making.
3. The recent explorations in Cyprus' exclusive economic zone have revealed the existence of large hydrocarbon reserves. Russia's experienced involvement in this field can be enormously

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formation of a common mentality that bonded Russians and Greeks. That relationship continued even after the fall of the Byzantine Empire when relations were further strengthened through royal marriages'. 'Russia, Greece: strategic partnership based on common historical, spiritual heritage', published in *Kathimerini* daily newspaper, 21 May 2009, Embassy News, Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Greek Republic.

82 I. Torbakov wrote: 'Yes, basically I agree with your nuanced "pragmatic idealist" characterization. But I am going to make your description of Russian policy even more nuanced and complex'. *Op. cit.*

83 *Ibid.*

84 Salvaridi interview, Nicosia, 7 February 2011.

lucrative for both sides. Such collaboration would expand substantially the already attained enviable level of mutual financial benefits that have rendered Cyprus, in the words of Chris Weafer, chief strategist at Russia's UralSib Investment Bank, 'effectively the offshore financial services center for Russia'.<sup>85</sup>

4. Russia, as a successful federation with a kaleidoscope of non-Russian populations, has the experience and the moral authority to advise Cyprus on its quest for a *rational and workable* federated solution. Therefore, the advocated Russian insistence on an International Conference will be important for various reasons, including, first, that Russia (assisted primarily by China and France) will counterbalance the Anglo-American axis which has hurt Cyprus through an amoral 'political realism'; and second, such multidimensional Russian assistance to Cyprus will deepen even further Hellenism's gratitude and affection towards the Russian people and their government.
5. By the same token, the deepening by Russia of its policies that are also seen to be caring for, and protective of, a small and regionally weak state such as Cyprus, will strengthen Russia's *soft power*, thereby increasing further its international prestige. In other words, *pragmatic idealism*, by its very nature, promises to continue being not only principled and ethical but also highly beneficial to both Cyprus and Russia.

If these concluding paragraphs contain the kernel of the 'practical' consequences of our 'working hypothesis', a word deserves to be added regarding the 'theoretical' implications of this work. That is, Pragmatic Idealism was established *vis-à-vis* Canada and the 'like-minded middle powers' during the Cold War, proving that legal principles and ethical values may take pride of place over (bland) interests, since these values may ultimately *serve* many 'interests' even better. This entailed the demystification of the alleged infallibility of 'Political Realism' in IR theory. Moreover, we know of no other theoretical construct to date that has argued that a superpower *can, if it so wishes*, depart from the cardinal canons of power politics in its international dealings. But this is precisely what we hope *to have begun to establish* concerning Russia's entrenched post-Cold War Cyprus policy. In other words, the proposition that Russia's policy towards at least *one state* (Cyprus), *if not some states* (i.e. also Serbia and Greece), may well spring not only from mere material interests but also from legal principles and ethical values associated with friendly – and even 'brotherly' – sentiments and dispositions helps at least to reduce substantially the cynical and deeply pessimistic assumptions that are taken for granted by the aficionados of the 'Realist' conception of the affairs of the world.

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85 Quoted in 'Russian President Reassures Greek Cypriots on Turkey Ties', *Hurriyet Daily News*, 7 October 2010.



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