

The February 2008 Presidential Election in the Republic of Cyprus: The Context, Dynamics and Outcome in Perspective

GIORGOS CHARALAMBOUS*

Abstract

This paper studies the context, procedure and outcome of the February 2008 presidential election in the Republic of Cyprus. It primarily analyses the dynamics between the main actors that took part in the contestation of executive power; that is, the five main political parties and the campaigns of the three main candidates. It further outlines the effects of the main issues on the structure of political competition and preliminarily assesses the connection between the social and political level. While an element of surprise exists, there appears to be a pattern based on the behavioural aspects of the election that does not deviate from the diachronic culture of Cypriot political competition. The paper is divided into five sections: an introduction and outline of the paper's rationale; a delineation of the election's background and context; an analysis of the campaign period; an assessment of the results; and a conclusion on the absence or recurrence of those election-related characteristics that have been observed before.

Keywords: Cyprus, elections, 2008, parties, political competition, election campaigns, election results

Introduction

Voters form opinions in response to debates between competing elites and a new majority is formed in favour of policy change in one direction or another. In the Cypriot polity, by way of its nature as a presidential system of government, presidential elections have the potential to constitute turning points in political competition as well as policy making. Firstly, as first order elections, they directly give shape to government-opposition dynamics and constitute the main points in time where party goals and strategies stand out.¹ Secondly, they are contested in such a

* The author would like to thank Pambos Papageorgiou and Valentinos Polycarpou for providing him with the necessary election data and Christophoros Christophorou, for both data and discussion. Gregoris Ioannou, Giannos Katsourides, Rolandos Katsiaounis and two anonymous referees have provided critical and constructive comments on earlier drafts.

way – through two rounds – which allows for tactical change within the race's time frame as well as change in initial inter- and intra-party agreements. Thirdly, their process resolves the toughest policy decisions (including foreign policy, which in Cyprus involves negotiations of the Cyprus problem), naturally dealt with by the executive more directly and with more constitutional power, than by the House of Representatives.

Although the literature on party structure and forms of electoral competition in the Republic of Cyprus is neither extensive nor comparatively argued, it does point towards common observations of Cypriot party-political culture and how parties and individuals contest power, form alliances, and implement policy. A strong bi-polarity – especially during elections – between left and right, which touches the very core of Cypriot society and economy, is combined with a significant degree of fragmentation whereby parties and various political and social groups appear to be taking conflicting attitudes towards one another during the inter-electoral phase (Christophorou, 2008). Consensus politics do prevail but mostly in the process of deciding on policy (see Charalambous, 2008, conclusion) and forming government (see Christophorou, 2008, p. 97; Faustmann, 2008, pp. 27-28; Mavratsas, 2003, pp. 184-192). Programmatic convergence is unspecified but even its absence is not likely to affect the executive's stability, determine its survival or deprive the president of his own personal stigma (Christophorou, 2008, p. 95; Ker-Lindsay, 2006).

Party membership is very high in comparative terms (Bosco and Morlino, 2006, table 1), votes predominantly reflect partisan identity, as parties maintain an ability to penetrate their own electorate organisationally (*ibid.*, pp. 335-336) and long-term volatility is at very low levels, similar only to those of Malta (Caramani, 2006, table 2). These various observations between scholars who have studied Cypriot politics, are summarised acutely – if not also slightly overstated in comparative terms – by what Mavratsas (2003) has called the culture of 'clientelistic corporatism' and serve as a starting assumption or multi-layered hypothesis to be tested through an analysis of the 2008 Presidential elections.²

This paper aims to make a two-fold contribution. Firstly, it attempts to trace and explain the main actors' decisions before and during the campaign and relate them to the election results. Secondly, the paper asks if and how developments and political dynamics before and during the elections have produced changes in the way political contestation operates in the Republic of Cyprus and in the political landscape that has arisen in the election's aftermath. In effect, it attempts to explain if and which of the features long inhabiting Cypriot politics made their presence in this election as well.

1 First order elections are generally the most salient in the eyes of parties and the public. These are normally electoral contests for executive office. The most important distinction between the two types of elections is that in second order elections 'there is less at stake as compared to first-order elections' (see Reif, 1985).

2 See especially Mavratsas (2003, pp. 136-152).

Political Dynamics Leading to the Elections

A delineation of the political dynamics in the few years preceding the February presidential election allows us to set the background and context of political competition within which the election was contested. Five main parameters can be applied to this election's context that did not come in direct contrast to the contextual factors that conditioned the nature of previous elections but did give a very particular shape to the dynamics of political competition since both actors (their number and character) and issues (their significance and partly their nature) meant that no easy prediction could be made, either with regard to the campaign itself or the government that was to emerge.

'Rejectionism' and Cleavage Based Politics

It was not the first time that an intense and partly opposition-manufactured belief of a 'rejectionist' being in government, contributed to the shape of electoral dynamics.³ Yet, the way that this came about, initially forming a new cleavage in Cypriot society and politics, seems to be unprecedented. The new historical context of the Cyprus Problem, as reshaped in the Annan Plan and post-Annan Plan period, which saw a failed referendum and a socially dividing campaign around it, brought to the surface an additional underlying reason for social and political antagonism.⁴ This essentially revolved between those who called for a rejection of the Plan (the President and the centre parties supporting him; DIKO, EDEK and the Ecologists, as well as the newly formed EVROKO), those who called for a positive vote (the official line of right-wing DISY) and those who were unsure but eventually tilted towards a 'soft no' (the communist party, AKEL) (see Ioannou, 2008; Trimikliniotis, 2006). As a result of the referendum new political formations and alliances materialised, while at the societal level as well, people's relations were affected (Faustmann, 2008, p. 35).

Yet, a rejectionism/anti-rejectionism dichotomy at the media level materialised in the year leading to the February 2008 election. DISY's 'pro-rapprochement and pro-flexibility' strategy of the past decade but also its official acceptance of the Annan Plan's unsuitability – on the basis of the people's verdict in 2004 – converted the tri-polarity into a seemingly two-way disagreement between three main candidates. Within the context of the then ensuing presidential campaign, Ioannis Kasoulides and Dimitris Christofias – that is, right and left but both 'flexible' – were targeting a common electorate on a crucial issue dimension – the 'soft no' and 'yes' voters.

3 A previous election was decided by the desire to bury the Gali Set of Ideas and DIKO leader Spyros Kyprianou's policy on the Cyprus problem was the driving factor of the informal co-operation between left (AKEL) and right (DISY) in the mid 1980s.

4 For the politics of referendum and parties' views of referendum pledges as a resource to broaden their electoral appeal especially with regard to ethno-national issues see Sussman, 2006.

Five Main Parties and the Potential to Shape Political Competition

This was the first time, where political competition involved five main parties. As in the past, all parties chose to support one candidate or another and actively participate in the presidential race. EVROKO, the party that was formed when a number of DISY leading members split and joined forces with the nationalist right-wing New Horizons, was (in the 2006 parliamentary elections) now a political actor with 5% of the vote. If we follow widespread agreement that “the core of any party system is constituted by the structure of competition for control of the executive” and that “the parties which count are those that are involved in or have an impact on that competition” (Mair, 2006, p. 65), then the presence of EVROKO makes the structure of competition different than in the last two presidential elections.

If EVROKO's voters are attributed a minimum degree of vote consolidation then both the first and second round of the election could theoretically be determined by their behaviour and in the first instance by their leadership's strategy.⁵ In the 2006 parliamentary elections, data from polls showed that EVROKO lost only 2.3% from those who voted for the two parties that later formed it and final results revealed that it managed to attract a substantial number of voters from DISY (Panagopoulos, 2006, table 3 and pp. 14-15). In addition, this was the very first election since 1974, where the right wing was represented by two parties of a strong or at least pivotal following. However, amid an electoral system and a cleavage structure that favour established political parties, the above facts under no circumstances implied certainty that the EVROKO's leadership could direct its voters to its preferred choice.

The EU as an Outside Arm

Cyprus was now a member of the European Union and presidential elections became a more direct concern for European elites. Cypriot electoral competition and each party's strategy now involved an additional set of issues whose shape and salience depended on EU developments. The election essentially became a two-level game. The opposition was provided with an additional weapon in its propaganda against the government and between the parties that comprised it, and the government could be judged on another template of measurement for its own record. Both of these effects became evident during the election campaign: 1) Kasoulides' slogans and efforts to portray a Europeanist attitude can be thought of as being much stronger than any other presidential candidate – surely also because he was currently serving as an MEP – and the attacks on AKEL for being Eurosceptic were used more extensively; 2) The fact that Cyprus had entered

5 The terms cohesion and consolidation are not used interchangeably although they are similar. Vote consolidation is a quantifiable term which measures the percentage of voters who retain their partisan preference or follow the party's suggestion from one election to another. Cohesion may be thought of as a more sociological and non-quantifiable term, which denotes agreement over a choice made by the party leadership.

the EU, coupled with the significance placed on the EU's role in the Cyprus problem, by all domestic political elites, played a negative role for Papadopoulos. The EU now constituted a key player in a potential solution of the Cyprus problem and Papadopoulos had established a poor reputation in European circles, both national and inter-governmental, since he carried with him the image of 'inflexibility' on the Cyprus problem.⁶

AKEL's own Nomination

The most important particularity of this election was AKEL's fielding of its own candidate. AKEL General Secretary Dimitris Christofias' nomination was endowed with a powerful symbolic appeal, since this was the first break with the party's tradition of not nominating its own candidate in the country's presidential elections. Ideologically, patience until the party or its leader could gather the necessary momentum seemed to be operating, whereas strategically, there is a good case to be made that the party was cautious of placing decision-making power in the hands of the right, especially after the latter grouped under DISY. This tradition is carefully grounded in the Marxist-Leninist theory of alliances, as well as theorised by Bulgarian communist leader Georgi Dimitrov and intertwined with the Marxist Leninist theory of the stages of struggle. The party, for instance, identifies various possible stages of struggle, such as an anti-fascist one, an anti-imperialistic one, and a stage of liberation from colonialism or one of socialist transformation (AKEL, 2002, p. 1). Upon such ideological rationale and based on a line existing since 1926 in the KKK (Cyprus Communist Party, AKEL's predecessor), AKEL curved its policy of alliances in the early 1940s, immediately after its establishment (thus running in the municipal elections of 1943 in alliance with other forces). It re-phrased its policy in 1962, under conditions of independence and formalised into an electoral coalition in 1991 under the name AKEL – Left – New Forces, repeating that the priority of the party in this first stage of struggle was to solve the Cyprus problem and reunite the country (AKEL, 1962, pp. 2-4; 2001, pp. 27, 42; 2002, pp. 1-4).

The matter of election tactics has since been discussed at each successive election, always based on the initial ideological considerations (interview, 27 February 2009). In 2002, for example, during the process of considering the then upcoming elections, it was clear that AKEL ascribed importance to the electability of the presidential candidate, as well as to his ability to maintain unity among 'the democratic, progressive forces', including DIKO and EDEK (AKEL, 2002, p. 7). In similar vein this rationale was there in 1982 as well, when AKEL supported Spyros Kyprianou, the DIKO leader at that time. In effect, independent of the results that AKEL's own nomination could produce, the February elections essentially were a party-strategy-crossing-point

6 For the negative perception of Tassos Papadopoulos by the international media, indicatively see (*EurActiv*, 2005, 2008; *Guardian*, 2003). For a summary of the USA's, UK's and EU's negative perception of Papadopoulos see a pro-Papadopoulos article by Spanish foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos (2008) and EU Enlargement Commissioner Verheugen's statement to the European Parliament (2004).

for both AKEL and its competitors. Yet, the tactic of alliances was not abandoned; the choice given to party branches by the leadership, during the decision-making phase was one of continuing the tripartite alliance with DIKO and EDEK under the nomination of Christofias or under the nomination of Papadopoulos. Since the ideological/theoretical basis of 1962 did not change, the communist candidacy signalled less potential for systemic change or conscious alteration in AKEL's relational distance within the party system. The presentation of Christofias did not signify a drive for socialism but simply a position in favour of AKEL playing a much more decisive role within the coalition.

With the advent of 2007, a feeling of political agitation surfaced within and on behalf of AKEL, about various aspects of government policy. At that time a careful strategy was being crafted with the party opening an official discussion with all party branches and concluding it at the Party Congress three months later. Dissatisfaction manifested itself in a variety of concerns, i.e. on the Cyprus problem, the possible fortune of the party under a second Papadopoulos government, the question of how the votes lost by the party's negative stance on the Annan Plan referendum would be regained, and the lack of benefits for social groups represented by the party (phone interview, 25 October 2008; interview, 27 February 2009). It seems that government participation by itself as a multi-faceted issue, had already given rise to a kind of internal confusion not experienced before: "that the party had for the first time officially participated in government, led to greater expectations and in turn to disappointments not witnessed until then" (phone interview, 25 October 2008).

At the same time, the more sloganesque and media-driven disagreement, which eventually formed the main reason for presenting Christofias as a candidate, was Papadopoulos' tactic on the Cyprus problem.⁷ According to the interviewees from AKEL, this was also the main concern of the leadership bodies, when discussion with regard to the elections started in early 2007 (interview, 27 February 2009). The tradition of the broad political front, led by a centre politician, was meaningful so long as there was, more or less, agreement on the line and tactics for pursuing a solution of the Cyprus problem. It was a failure to agree with the organised centre (DIKO and EDEK) that had led to the nomination of a moderate figure, Giorgos Vasiliou, in 1988 (see Hadjikyriakos and Christophorou, 1996, pp. 117-121, 141-143). Indicative of this may be that the problem also appeared to exist within the ranks of the party as well, with members and officials, many of whom (both 'No' and 'Yes' voters) perceived the president's Cyprus problem approach as dangerous and unfruitful (phone interview, 25 October 2008; interview, 27 February 2009).

The decision to nominate Christofias was taken in July 2007 following an intra-party dialogue where all party branches were presented with a choice of either continuing support for Papadopoulos or nominating Christofias. The results (80% in favour of Christofias) were

7 For examples, see KYPE (2007) and Christofias (2007). Christofias himself noted repeatedly that disagreement stemmed from Papadopoulos' tactics and not his programmatic positions.

considered by the Central Committee, which also voted in favour of Christofias' nomination by 85 to 12 (and three abstentions) and carried its choice to the July Congress where it was approved by 94%. By suggesting the Christofias candidacy, the Central Committee did not simply follow the clear result of the debate in the base groups of the party in so far as such debate can be influential towards the direction chosen by the leadership. It also chose to adopt tactics which did not involve a hard choice in terms of party goals (see Muller and Strom, 1999).

Firstly, a party candidacy was the choice most suited for avoiding an exchange between votes and policy making. The party's vote share had decreased after the 2004 Annan Plan Referendum, evident in both the European election of 2004 and the Parliamentary election of 2006.⁸ Nevertheless, AKEL attempted to differentiate itself from the other forces which voted 'No', arguably in an attempt to ease the burden it carried as "the key factor in the balance between the forces of the status quo and the forces of its transcendence". Yet it was trapped in 'a lose-lose' situation because of a dilemma: it could continue further and alienate those who felt betrayed by the leadership's approach in supporting Papadopoulos or it could leave the tri-partite alliance and lose significant institutional capacity which secured clientelistic influence, attracted or maintained favour based voters, and kept policy making away from DISY (Ioannou, 2008, pp. 17-18). In return for the most secure approach in terms of policy making, vote consolidation could be significantly endangered since continuation of support for Papadopoulos was by now more clearly not in line with the party's policy aims.

Christofias' nomination served to revive the party organisationally, and to remind its base for the first time that cohesion, loyalty and mobilisation were now being requested in the name of what the party alone believes is right; and also to attract votes that no previous or other leader of AKEL seemed able to. His popularity was very high in both substantial and comparative terms. If we follow Bosco and Morlino's (2006, p. 256) argument that the mode of competition in Cyprus is distinguished "by party tactics designed to maintain the party's previous voters, acquire other electors who voted for a party within the same ideological block and regain the party voters who abstained in the previous election", then Christofias' candidacy surely appeared capable to achieve this.

The Campaign

First Round

Three candidate-centred campaigns, by right-wing, DISY MEP, Ioannis Kasoulides, left-wing, AKEL General Secretary, Dimitris Christofias, and President, ex-DIKO leader, Tassos Papadopoulos began simultaneously around mid-July 2007. Compared to parliamentary elections,

⁸ AKEL's 2001 parliamentary vote of 34.7% dropped to 31.1% in the parliamentary election of 2006. In the first European election of 2004, three months after the Annan Plan referendum, the party polled 27.9%.

the targeted electorate was naturally not as determinate, primarily because each campaign was highly personalised.

Campaigns were professionalised and very costly,⁹ while spin doctors from Greece were allowed their say in everything.¹⁰ If, and to what extent, spin doctors altered pre-determined policy programmatic positions, can only be speculated on the basis of each party's ideological consistency and organisational involvement in the campaign. Although campaigns were given the stigma of personas rather than parties – in terms of 'image merchandising' – individual entrepreneurs affiliated to the parties and/or candidates were an important source of financial support. Although the management of the campaign was a closed affair, limited to the parties supporting each candidate plus the candidates themselves and the spin-doctors, variations in terms of control by the parties did exist as we will see later.

The absence of an objective media coverage of the three candidates' electoral pledges has been a result of the majority of the media (TV channels and newspapers especially) supporting one of the candidates without any self-imposed or legal constraints.¹¹ As a consequence and in addition to the work already executed by spin-doctors, each candidate's image revolved mainly around one or two general issues at the most. Christofias' main focal point, apart from his popular personality, was his declared, more flexible and stronger effort to solve the Cyprus problem with the opening of direct initiatives on behalf of the Republic of Cyprus. His endorsement of 'anthropocentric' policies also gained momentum amidst an establishment where powerful media sought an end to the Papadopoulos presidency. Within such a context and through careful image communication, something that could have otherwise been presented as a communist threat to the economy was positively advertised.

The phobia of AKEL within what it always perceived, a society with very economically powerful, anti-communist elites, combined with an awareness of the statistical composition of its electorate (and membership) manifested itself into a very broadly targeted course of action in terms of electoral campaigning.¹² Essentially, however, Christofias' tactics did not differ substantially from

9 The estimated nominal expenses for publicity in the major media during the four months preceding the election amounted to €4.4 million (Christophorou, 2008b, p. 226).

10 It should not be inferred that the increasing use of spin-doctors in Cyprus is either a cause or a reaction to political party decline. As a first step it should be established if, and to what extent, it has been membership issues (Morlino and Bosco, 2006) that have triggered more campaign and organisational professionalisation (Christophorou, 2006).

11 Cypriot media seem to be inclined both towards confirming the beliefs of consumers through editorials and through influencing political outcomes. In this vein, they are biased in as far as their editorials selectively omit information and highlight details that are favourable or unfavourable to a particular issue. A historical review of such pattern of behaviour by the main Cypriot media during election time, is given by Ierodiakonou, (2003, pp. 126-177). For the above, commonly used definition of media bias, see Andina Diaz, forthcoming.

12 See AKEL's (1996) own analysis of Cyprus' class structure. Characteristic of the campaign's broad target were the slogan 'For both employees and entrepreneurship' and photographs of Christofias pictured with the Pope.

AKEL's own campaigns in the past two decades whose established strategy was well beyond identifying solely with the workers and the lower classes. It extended its appeal, as Adam Przeworski says, by promising to struggle “not for objectives specific to workers as a collectivity – those that constitute the public goods for workers as a class – but only those which workers share as individuals with members of other classes. Workers were thus not mobilised as ‘workers’ but as ‘consumers’, ‘taxpayers’, ‘rural’ or ‘urban dwellers’, ‘parents’, ‘the poor’, ‘the people’, etc” (Przeworski, 1980, p. 43).¹³

The projected strong points of Kasoulides were his anti-partitocratic mentality, his Europeanist profile and in direct relation to these, his connections and appeal to European leaders that could assist in the negotiations of the Cyprus problem.¹⁴ Papadopoulos' campaign underlined that he was ‘a choice of trust’ and gave immense emphasis on his Cyprus problem policy and its achievements (for example by publicising a 17-page booklet focused on this issue and more specifically the Annan Plan – see Papadopoulos, 2008). To defend arguments about Papadopoulos' bad reputation in Europe, his team prepared a course of reminders, including the successful, unanimous decision of the European Council to impose measures against Turkey due to its denial to fulfil its obligations *vis a vis* the Republic of Cyprus and the many exchanged visits between Cyprus and other EU member countries.

With regard to internal governance, Papadopoulos was advertised as a man who keeps his promises (e.g. the slogan ‘we said it, we did it’). As a senior figure of the Papadopoulos campaign team said “(our) campaign was anchored in the positive advertising of the government's achievements”; examples of such achievements were “the successful induction of Cyprus into the Eurozone, the good state of the economy (with a budget surplus), high social services and the establishment of the ‘Citizen Services Centre’ (email correspondence, January 2009). There was very limited focus on negative advertising of its competitors' positions and past. With regard to the Christofias candidacy especially, the Papadopoulos team appeared very respectful towards AKEL voters, presumably in an attempt to win over as many of them as possible and counterbalance the lack of vote consolidation that was apparent within DIKO and EDEK (Drousiotis, 2007).

On the Cyprus problem, there was apparent convergence between left and right. For instance, a major commonality between the approaches of Christofias and Kasoulides lay in blaming the incumbent President for contributing to turning the Cyprus problem, “from one of invasion and occupation against the Cypriot people, to an issue of Turkish-Cypriot isolation”. Naturally, neither Christofias nor Kasoulides followed the tactic of glorifying past policy choices. In this vein, the overturning of Papadopoulos' lead in the election race was attempted through transcending the

13 Przeworski's (1980) thesis is pre-occupied with tactics and rhetoric employed by socialist parties in expanding their class focus. What seems to be true for the socialist parties of the 1980s is still a relevant point for AKEL, as a self labelled Marxist-Leninist party.

14 See, for example, his introductory remarks in his speech at the official electoral congress of DISY (*Simerini*, 2008). On the EU issue, Kasoulides was consistently ranked first among the three candidates (RIK, 2008; ANTI, 2008).

Yes/No divide of the Annan Plan that gave Papadopoulos the upper hand by the nature of the referendum's result.¹⁵

Common ground with AKEL led DISY to simultaneously hint at possible support for Christofias in case of defeat in the first round; nevertheless, this was not based on an official party decision and can be interpreted as a strategic move to portray the Kasoulides side as primarily interested in the common supra-partisan, good. By extension, DISY's strategy involved more intense criticism against Papadopoulos, rather than Christofias.¹⁶ According to two Kasoulides' campaign team members, this strategy was based on a three-fold logic: firstly, DISY's ultimate and projected goal was to oust Papadopoulos from government; secondly, he was an easier target; and thirdly, undermining the incumbent on the Cyprus problem consequently damaged Christofias who supported him for four years (phone interview, 5 December 2008; interview, 27 March, 2009).

Programmatically, there continued a concurrent deep-rooted ideological differentiation, characteristic of parliamentary elections. In economic policy, this differentiation was less so, but Christofias' differences with Kasoulides were also those which essentially separated their respective parties' groups in the European Parliament. Indicatively, Christofias supported the Cost of Living Allowance (COLA or ATA) and paid significant attention to industrial policy where it was argued that a balance should be sought between the secondary and tertiary industries. The main difference with the rhetoric of the Kasoulides programme was the emphasis on an 'anthropocentric' (and not market oriented) economic policy; a multi-sided and multi-level policy of higher social spending; and a 'mixed economy' which incorporated the co-existence of private, public and cooperative initiatives, while reinforcing the competitiveness of the latter.¹⁷ Kasoulides focused on a small and flexible state, plus market competition and high-skilled workers, and appeared encouraging on the prospects of investing the reserves of the Social Security Fund. At the same time, certain programmatic positions of DISY were not included in Kasoulides' programme. Indicatively, the division of capital in semi-governmental organisations in shares was dropped, in agreement with the party (interview, 20 April 2009) – arguably, an ideological part of DISY's proposals, existing since 2003.

As expected the left-right cleavage on social policy was clearer with Christofias proposing a number of state provisions (for single-mothers and low-income pensioners, plus an Easter state provision on a permanent basis and provisions to student-members of multi-member families) and

15 According to surveys, Papadopoulos was judged to be more acceptable, in comparison to the other two candidates, regarding policy on the Cyprus problem (RIK, 2008; 2007).

16 The '133 + 1 points' (essentially alleged loop holes in Papadopoulos' policies), crafted by Kasoulides' campaigners is a good example (Kasoulides, 2008b).

17 The term 'mixed economy', unlike in most other European countries where it is a shared term, is tied in Cypriot political life to the tradition of AKEL and thereby it can serve, more easily than elsewhere, as a campaign catchword. Similarly, the term 'anthropocentric' is used in the fashion of image merchandising and has a long tradition in AKEL's rhetoric under Christofias.

a stop to neo-liberal policies including the abandonment of the policy for the extension of the retirement age and the reduction in working time – without a decrease in wages – as a means to fight unemployment (Christofias, 2008, pp. 60-67). Kasoulides' social provision policies were substantially more limited in extent, yet considerable in regard to the variety of under-privileged social groups targeted. His proposed provisions for assistance in relation to the first residence of people were constrained by conditions such as membership in a multi-member family and an annual family income of no more than €18,000. These were cross cut by flexibility arguments for young employees, and the reliance on companies for the provision of certain benefits and the promotion of life-long learning (Kasoulides, 2008, p. 68).

Papadopoulos' social policy proposals can be seen as marginally on the left side of the political spectrum but limited in ideological analysis. In general, Papadopoulos called for a rise in basic and lower pensions, provisions for dependents, new couples, the disabled, soldiers, and multi-member families. The incorporation of specific amounts and numbers in all of the intended social provisions was projected as an indication of the responsible governance of Papadopoulos and it was argued that his proposals were the only ones that had undergone costing (interview, 7 February 2009).

Towards the end of 2007, Papadopoulos' candidacy appeared less secure. Considering that it was being increasingly delegitimised, it is logical to assume that the extensive social benefits announced by the government in the final months of 2007 were aimed at driving economic outcomes that voters would find desirable. According to the most widely used models, the degree to which the incumbent manipulates the economy should be negatively correlated with its political security going into the election (Schultz, 1995). Firstly, a third package of social cohesion, worth €114 million and affecting more than 100,000 citizens, was announced in July. Secondly, a series of social policy measures was successively passed by the Ministerial Council between October and December of 2007. These included the expansion of motherhood benefits, various lump sums to pensioners, an increase in child benefits for multi-member families, a decrease in the consumption tax of heating oil, and assistance to quadriplegics and enclaved persons. Thirdly, the 2007 budget as approved by the Ministerial Council – now composed of Ministers from DIKO, EDEK and EVROKO – involved an 11% increase in social spending as well as a reallocation of most spending money to those ministries related with social policies (Ministry of Finance, 2007).

The EU issue was dealt with in the most strategic of manners, especially by AKEL. For the secretary of a party with clearly radical positions on the current shape of the EU's political character, as well as a recently established organisational mechanism to assist in the formulation and dissemination of AKEL's policy on the EU, the focus on the EU was limited in radicalism and reduced to declaring an insistence on the prevention of anti-popular, neo-liberal and conservative policies. The focus, therefore, was on the candidate government's proposed utilisation of EU membership to fix the domestic problems, rather than on its determination (as declared by AKEL in the last European election) to contribute to the overall change in the EU's existing policies or challenge the EU's leading circles (see AKEL, 2004, introduction). Christofias'

disadvantage can be illustrated in his electoral programme – in contrast to that of Kasoulides – by the absence of references to developments in EU policies or the character of recent Treaties.

AKEL, rather than attacking DISY's strong front or protracting its deeply-rooted disagreements on EU Treaties, mainly concentrated on defending its general European policy (not so much its own specific positions) and branding the Kasoulides and DISY voting patterns in the European Parliament as socially insensitive and contradictive to their intended appeal.

Kasoulides' ongoing term as an MEP did provide him with the benefit of knowing and pointing out certain procedural lacunae, concerning the presence of Cyprus in Brussels that in turn addressed proposals, i.e. the upgrade of the Cypriot permanent representation in Brussels, its links with Cypriot MEPs, and the projection of clear positions on behalf of the government on issues like the reform of the 'Common Agricultural Policy' and Community funding (Kasoulides, 2008, pp. 14-16).

Despite the fact that Cypriot politicians have grown much more aware of European affairs and developments, in addition to developing their expertise on the impact of the EU on Cyprus (see Katsourides, 2003), the discussion on Europe, while labelled a fundamental issue, did not reach high levels of sophisticated argument, but primarily served as a complementary subject to that of the Cyprus problem, and remained entrenched in left-right polemics. This may be ascribed to Kasoulides' team for generalising and beautifying a pro-European attitude and to Christofias' fear of raising suspicions about Eurosceptic tendencies.¹⁸

In the past, DIKO had managed to elect its own candidate thrice without heavy organisational work, and again it constituted only one supporting part of the centre's (and its former leader's) candidacy, which relied also on the active support of EDEK and EVROKO, as well as on the President's own circle of friends that his government brought to power (see Christophorou, 2008b, p. 222). The social democratic EDEK's main strategy was one of full alignment alongside the position of Papadopoulos, with the aim of eventually becoming a key government player in the event of a win; especially as AKEL had left the coalition. Perhaps for the first time, EDEK had a much better reason and a clearly planned benefit by standing decisively against AKEL in the presidential election, than simply its (former leader Vassos Lissarides') strategy of invariable hostility. Yet, in this election – as in previous ones where Lissarides was no longer party leader – it can be said that a sceptical attitude towards AKEL appears to have been a constant attempt to prevent close identification with, and subsequently 'vote stealing' by, the communists.

From the perspective of an actor-centred model, three campaigns were interacting with five parties; a reciprocal action that ran smoothly only in the case of AKEL, where the campaign team was organically linked to the party. The Papadopoulos central campaign and the internal tensions it was facing due to conflicts between the coordinator and the party leaderships, as well as the

18 In every single interview Christofias gave, as a candidate for the presidency, he was asked about allegations against AKEL being a Eurosceptic party.

decision of the campaign to accord overt emphasis on the ‘hard No’ aspect (which the results showed to be based on a misreading of the 76% ‘No’ to the Annan Plan; see later), were directly related to each supporting unit’s input in the campaign. Indicatively, the appointment of Giorgos Lillikas (former AKEL minister and MP) as head of the Papadopoulos team did not find DIKO in agreement, because fundamentally, as one senior figure put it, “(we considered) Lillikas to be a cause of cohesion of AKEL voters around Christofias” (interview, 15 April 2009). After a discussion which lasted throughout the Christmas holiday period, Lillikas’ role was later shared between four representatives (Lillikas himself, and one representative from each of the following: DIKO, EDEK and EVROKO). Furthermore, AKEL, according to the above DIKO senior figure, traced this weakness and focused on it by referring to the Papadopoulos candidacy through the name of Giorgos Lillikas. In general, as suggested by a statement later issued by the party, there was an intense belief in DIKO that it should have played a more prominent part in the campaign (Chatzicostas, 2008).

In the Papadopoulos campaign, what was also witnessed – on the basis of the polls – was a ‘complacency effect’. The specific tactic looked beyond the first round, thinking that its ‘real challenge’ was to achieve a head start in the formation of second round partnerships. According to a senior figure of DIKO and the Papadopoulos campaign team, “this issue was never put on the table”. Even more important, however, is the fact that within the Papadopoulos camp, full trust of the polls undertaken seemed to exist: “even on the night of the election, on our way to TV stations, we were told that we were in the lead” (interview, 15 April 2009). Considering that this specific election was intensely over-pollled with more than fifty polls taking place over 9 months and all showing that Papadopoulos was in the lead, the worry about possibly not going through to the second round became a detail that was overlooked amidst other procedural problems that were emerging during the campaign.

Similarly, the case of the Kasoulides campaign itself showed that the programmatic party competition evident in the country’s parliamentary election was largely submersed in personalised politics. The dynamics between the Kasoulides campaign and DISY involved the DISY Chairman, Nicos Anastasiades, being accused of undermining the Kasoulides candidacy on various occasions by writing him off and working for the Christofias candidacy even prior to the first round. Nevertheless, beyond this, the Kasoulides campaign team ran parallel to the mobilisation of DISY until Christmas, “when the two were eventually unified” (interview, 27 March 2009). Numerically speaking, more non-partisans were involved in projecting Kasoulides than in the other two campaigns. Indeed, his campaign’s initial momentum was arguably established on the borderline – if not outside – of DISY’s sphere of influence with the social movement of KYPROS 21 [CYPRUS 21], and played a major part in both the organisation of the campaign and the construction of the election programme.¹⁹

19 Members of KYPROS 21 participated in the various committees, which drafted Kasoulides’ electoral programme.

Second Round

On 18 February 2008, after the exclusion of incumbent president, Tassos Papadopoulos, there was an immediate adjustment on behalf of the two remaining candidates and their teams (Christofias and Kasoulides). Such adjustment primarily involved bargaining between each candidate and DIKO. Characteristic of the situation are the words of a Kasoulides' campaign team member: "On the night of the first round, there was a phone call, which started with 'when are we going to meet', rather than with, 'are we going to meet at all?'" (interview, 27 March 2009).

The two candidates became more accommodating towards DIKO and EDEK, in terms of reassurances on the Cyprus problem policy and of ministry promises. As contrary as this may appear towards the image and propaganda of an anti-partitocratic campaign, Kasoulides' rewards – according to both newspaper reports of the time and interviewees from DIKO and DISY – were bigger than those offered by Christofias and AKEL (Drousiotis, 2008; interview, 27 March 2009; interview 15 April 2009). EDEK chose Christofias immediately after the first round and within three days, DIKO and the small green party 'Ecologists/Environmentalists', although more divided, vowed support for Christofias as well.

Once Papadopoulos was out of the race, EDEK's immediate decision to support Christofias implied a strategy crafted before the first round results.²⁰ An interviewee from EDEK was explicit that such a direction, "although not officially decided, was given by the leadership since September 2008" (interview, 23 April 2009). More importantly, beyond the assumption that EDEK's decision was pre-determined, two main scenarios can be contemplated in regard to the strategic thinking behind it. Firstly, that any identification with DISY (even through abstention), would prove damaging in terms of membership discipline. Secondly, that more consistency in relation to the party's label as a left party obliged EDEK's leadership to support 'the B Plan' that was programmatically and ideologically closest to its own positions.

The decision of DIKO to support Christofias in the second round was one of the most important events of the whole campaign. DIKO appeared deeply unsure over what AKEL had been doing for the centre for decades. There was a preliminary decision by the General Secretariat of the party to support Kasoulides which was then overturned. The reasons behind the shift may be difficult to disentangle from other considerations at the time and more historical factors. Nevertheless, interviewees from DIKO confirmed what a series of newspaper articles argued: that the overturning of the initial decision was largely due to the fact that, DIKO officials known to be aligned with Tassos Papadopoulos, eventually supported Christofias. In the words of a DIKO figure and Tassos Papadopoulos campaign team member, "our primary concern was for the candidate whom we supported to be elected ... if Tassos was to vote for Christofias, then what would we do ... the party would be split" (interview, 15 April 2009). Surveys, according to the same

20 After a unanimous vote in EDEK's Political Bureau, the Central Committee voted in favour of the Christofias candidacy; with 109 members voting in favour, five voting against, and two abstaining.

interviewee, did play a role as they showed that two-thirds of DIKO's voters had already chosen one of the two candidates, leaving one-third to be determined by the party. The result was that even those officials initially suggesting Kasoulides, preferred to maintain unity and ally with the candidate who seemed more electable in terms of the dynamic he was able to secure from DIKO voters.

The second round campaign soon took shape on existing and agreed patterns of cooperation with only EVROKO giving its voters the choice of 'voting according to will'. In the absence of an up-to-date performance for either candidate (unlike in the case of the incumbent) it was attempted to affect voters' evaluations based on long-term partisan and ideological predispositions and the cues provided by party leaders (see Butt, 2006). The week before the second round saw a very antagonistic climate between the left and right at party, media and especially support base level (e.g. via emails and telephone messages). Moreover, it was largely representatives of the campaigns who took part in the debates, rather than people with the sole authority of the party figure.

Since both candidates supported a fast, effective and flexible solution to the Cyprus problem, this issue remained silent in the second round. This fact echoes the claim that either both candidates were hesitant to repeat pro-flexibility arguments on the Cyprus problem in the face of having to secure the support of 'rejectionist' or 'sceptical' voters from the centre. It was the first time that political competition – as shaped in the post-Annan Plan period – led to a de-specification of this matter. Rather, it was substituted by noise around its cleavage-based connotations; that is, patriotism versus nationalism, 'Greekness' versus 'Cypriotness' and 'proper flexibility' versus 'Turkish-friendly approaches'.

Left-right antagonism was reflected in more than one issue parameter of political competition but it was especially DISY's approach which was anchored in a wholly ideological front since numerically it was lacking the support that Christofias had secured from EDEK and DIKO. It was estimated, according to interviewees, that EDEK's and EVROKO's official support would not determine the result as cohesion levels in these two parties were not high enough (interview, 27 March 2009). It was, therefore, DIKO's 'casting vote' that the Kasoulides campaign team targeted in the second round, which may partly explain the choice of issues that were emphasised during this short period.

First and foremost was the issue of educational reform where Christofias proposed a reorientation "of education away from ethnocentrism and towards the multi-cultural conception of the world and the respect of others" (Christofias, 2008, pp. 81 and 83) and argued that his government would eventually change the mentality of education and especially re-evaluate the content of history textbooks.²¹ The second (almost twin but non-policy) issue was that of

21 Educational reform as such was not a new issue or one addressed by Christofias alone. On the whole it involves non-political changes as well. Presumably, such statements could serve as an excuse for AKEL's four-year support of the President.

Christian orthodoxy and the church's role. During the second week, the Kasoulides team undermined the Christian beliefs of AKEL and Christofias and urged the Archbishop to support Kasoulides (*Phileleftheros*, 2008).

The third main issue of the second week was the European Union, especially the fact that AKEL is a member of only a small grouping in the European Parliament (GUE/NGL). From this a case was made to discredit other aspects of Christofias' programme such as his proposed attempt to secure the backing of EU elite circles for his Cyprus problem policy. In the space separating the first and second rounds a difference in strategies would likely be anticipated between those of DISY against the European policy of Papadopoulos and against the European policy of Christofias. Damaging reputations through accusations on badly handled relations turned into a more ideological discrediting of insufficient relations and ideology-based outsider behaviour; the latter is anchored to an established inter-party competition issue (for examples, see *Simerini*, 2008b; *Simerini*, 2008c; *Simerini*, 2008d).

In all three of the issues above and despite the partly supra-partisan label of the appeal of each side, campaigning in favour of specific platforms went hand in hand with targeting voters of a particular social identity. Political competition was conducive to cleavage-based polemics, even if it did not spawn them consciously. Polemics on these three dimensions included appeals to groups traditionally opposing each other in society. At the same time, however, the three issues mainly originate from the left-right cleavage – unlike in other European countries whereby distinct cleavages are formed over them – but also transcend them in contemporary Cypriot politics. Education reform and the content of history books is a sensitive matter for centre-right and rightist voters, and for movements and parties who connect it to their broader ideological values of ethno-centrism and nationalism. Similarly, religion and the church are subjects which touch upon a large number of Cypriots and while they cut across partisan orientations, church-state and left-right divisions are highly connected (see Panayiotou, 1999, pp. 564-574). From the mid-1990s Europe has been employed as a strategic electoral weapon by all the main parties, yet a Eurosceptic/Euroenthusiast divide has existed between left and right for decades, with the former being supportive of cooperation with the USSR, until this was not an option.

The contention of three interviewees from the Kasoulides campaign team that “there was a lack of coordination between the DISY leadership and the Kasoulides' team” (although a different degree was ascribed by each) is indicative of DISY's potentially more reserved attitude, had it been able to guide the campaign through a mechanism exclusively appointed and controlled by the party (phone interview, 5 December, 2008; interview, 27 March 2009; interview, 20 April 2009).²²

22 DISY leader, Nicos Anastasiades did not make a TV appearance between the first and second rounds.

Analysis of the Outcome and its Determinants

Table 1 (p. 114) presents the results of the two election rounds. Kasoulides was the winner of the first round and Christofias of the overall election. Papadopoulos left the race early and against all poll predictions.²³ Despite the significance of the election, the abstention level was high in both rounds and actually increased slightly between the two rounds. From the Papadopoulos voters only 9% abstained in the second round, while most first-round non-voters were followed by second-round abstentions (Sigma, 2008). Considering that the electoral behaviour of the first-round losers was homogeneous enough to determine the result, there can be no objection to the fact that the eventual win of one candidate over another was determined by, and susceptible to, electoral alliances decided upon within a week. An electoral agreement of a different form or composition must be considered as enough to change the final result.

The second round difference between Christofias and Kasoulides was 7%. Although Christofias was the undisputed winner, when each candidate's final results are compared against the vote share of his supporting parties (table 1, third column) it is evident that it was Kasoulides who managed to surpass his partisan following more comfortably. He also secured the biggest percentage of those voters who formed their preference in the last week and month before the election (Sigma, 2008), although the indecisive vote was not homogeneous enough to affect the final result.

AKEL has always been viewed the most cohesive party. Its long-term consolidation vote suggests that it is more successful than other parties in winning long-term loyalty by instilling in its supporters a political identity which expresses the party's side in the country's cleavage structure. Therefore, a response to the question, 'How does one explain Christofias' win?' must be historical in nature. Surely, as Christophorou (2008b) suggests, a fundamental assumption, as developed by Panebianco (1988), is that parties' successes and failures "can be explained by the course they follow to establish themselves and gain legitimacy, as well as their capacity to adapt to changes in society". This has been illustrated by AKEL's continued electoral success and once again confirmed by the tactic employed during the last election (also see Charalambous, 2007). At the same time, it is still justifiable to focus equally on the conditions that shape the tactics of each party to begin with.

The context itself may yield unsolvable dilemmas or offer the opportunity for unconventional differentiation during the process of dealing with the doubts in question. Therefore, beyond an analysis of electoral tactics and election dynamics, the elaboration on Christofias' win can constructively begin with larger questions: would the first communist president ever be elected in the EU, if Cypriot cleavages and their manifestations had not been different to those in the rest of the EU? Had the Cyprus problem or the bi-communal history of Cyprus been absent from the island, would Christofias, and by extension AKEL, be as successful, electorally?

23 An informative website posting all relevant public opinion polls is [<http://www.cypriuselections.org>].

**Table 1: Results of Presidential Elections
(three main candidates/in percentages)**

Candidate	1st Round Result	Difference from supporting parties' vote share (in 2006)	2nd Round Result
Christofias	33.3	0.4	53.4
Kasoulides	33.5	1.1	46.6
Papadopoulos	31.8	-2.9	N/A

Source: Own compilation of data from Sigma (2008) and data provided by Christophoros Christophorou.

Notes: For first round – Abstentions: 10.4%; Invalid: 1.7%; Blank: 1.0%.

For second round – Abstentions: 9.2%; Invalid: 2.3%; Blank: 1.7%

For Christofias the supporting parties of the first round were: AKEL and EDH and for the second round were: AKEL, EDH, DIKO, EDEK and Ecologists/Environmentalists.

For Papadopoulos the (first round) supporting parties were: EDEK, DIKO, Ecologists and EVROKO.

For Kasoulides the supporting parties in both rounds were: DISY, KEP and EVRODH.

Another important question, inextricably related to the Cypriot incumbent government's ability to maintain its advantage is how do the detailed results reveal the reasons behind the defeat of Papadopoulos in the first round? What – based on exit polls (table 2) – should primarily be considered as a failure for the incumbent are the divisions over the candidacy of Papadopoulos within his supporting parties and their eventual incapacity to gather the necessary momentum around their proposed entrant. To this end, the three supporting parties' and particularly EDEK's traditional lack of strong organisational capacity and dynamic mobilisation mechanisms compared with the two bigger parties, must have proven decisive. Six per cent of DIKO voters, 21% of EVROKO's voters and an amazing 26% of EDEK voters went to Christofias. The electoral behaviour of EDEK's voters in this election and their mobility towards AKEL especially must have also acted as a counter-weight to the communist party's 10% loss towards Papadopoulos. Be that as it may, EDEK's incapacity to convince its voters continued into the second round – as the Kasoulides campaign team had predicted on the basis of polls – with 26% either voting against their leadership's official endorsement or abstaining. This suggests that it was not merely due to the persona of Papadopoulos that EDEK's lack of vote consolidation arose; the greater ideological heterogeneity among EDEK's voters must not be forgotten (Hadjikyriakos and Christophorou, 1996, p. 20).

**Table 2: Cross Party/Candidate Movement in the 2008 Presidential Elections
(first round compared with 2006 vote)**

First round (Presidential Election 2008)

Parl. Elections 2006	Christofias	Kasoulides	Papadopoulos
AKEL (Christofias)	86.4 per cent	1.7 per cent	10 per cent
DISY (Kasoulides)	2.2 per cent	87.1 per cent	8 per cent
DIKO (Papadopoulos)	6.4 per cent	4.1 per cent	86.9 per cent
EDEK (Papadopoulos)	25.7 per cent	7.1 per cent	64.6 per cent
EVROKO* (Papadopoulos)	0 per cent	21.4 per cent	73.2 per cent
EDH (Christofias)	40 per cent	40 per cent	6.7 per cent
Ecologists (Papadopoulos)	39.4 per cent	29.4 per cent	35.3 per cent

Note: The figures are taken directly from the exit poll sample and do not include corrections, although these are minor.

*During the polling period, the percentage of voters who declared that they had voted for EVROKO was systematically lower than this party's actual percentage in the 2006 parliamentary election. The same phenomenon was observed in the exit poll. See later, for the methodological aspect of this issue.

Source: Sigma (2008)-European University Cyprus/own compilation – the sample of this exit poll was 2163 people.

In addition to organisational inadequacies, there have arisen academic claims about a faulty methodology in electoral surveying, later reinforced by the substantial difference of the final results from all pre-electoral surveys conducted. Although all surveys incorporated a 2.5%-3.5% statistical fault – essentially bigger than the difference between the first and the second candidate – their average result is much different than that of the final election. According to mathematician Giorgos Smirlis (2008), the surveys portrayed an exaggerated result for Papadopoulos and an underestimated one for Kasoulides because of: non-representative sampling (as it was mostly housewives responding to the phone surveys); a faulty response by those voters in favour of a candidate other than the one supported by their own party (in this case, Papadopoulos' overestimation was caused mostly by EVROKO voters); the omission of the vote from abroad; and a faulty response of citizens who were afraid to express their intention to vote a non-incumbent. Considering the lead that Papadopoulos had in all surveys, Smirlis' argument that a 'bandwagon effect' may have been set off is more than reasonable. The incumbent's failure to reach the second round is then of even greater significance because in the absence of a 'bandwagon effect' the so called 'soft vote', might plausibly have chosen another candidate and Papadopoulos' final

result might, therefore, have been even smaller; or, the strategy of his campaign might have changed.

Furthermore, the bipolarity of the electoral body was also reconfirmed in the election. In the first round, Christofias and Kasoulides lost around 2.0% to each other compared to the 2006 parliamentary election (table 2). In the interval between the first and second rounds, the movement of these two candidates was a minor 1.5% from Christofias to Kasoulides and vice versa 2.5% (Sigma, 2008). When these two figures are compounded, a very small section of the electorate, voting for one of the two polls can be thought to be unconstrained by its side on the left-right cleavage or their party-political preference. The system's electoral logic thus continues to be reconfirmed by the larger, systemic consequences of the vote. DISY was the party most harmed by the political developments of the post-referendum period. Thereafter, its successful replacement of historic leader and permanent candidate for the presidency Glafkos Clerides, with someone who proved equally capable of running against the organisational power of AKEL and an incumbent government which had at its disposal various clientelistic mechanisms, was tantamount to passing a crucial electoral test.

EVROKO's move of not dictating a choice to its voters in the second round did not deter the crashing majority of its voters from positioning themselves against the communist candidate. Only 15% of EVROKO's voters seem to have abstained while 71.1% chose Kasoulides (table 2). In spite of the recent divides within the Cypriot right, the element of bipolarity is, therefore, not diluted. Additionally, the actual result of the first round inhibited the attempt of EVROKO's leadership to establish a strong partisan identity.

Lastly, one paradox related to the Cyprus problem deserves to be highlighted. Considering on the one hand the positions and especially the rhetoric of EDEK and DIKO in the 2004 referendum and beyond, and on the other hand AKEL's distinctive stance as a supporter of the 'soft no', it may appear as a paradox that all three parties lost a substantial number of their votes to a candidate who represents a clearly different position from their own on the Cyprus problem. A logical hypothesis would be that the approach of EDEK, DIKO and AKEL on the Cyprus issue did not impose a constraint on their voters. A version of this hypothesis was empirically tested by Webster (2005), who reports that political party preference plays no apparent role in conditioning preferences for a structure to a solution: "It seems that, despite all the differences that the parties have regarding the Annan Plan and various other political issues, these play no role in conditioning the preferences for a solution among supporters". According to the exit-polls, Papadopoulos was voted by only 40% of 'No' voters in the Annan Plan referendum and 5% of the 'Yes', Christofias by 35% of 'No' voters and 34% of 'Yes' voters and Kasoulides by 24% of 'No' voters and 62% of 'Yes' (Konstantinides, 2008). Votes in the presidential election seem to be equally, if not mostly, conditioned by partisan and/or ideological identity (which may be partly fed by a culture of party patronage/clientelism) rather than by the Cyprus problem policy of each candidate.

Conclusions

The most important feature of this election was the win of the Communist party candidate, (although more than one passing investigator has doubted the 'communism' in AKEL's practice) (Dunphy and Bale, 2007; March and Mudde, 2005). And while the prevailing pattern of partial alternation continues – that is, one party holding the presidency each time, but previous office holders/supporters retaining control over ministries and parliament – the fact that a new party (AKEL) arrived in presidential office, leads to the expectation that change in the structure of political competition will be more easily observed (Mair, 2006, p. 66).

Nonetheless, the election itself (that is the campaigns, party tactics and factors that conditioned the results) followed a pattern that is by now distinctly familiar. In the light of a systemic contest and negotiation mentality, there is a good case to be made that a somewhat different background context did not produce a type of electoral competition that deviates from the Cypriot norm. Four main attributes that the literature on Cypriot politics (see, especially Mavratsas, 2003, pp. 148-188) ascribes to a Greek-Cypriot 'corporatist' culture, are reconfirmed in this election.

Firstly, sharing the spoils of governmental power as reflected in post-first round negotiations seemed to be the main and natural driver in managing the second round. More broadly, all parties seem to have made their decision based on their future as a collectivity, rather than on the perceived ideological proximity towards one of the candidates, notwithstanding signs of internal fragmentation on a personal basis. Overall, the election result was effectively determined by DIKO's stance in the second round, which was decided upon a rationale of ensuring the electability of the candidate to be supported, together with maintaining relative unity. In retrospect the election of Christofias to presidential office was not so surprising, once the inter- and intra-party politics are accounted for.

The debates characteristically involved mostly polemics, and each candidate's strategy, rather than focusing on ideological differences, focused on its natural enemies as conceived according to each phase of the campaign. Concurrently, the new government carried forward the tradition of basing an alliance on power sharing and not ideology and policies, with agreement existing so far on only general concerns and vague promises (also see Christophorou, 2008b, p. 228). The autonomy of Christofias, like that of the Presidents before him, is not, therefore, only constitutional but political as well. Indeed, this was repeated by AKEL during the period leading to the second round, presumably in an attempt to minimise the fear that EDEK and DIKO would interfere and dilute the 'significant change' component that compelled Christofias (see Koulermou, 2008). Certainly, the de-emphasis (even omission) of certain programmatic party positions and images of broad appeal were chief elements, useful both for votes and coalition building. Still, the fact that Christofias' electoral programme (not least his proposals for education reform and his party's diachronic stance on the Cyprus problem and rapprochement with the Turkish Cypriots) was markedly different from the policies favoured by DIKO and EDEK, showed once more that the

divide between the ideologies of left and centre is one easily surpassed through the distribution of executive posts.

The election result confirms that electoral behaviour remains deeply bi-polar and that an incumbent president's relative advantage in popularity can be overturned when left and right mobilise to the full. Cyprus problem policy continues to be an indicator of voting preferences but the Annan Plan's divisions have been less influential than expected, not least because two out of the three candidates running for office aimed at transcending this divide. A further erasing of the recent tri-polarity created by the Annan Plan referendum is to be expected in the inter-electoral periods, certainly at the political level and insofar as a similar Plan does not emerge in the near future.

That left and right competed against each other in a presidential election impacted for the first time on their respective parties' antagonism – or more broadly speaking, the left-right axis' topicality in the Cypriot political landscape. The candidacy of Christofias and the successful progression of both him and Kasoulides to the second round contributed to the re-elevation of the left-right cleavage, bringing all its accompanying sub-divisions (e.g. between church and state) to the surface of political contestation. Thus, the ensuing post-election period, where DISY had been softer in its opposition against the Christofias government could not appear in clearer contrast to the atmosphere of the election's second round.

The centre parties, as in 1988 and 1993, competed against both other power poles and this has naturally brought into question their organisational capacities. Clear indications are the losses of both DIKO and EDEK to Christofias and Kasoulides, the internal confusion at leadership level, and the self-acknowledgement of insufficient coordination. As a result of the election, the most evident change in the political landscape is that the centre was slightly weakened. Post-election surveys presented an increasingly bi-polar party system, with AKEL and DISY increasing their popularity. DIKO and EDEK initially appeared to be losing votes to the two bigger parties (GPO, 2008) and EVROKO, which has also suffered losses, has been calling for a united front with one or both of the centre parties in an attempt to supersede the evident bi-polarity. These events, in addition to the approaching European election of June 2009, appear to be currently stimulating the desire for constant differentiation from both the government and DISY. Electorally, the system may thus be thought to be returning to the textbook bipolarity evident from parliamentary elections, while a competitive and fragmenting climate, is also surfacing again.

Appendix

Interviews

A series of interviews (regular, telephone and via email) with presidential campaign team members, senior party officials and pollsters were conducted. All interviews (except those conducted via email correspondence) were semi-structured.

- a) Member of AKEL Central Committee and Member of Christofias Presidential Campaign, 25 October 2008 (telephone interview).
 - b) Senior AKEL Figure and Senior Member of Christofias Presidential Campaign Team, 27 February 2009 (interview).
 - c) Senior DIKO Figure and Senior Member of Tassos Papadopoulos Presidential Campaign Team, 15 April 2009 (interview).
 - d) Senior Figure of Tassos Papadopoulos Presidential Campaign Team, 7 January 2009 and 29 March 2009 (email correspondence followed by telephone interview).
 - e) Senior DISY Figure and Senior Member of Ioannis Kasoulides Presidential Campaign Team, 20 April 2009 (interview).
 - f) Senior Member of Ioannis Kasoulides Presidential Campaign Team, 20 March 2009 (interview).
 - g) Member of DISY Senior Council and Member of Kasoulides Presidential Campaign Team, 20 December 2008 (telephone interview).
 - h) Senior EDEK Figure and Senior member of Tassos Papadopoulos Presidential Campaign Team, 23 April 2009 (interview).
 - i) Representative of CYMAR Research, 10 April 2009 (email correspondence).
 - j) Representative of CyproNetworks Research, 23 March 2009 and 24 April 2009 (email correspondence followed by interview).
-

Bibliography

Secondary Sources

- Andina Diaz, A. (2009) 'Media Bias and Electoral Competition', *Investigaciones Economicas*, forthcoming.
- Bosco, A. and Morlino, L. (2006) 'What Changes in South European Parties? A Comparative Introduction', *South European Society and Politics*, Vol. 11, Iss. 3, pp. 331-358.
- Butt, S. (2006) 'How Voters Evaluate Economic Competence: A Comparison between Parties In and Out of Power 2006', *Political Studies*, Vol. 54, pp. 743-766.
- Caramani, D. (2006) 'Is there a European Electorate and What Does it Look Like? Evidence from Electoral Volatility Measures, 1976-2004', *West European Politics*, Vol. 29, No.1, pp. 1-27.
- Charalambous, G. (2007) 'The Strongest Communists in Europe: Accounting for AKEL's Electoral Success', *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, Vol. 23, No. 3, pp. 425-456.
- (2008) 'The House of Representatives' in Faustmann, H. and Ker-Lindsay, J. (eds), *The Politics and Government of Cyprus*. Oxford: Peter Lange, pp. 143-168.
- Christophorou, C. (2006) 'Party Change and Development in Cyprus (1995-2005)', *South European Society and Politics*, Vol. 11, Iss. 3, pp. 513-542.
- (2008) 'The Evolution of Greek Cypriot Party Politics', in Faustmann, H and J. Ker-Lindsay, *The Politics and Government of Cyprus*. Oxford: Peter Lange, pp. 83-106.
- (2008b) 'A New Communist Surprise – What's Next? Presidential Elections in the Republic of Cyprus, February 2008', *South European Society and Politics*, Vol. 13, No. 2, pp. 217-235.
- Dunphy, R. and Bale, T. (2007) 'Red Flag Still Flying? Explaining AKEL – Cyprus Communist Anomaly', *Party Politics*, Vol. 13, No. 3, pp. 287-304.

- Faustmann, H. (2008) 'Aspects of Political Culture in Cyprus' in Faustmann, H. and Ker-Lindsay, J. (eds.), *The Politics and Government of Cyprus*. Oxford: Peter Lange, pp. 17-44.
- Hadjikyriakos, A. and Christophorou, C. (1996) *Vouleftikes: Istoria Arith oi Analisi* [Parliamentary Elections: History, Numbers, Analysis]. Nicosia: Intercollege.
- Ierodiakonou, L. (2003) *Tethlasmeni Poria – Kypros 1959-2003, Politiko Systhma, Politikoi Thesmi, Diadromi Ekdhmokratismos* [A Zigzag Course – Cyprus 1959-2003, Political System, Political Institutions, Democratization Process], Nicosia: Alithia.
- Ioannou, G. (2008) 'Beyond the Cypriot No: An Examination of its Rationale and a Vision of its Transcendence', Paper presented at the Conference entitled: *Rethinking Reconciliation and Cooperation with View to Reunification in Cyprus: Challenges for Citizens, Political and Social Actors*, University of Nicosia, 21 June 2008.
- Katsourides, G. (2003) 'Europeanisation and Political Parties in Accession Countries: The Political Parties of Cyprus', Paper presented for the EpsNet Plenary Conference.
- Ker-Lindsay, J. (2006) 'Presidential Power and Authority in the Republic of Cyprus', *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 1362-1395.
- Koulermou, N. (2008) 'Polos Enotitas: Nea Dinamiki Meta kai ti Stiriksi ton Kommaton DIKO kai EDEK' [Pole of Unity: New Dynamic After the Support of DIKO and EDEK], *Haravgi*, 21 February 2008.
- Mair, P. (2006) 'Party System Change' in Katz, R.S. and Crotty, W. *Handbook of Party Politics*. London: SAGE, pp. 63-74.
- March, L. and Mudde, C. (2005) 'What's Left of the Radical Left? The European Radical Left after 1989: Decline and Mutation', *Comparative European Politics*, No. 3, pp. 23-49.
- Mavratsas, C. (2003) *Ethniki Omopsichia kai Politiki Omofonia: H Atrofia tis Ellinokipriakis Koinonias ton Politon stis Aparches tou 21ou Aiona* [National Unanimity and Political Consensus: The Atrophy of Greek-Cypriot Civil Society at the Dawn of the 21st Century]. Athens: Katarti.
- Muller, W.C. and Strom, K. (1999) *Policy, Office, Votes: How Political Parties Make Hard Decisions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Panagopoulos, C. (2006) *Pos kai Yiati Psifisan oi Kiprioi: Oi Vouleftikes Ekloges tou 2006* [How and Why the Cypriots Voted: The Parliamentary Elections of 2006]. Nicosia: Cyprus College.
- Panayiotou, A. (1999) 'Island Radicals: The Emergence and Consolidation of the Cypriot Left, 1920-60'. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of California, Santa Cruz.
- Panebianco, A. (1988) *Political Parties: Organisation and Power*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Przeworski, A. (1980) 'Social Democracy as a Historical Phenomenon', *New Left Review*, Vol. 20, pp. 2-58.
- Reif, K. (1985) 'Ten Second-Order Elections' in Reif, K. *Ten European Elections*. Aldershot: Gower, pp. 1-36.
- Schultz, K. (1995) 'The Politics of the Political Business Cycle', *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 25, pp. 79-99.
- Sussman, G. (2006) 'The Referendum as an Electoral Device in National Party Politics', *Politikon*, Vol. 33, Iss. 3, pp. 259-275.
- Trimikliniotis, N. (2006) 'A Communist's Post-Modern Power Dilemma: One Step Back, Two Steps Forward, "Soft No" and Hard Choices ...', *The Cyprus Review*, Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 37-86.
- Webster, C. (2005) 'Division or Unification in Cyprus? The Role of Demographics, Attitudes and Party

Inclination on Greek Cypriot Preferences for a Solution to the Cyprus Problem', *Ethnopolitics*, Vol. 4, No. 3, pp. 299-309.

Primary Sources

- AKEL (1962) 'To Programma tou AKEL' [The Programme of AKEL] Nicosia: AKEL.
- (1996) *I Taxiki Diarthrosi tis Kipriakis Kinonias: Economikes kai Koinonikes Allages* [The Class Structure of Cypriot Society: Economic and Social Changes] Nicosia: AKEL.
- (2001) *Apofasis kai Alla Dokoumenta 19ou Synedriou AKEL* [Decisions and Other Documents of AKEL's 19th Congress] Nicosia: AKEL.
- (2002) *Lecture A: TO AKEL kai I Politiki ton Simmaxion* [AKEL and the Policy of Alliances] Nicosia: AKEL.
- (2004) *Programmatiki Diakiriksi Enopsi ton Evroeklogon 2004* [Programmatic Declaration for the European Elections 2004]. Nicosia: AKEL.
- ANTI (2008) 'Dimoskopisi – Ekloges 2008' [Poll-Elections 2008] carried out by EVRRESIS, 10 February 2008.
- Charzicostas, K. (2008) 'O Dodekalogos tis Ittas' [The Twelve Points of Defeat] *Simerini*, 21 May 2008.
- Christofias, D. (2007) '08.07.07 Omilia tou G.G tis KE AKEL Sintrofou Dimitri Christofia apo to Vima tis Ektaktis Pagkiprias Sindiaskepsis tou AKEL' [Speech of the G.S of AKEL's C.C Comrade Dimitri Christofias at the Extraordinary Pan-Cyprian Congress of AKEL], available at [<http://www.akel.org.cy>], accessed on 25 November 2008.
- (2008) *Dimitris Christofias: Programma Diakivernisis* [Dimitris Christofias: Programme of Governance]. Nicosia: Dimitris Christofias Presidential Campaign Team.
- Drousiotis, M. (2007) *Stratigiki Diemvolisis tou AKEL* [A Strategy of Penetrating AKEL], *Politis*, 29 August 2007.
- (2008) 'Olo to Paraskinio apo ton Kasoulidi ston Christofia' [The Whole of the Backstage from Kasoulides to Christofias], *Politis*, 24 February 2008.
- EurActiv (2005) 'Turkish Cypriot Expectations from the European Union', 12 October, available on [<http://www.euractiv.com/en/enlargement/turkish-cypriots-expectations-european-union/article-145687>], accessed on 10 January 2009).
- (2008) 'Cypriot Election Brings Fresh Reunification Hope', 18 February 2008, available on [<http://www.euractiv.com/en/elections/cypriot-election-brings-fresh-reunification-hope/article-170370>], accessed on 10 January 2009.
- GPO (2008) 'Survey in Cyprus' carried out on behalf of 'Haravgi' newspaper (unpublished presentation of survey results), 2 November 2008.
- Kasoulides, I. (2008) *Programma Diakivernisis Ioanni Kasoulide'* [Ioannis Kasoulides Programme of Governance]. Nicosia: Ioannis Kasoulides Presidential Campaign Team.
- (2008b) *153 + 1 Anekplirotes Iposchisis tou Tassou Papadopoulou* [153 + 1 Unfulfilled Promises of Tassos Papadopoulos], *Koinoniki Simmachia yia tin Kipro tou 21 Aiona*, 14 January 2008, available from [<http://www.kypros21.com/archives/735>], accessed on 10 January 2009.
- Konstantinides, F. (2008) 'Oliki Anatropi' (Total Inversion) *Eleftherotypia*, 18 February 2008.
- KYPE (2002) 'AKEL – Proedrikes – Ypostiriksi Ipopsifiotitas Tassou Papadopoulou' [AKEL – Presidentials Elections – Support for Tassos Papadopoulos Candidacy] 28 July 2002.
- (2007) 'Sinantisis Papadopoulou Talat' [Papadopoulos-Talat Meetings] 23 May 2007.

- (2007b) 'Christofias: Sinentefksi sto KYPE' [Christofias: Interview to KYPE] 2 August 2007.
- Ministry of Finance (2007) 'Proipologismos 2008: Parousiasi sto Ipourgiko Simvoulío' (Budget 2008: Presentation to the Ministerial Council) available from [[http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/MOF.nsf/C47AF626A7938122C2257547002D812B/\\$file/presentationBudget08_%20%CE%A5%CE%A3.pdf](http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/MOF.nsf/C47AF626A7938122C2257547002D812B/$file/presentationBudget08_%20%CE%A5%CE%A3.pdf)] accessed on 20 January, 2009.
- Moratinos, M.A. (2008) 'Tasso Papadopoulos: A Man Who Understood His People Very Well' Greek American News Agency, 17 December 2008, available on [http://www.Greekamericannewsagency.com/gana/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3929&Itemid=83], accessed on 10 January 2008.
- Papadopoulos, T. (2008) 'Gia tin Lisi pou mas Aksizi' [For the Solution we Deserve] Nicosia: Tassos Papadopoulos Campaign Team.
- Phileleftheros* (2008) 'Paraskinio apo ton Archiepiskopo' [Background from the Archbishop], 22 February 2008.
- RIK (2007) '13^o Pagkipria Erevna Politikis Koultouras kai Simperiforas' [Pan-Cyprian Survey on Political Culture and Behaviour] carried out by Public Issue and CYMAR, 25 November 2007.
- (2008) 'Dimoskopisi – Ekloges 2008' [Poll – Elections 2008] carried out by CYMAR, 26 September 2008.
- Sigma Channel (2008) 'Exit Poll' Managed by European University Cyprus, 17 and 24 February 2008.
- Simerini* (2008) 'Pagkiprio Sinedrio DISY – Anastasiades – Kasoulides' [Pan-Cyprian Congress DISY – Anastasiades – Kasoulides], 19 January 2008.
- Simerini* (2008b) 'Mavres Tripes Politikis Papadopoulou' [Black Holes in Papadopoulos' Policy] 9 February 2008.
- Simerini* (2008c) 'Vasiliou; Den ine Anti-Evropaistis' [Vasiliou? He is Not an Anti-Europeanist] 22 February 2008.
- Simerini* (2008d) 'Sofokleous: O Christofias den Theli tin Evropi' [Sofokleous: Christofias Does Not Want Europe] 21 February 2008.
- Simerini* (2008e) 'Ohi sti Sinthiki Psifizi to AKEL' [AKEL Votes No to the Treaty] 23 June 2008.
- Smirlis, G. (2008) 'Oi Adinamies ton Dimoskopiseon' [The Weaknesses of Polls], *Politis*, 14 February 2008.
- Smith, H. (2003) 'Tassos Papadopoulos: "Turk-basher" who might just reunify the country,' *The Guardian*, 17 February 2003.
- Verheugen, G. (2004) 'Statement to the European Parliament' Turkish Embassy Archives, 21 April 2004, available from [<http://www.turkishembassy.com/II/O/Cyprus>], accessed on 10 January 2008.