

AN IRREPARABLE BREAKDOWN OF TRUST: RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL AND THE GREEK CYPRIOTS BEFORE AND AFTER THE 2004 REFERENDUM

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Abstract

For most of the last forty years, the UN Secretary-General has been regarded by the Greek Cypriots as a fair and impartial intermediary in the efforts to solve the Cyprus Problem. However, a poll taken in the middle of 2005 showed that the standing of the UN Secretary-General has fallen to extremely low levels. This was a direct result of the failed effort to reunite the island in 2004 when the Greek Cypriots overwhelmingly rejected a reunification plan drawn up by the Secretary-General. This article shows that at the time of the referendum campaign a deliberate effort was mounted to discredit the UN Secretary-General as a part of a larger effort to ensure that the plan was rejected by the electorate. While this policy was successful in its aim, it also led to an unprecedented climate of mistrust between the Greek Cypriots and the UN Secretary-General. This soured efforts to pursue a settlement for the rest of Kofi Annan's term of office, which came to an end in December 2006.

Keywords: United Nations, Kofi Annan, Annan Plan, Referendum, Peacemaking, Negotiation

Introduction

According to a Eurobarometer poll published in autumn 2004, the United Nations was ranked third from bottom in terms of the amount of trust shown by Greek Cypriots towards various institutions, such as the government, parliament, armed forces, religious institutions and the European Union. Indeed, just 34 per cent expressed confidence in the organisation.¹ A subsequent opinion poll, published in the summer of 2005, again showed that the level of trust Greek Cypriots had in the United Nations was extremely low. Only 8 per cent trusted the UN "very much", whereas 27.8 per cent said that they had no trust at all in the organisation.² This

low level of confidence in the UN was also confirmed by Andreas Mavroyiannis, the Cyprus Permanent Representative to the UN. In an interview he gave to a Greek newspaper in New York, he confirmed that the relationship of trust with the UN, and the organisation's ability to lead talks towards a settlement, had to be restored.³

This antagonism between the UN – which in this context more specifically refers to the bureaucratic leadership of the Organisation, in particular the Secretary-General⁴ – and the Greek Cypriots was unusual. For most of the history of the Cyprus Problem, the UN Secretary-General has tended to be regarded in a positive light by the Greek Cypriot side.⁵ Even if disputes arose with certain Secretaries-General at some point or another, these tended to be fairly minor. In this context, how can the current levels of mistrust be explained? As will be shown, the low level of trust in the UN and the Secretary-General is the direct result of the recent peace process that took place on the island from 2002-2004. Specifically, it relates to developments that took place in early 2004, when a UN sponsored peace plan presented to the two communities on 31 March was roundly rejected by Greek Cypriots in a referendum held on 24 April. Throughout the campaign leading up to the vote, the Secretary-General came under constant attack from across the political spectrum and in the media for his apparent lack of impartiality. Whether or not this was justified was irrelevant. Instead, questioning the credibility and fairness of the Secretary-General was necessary in order to ensure the defeat of his plan. But while these attacks may have achieved the required results at the time, it has nevertheless led to deep levels of mistrust towards the UN Secretary-General. In this regard, Kofi Annan became a discredited intermediary in the eyes of the Greek Cypriots.

UN Peacemaking Efforts in Cyprus, 1964-2001

The United Nations Secretary-General has played a central role throughout most of the modern history of Cyprus since its independence in 1960. Following an outbreak of intercommunal fighting in late 1963, in March 1964 the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution authorising the formation of a peacekeeping force for the island – the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) – and mandated the Secretary-General to appoint a Mediator to oversee the efforts to reach a political settlement between the island's two communities.⁶ Following the death of Sakari Tuomioja, the first appointee, in September 1964 UN Secretary-General U Thant appointed Galo Plaza Lasso to the position. In 1965 he produced a report that called on the Greek Cypriots to put into abeyance their call for union with Greece (Enosis) and called on the Turkish Cypriots to refrain from calling for a federation.⁷ Controversially, he also suggested that the abrogation of the core constitutional treaties proposed by the Greek Cypriots should be accepted. While the report was met with a qualified approval by the Greek Cypriots, the Turkish

Cypriots and Turkey objected and demanded the resignation of Galo Plaza. However, the Greek Cypriots insisted that he remain in place, and would not accept a new mediator. In view of this deadlock, the process of mediation was abandoned.⁸

Instead, the UN Secretary-General offered his Mission of Good Offices to the parties. This led to intercommunal talks between the two sides. Lasting from 1968-1974, these aimed at securing a greater degree of autonomy for the Turkish Cypriots within the confines of a unitary state controlled by the Greek-Cypriot majority. Despite claims that the two sides were close to finalising an agreement, these negotiations were brought to a halt in July 1974, when Turkey invaded Cyprus in response to a Greek inspired military coup on the island. After the failure of two rounds of UN sponsored peace talks in Switzerland, during which Ankara issued an ultimatum that the Greek Cypriots accept a federal settlement,⁹ Turkey continued with its attack and by the middle of August had occupied 37 per cent of the island. This fundamentally changed the parameters of a settlement. Instead of pursuing autonomy within a united republic, the Turkish Cypriots now stuck to their demands that a future settlement be federal in nature, based on the creation of two areas (bi-zonality) made up of the two communities (bi-communality). Following further talks overseen by Kurt Waldheim, the then UN Secretary-General, this model was formally accepted by the Greek Cypriots in 1977. It was later reaffirmed in a second, follow-up agreement signed in 1979.

Talks continued over the next few years. However, tensions rose in the spring of 1983 when the General Assembly passed a resolution calling for the withdrawal of occupation troops in Cyprus.¹⁰ Months later, Rauf Denktash, the Turkish-Cypriot leader, used the cover of political instability in Turkey to unilaterally declare independence in November 1983. The Turkish Government immediately recognised the 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' ('TRNC'). However, no other state followed suit. In fact, within days the move had been condemned by the UN Security Council.¹¹ Despite this apparent setback, peace efforts continued and in 1985 the Secretary-General presented the two sides with a blueprint for a settlement. While the plan was accepted by Denktash, Spyros Kyprianou, the then Greek-Cypriot leader, insisted that it could only be a basis for discussion.¹² The talks therefore collapsed with the Greek Cypriots facing the strongest criticism they had encountered in the post-1974 period.

In the aftermath of the talks, Denktash's position hardened.¹³ This resulted in the failure of several subsequent peacemaking attempts, led by Secretaries-General Javier Perez de Cuellar and Boutros-Boutros Ghali. By the late-1990s, Cyprus' application to join the European Union was serving to add an extra complication to the situation. In 1998, and responding to the start of EU accession talks, Denktash formally declared that he would no longer discuss the creation of a

bi-zonal, bi-communal federation. Instead, he would confine himself only to talks on the creation of a confederation of two sovereign states.¹⁴ Despite this change of position, a new round of talks started in late 1999. However, these proved to be short lived. By the end of 2000 Denktash had once again decided to walk away from the table. The Turkish-Cypriot leader was now widely held to be personally responsible for ensuring that fifteen years of UN peacemaking efforts had come to nought – a fact reflected in numerous reports by the UN Secretary-General. His obstructive attitude was also noted by other diplomats involved in the peace process.¹⁵

Peace Talks and the Annan Plan, 2001-2004

Nevertheless, in November 2001, Rauf Denktash surprised observers by sending a letter to Glafkos Clerides in which he proposed a meeting to discuss the implications of the island's EU accession.¹⁶ After several face-to-face meetings, a new peace initiative was launched in January 2002 under UN auspices. Despite hopes that the talks might yield an agreement by June, the date informally proposed by the Turkish-Cypriot side, within weeks it was clear that Denktash had no intention of reaching a settlement. Instead, his tactic appeared to be geared towards keeping the talks going in the hope that the EU would use this as a pretext for delaying Cyprus' entry.¹⁷ Even a visit to the island in May by Annan failed to push talks forward and the original deadline came and went with no sign of a settlement. As a result, and acting with the consent of the Security Council, Annan started to put together the first elements of a plan to be presented to the two sides. The opportunity to present the two sides with the agreement came in early November, shortly after a new government came to power in Turkey promising a settlement of the Cyprus Problem as an integral part of Turkey's EU integration process. On 12 November 2002, the UN finally unveiled its draft agreement, which quickly came to be known as the Annan Plan.

In most respects, the plan was broadly in line with the expectation of the international community. Most importantly, it stuck to the broadly agreed parameters of a settlement and proposed the formation of a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation. In accordance with the wishes of the Secretary-General, the Greek-Cypriot side quickly began work on drafting a list of proposed amendments. In contrast, the Turkish Cypriot side delayed presenting its changes for as long as possible. As a consequence, the UN was only able to unveil the second version of its plan on 10 December – just three days before the start of the Copenhagen EU Council, during which the EU members were due to decide on Cypriot EU accession. Despite the fact that the Greek-Cypriot side went to the summit ready to enter into an agreement,¹⁸ the Turkish-Cypriot side again refused to negotiate. As a result, a major opportunity to secure a deal was missed. In view of the intransigence of the

Turkish Cypriots, and faced with a long-standing threat by Greece to prevent enlargement if Cyprus was not included, the EU went ahead and agreed that Cyprus should become a member, despite the ongoing division of the island.

Nevertheless, the Secretary-General decided to keep on with his mission and talks resumed again in January 2003. The following month, however, presidential elections saw the moderate Glafcos Clerides voted out of office and replaced by Tassos Papadopoulos, a known hardliner on the Cyprus issue.¹⁹ Despite his reputation, many hoped that Papadopoulos would not obstruct the talks. This expectation was based on the fact that he had not openly stated his opposition to the Annan Plan during the campaign and that his victory rested on the support he had received from AKEL, the Greek-Cypriot Communist Party, which traditionally commands about a third of the vote and has historically been the most moderate party on the Cyprus issue. With this in mind, the UN Secretary-General visited the island again at the end of February and presented the two sides with the third version of his plan. Failing to receive a formal response to the agreement there and then, Annan called upon the leaders to meet with him again a few weeks later in The Hague and announce whether they would be prepared to submit it to a referendum. Papadopoulos, albeit reluctantly, agreed to put the plan to a vote. However, Denktash refused. At that point the Secretary-General called a halt to his efforts.²⁰

Over the next few months there appeared to be little likelihood of new talks. However, expectations began to grow again in the autumn as parliamentary elections on the Turkish-Cypriot side seemed likely to result in a win for the pro-resolution opposition parties. In the event, the results were drawn and a coalition was formed between the pro-settlement Republican Turkish Party (CTP), led by Mehmet Ali Talat, and the more hard line Democratic Party (DP), led by Serdar Denktash, Rauf Denktash's son. Shortly afterwards, the Turkish Government called for a resumption of talks. Following further discussions with the two sides, and other interested parties, Annan brought Papadopoulos and Denktash, who still remained the Turkish-Cypriot negotiator, to New York. There, after three days of talks, it was decided that a new process would begin under UN auspices. However, it would vary considerably from previous negotiations. In view of the island's impending EU accession, due to take place two and half months later, on 1 May 2004, it was decided that the process would be five weeks long. The first month would take place in Cyprus and involve the two sides. Thereafter, assuming that the two sides failed to finalise the text, a second phase lasting one week would be held that would also involve Greece and Turkey. If at the end of that further period areas remained undecided, the Secretary-General would complete the blank areas. Thereafter, the finalised plan would be put to the two communities in simultaneous referendums. Despite the fact that Papadopoulos opposed this format, he had little choice but to

accept the formulation.²¹ Given that Denktash had agreed, albeit under orders from Turkey, he could not be seen to be the intransigent party, especially by the EU.

As had been widely expected, the first round of talks, which lasted from 19 February until 23 March, failed to produce any results. Instead of engaging in negotiations, the process was marked more by mutual recriminations as each side accused the other of acting in bad faith. As a result, the second round was convened in the Swiss mountain resort village of Bürgenstock, near Lausanne. However, Denktash refused to participate and the Turkish Cypriots were instead represented by Talat. This time the two sides were joined by the Greek and Turkish leaders. However, yet again no progress was made. Without the presence of Denktash, who had boycotted the talks, the burden of responsibility fell on the shoulders of Papadopoulos, who refused to enter into direct discussions with the Turkish Cypriots. Instead, he presented the UN team with an extensive list of changes to the UN proposals. In the end, and as many had expected when the process first began, the Secretary-General was forced to complete the blanks. After presenting the two sides with a fourth version of the plan a day before the end of the second phase, a fifth and final version of the agreement was unveiled on 31 March 2004.²²

The Referendum Campaign

While there had been a steady stream of opposition to the plan throughout the course of its lifetime, starting in November 2002, it was not until the Bürgenstock talks, and the presentation of the final proposals, that full-blown opposition emerged within the Cypriot Government.²³ While Papadopoulos refused to take a clear position without first considering the plan as a whole, it was fairly obvious at this stage that he was against the agreement. In comments given to the press on his arrival back in Cyprus, he stated that the UN Secretary-General had taken into account, either in whole or in part, Turkey's positions on the Cyprus problem.²⁴ Similar criticisms of the UN Secretary-General were echoed soon afterwards by other Greek-Cypriot political figures. For example, Nicos Cleanthous, the deputy leader of DIKO, the party led by Papadopoulos, claimed that that UN was not interested in negotiations. Instead, it had simply played the referee in order to fix the game in Turkey's favour.²⁵ Such sentiments were also expressed by the leadership of EDEK, the smallest party in the coalition. Dimitris Christofias, the leader of AKEL, the largest party in the coalition, although reserving judgement on the plan, commented that the agreement, which had been drawn up by the Secretary-General in conjunction with Britain and the United States, appeared to have discarded UN resolutions on Cyprus.²⁶

Over the course of the next week, there was a steady stream of statements against the plan that also criticised the role of the UN. Meanwhile, indication of high-

level opposition to the proposals emerged when a public relations firm run by the wife of the Commerce Minister, George Lillikas, an 'ardent' opponent of the plan, was hired to manage the 'no' campaign.²⁷ Attention, however, was focused on the final position that Papadopoulos would take. This became clear on the evening of 7 April when he made a fifty-minute televised speech to the Greek Cypriots.²⁸ During the course of his address he launched a withering attack on the plan, arguing that it was not a blueprint for the reunification of the island, but instead represented a cementing of the island's partition. Regarding the process by which the plan was developed, he again criticised the UN, stating that he took exception to the, "negative stance and the maximalist positions of the Turkish side but also the tolerance the UN exhibited regarding the Turkish demands which were outside the provisions of the Annan plan". He then went on to spell out the ways in which he believed that the Annan Plan would not end the division of Cyprus, but instead "legalizes and deepens" the partition of the island. For example he raised concerns over the way in which the plan would legitimise Turkish involvement in the affairs of the Cyprus state, it would not allow all Greek-Cypriot refugees to return to their homes and that the area controlled by the Greek Cypriots would become a constituent state of the United Cyprus Republic, as the new state would be known. While concerns over certain elements of the plan, such as questions of security and implementation, were certainly justified,²⁹ his main complaints against the agreement were, as one observer has pointed out, disingenuous. For example, "it was always known and accepted that a federation would mean that Greek Cypriots would become part of a constituent state – why the objection now?"³⁰ In a tear-filled conclusion to his speech, he therefore called on the Greek Cypriots to deliver a "resounding no" to the plan. Shortly afterwards, he was shown emerging from the presidential palace to be met by a cheering crowd waving Cypriot and Greek flags and chanting 'OXI' – 'NO'.

At that moment, the hopes that the supporters of the Annan Plan might have had about winning the campaign came to an end. Having delivered such a strong rebuttal to the agreement, Papadopoulos had ensured that AKEL could not break ranks and call for a 'yes' vote without splitting the coalition. This was confirmed a week later when, despite an earlier agreement to support the plan by the party's Central Committee, the main leadership of the party decided to call for a 'soft no' in the referendum. In effect, this was a call for the voters to reject the plan, not because it was a bad plan, but because it was a plan that needed further improvements, especially on security elements. There were also concerns about the possibility that Turkey might not honour its part of the agreement. In any case, the call for a 'soft no' was as far as AKEL wanted to go. It was especially telling that an attempt by Britain and the United States to present the UN Security Council with a resolution that tried to ensure full and proper implementation of the agreement was rejected by Russia. The fact that George Iacovou, the Greek-Cypriot foreign

minister, had been in Moscow just days before, led many to conclude that Russia was acting at the behest of the Greek Cypriots – a charge that has been categorically rejected by the Greek Cypriots.³¹

In addition to the official opposition to the plan, there was also widespread condemnation of it, and the UN's role, in most sections of the media. While a few newspapers were in favour of the agreement,³² most of the rest were implacably opposed to the Annan Plan. But quite apart from their commentary and analysis against the plan, they also took to editorialising their news coverage to emphasise the worst elements of the plan. On television matters were even worse. All the stations, both state and private, came out against the agreement. Even though the main supporters of the agreement were given air-time to present their views, which often resulted in noisy debates, one could not escape the impression that almost the entire media was fully in line with the government's opposition to the plan and that opponents of the plan were given a better platform.³³ Moreover, and unlike the government, which had been clear to avoid explicit criticism of Annan, many sections of the media showed little compunction about using whatever means were available to discredit the plan and its architects. The Secretary-General was therefore subjected to wholesale abuse and ridicule. In many instances this also took a very personal and unpleasant tone. Indeed, racial slurs even entered into the debate about the plan. For example, there was repeated talk in certain sections of the media about "Mavros Ananas". Translated as, "the black pineapple", this was an obviously racist pun that not only referred to his colour but also suggested malign intentions. Such comments were soon heard across the Greek-Cypriot political and social spectrum. For example, a member of the House of Representatives, again from DIKO, stated that a "black Secretary-General" should have had more respect for human rights given slavery of the nineteenth century.³⁴ Perhaps more damagingly, the Secretary-General was widely regarded as being beholden to Anglo-American interests.³⁵ Indeed, there was a widespread perception that the Annan Plan had not even been drawn up by the UN. Instead, a popularly held view was that the real architect of the plan was Lord Hannay, the British Special Representative for Cyprus. To this extent, Annan had simply lent his name to a document that was clearly a product of a conspiracy in London and Washington.³⁶

The abuse was not limited to the Secretary-General. Members of Secretariat and the UN team in Cyprus were also criticised and insulted. The most obvious target was Alvaro de Soto, the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Cyprus. As the lead figure in the process, and the most senior UN figure based in Cyprus, he was seen to be the prime mover behind the plan. But several of his leading advisers and assistants were also subjected to heavy criticism, most notably Didier Pfirter, who was the main legal adviser to the UN team and who had taken a leading role in trying to explain the provisions of the plan to the two sides.³⁷

Annan and Papadopoulos Clash after the Referendum

As expected, the UN plan was heavily rejected by the Greek Cypriots in the referendum held on 24 April 2004.³⁸ Despite hopes that the ill-feeling that emerged during the referendum campaign would quickly end, the antagonism between the Greek Cypriots and the UN Secretary-General actually intensified after the vote. In a report prepared shortly after the referendum, Annan produced a large number of examples of what he saw as bad faith on the part of the Greek Cypriots.³⁹ For instance, the report made it clear that the Greek Cypriots had specifically called for a resumption of talks in a letter sent in December 2003. This call was again repeated when Annan and Papadopoulos met face-to-face in Brussels in January 2004, at which point the Cypriot president had assured Annan that, “he did not seek ‘forty or fifty’ changes to the plan, and that all the changes he would seek would be within the parameters of the plan” (paragraph 8).

In terms of the first phase of talks, Annan stated that the Greek Cypriots, in contrast to the Turkish Cypriots, produced lengthy lists of demands and refused to present a single paper outlining their preferred changes until halfway through the second phase of talks (paragraph 20). In addition, he stated that the Greek Cypriots demanded that all their points be considered, while rejecting discussions of the Turkish-Cypriots points (paragraph 22). The problem of negative press reporting of leaked information from bilateral meetings held between Papadopoulos and de Soto was also raised (paragraph 24). As far as the second phase of talks was concerned, Annan noted the way in which the Greek Cypriots had prevented direct meetings between the leaders thereby forcing the UN to hold informal meetings and gatherings to bring the sides together (paragraphs 33 and 34). He also criticised the way in which information regarding the fourth, bridging version of the Annan Plan had been leaked to the Greek-Cypriot media, which had then reacted very negatively to the proposals (paragraph 40).

In terms of the referendum, Annan was particularly scathing. He accused Papadopoulos of having completely turned his back on the previous assurances he had given in Brussels earlier that year (paragraph 65), and that he had actually appeared to reject the basic parameters of the agreement (paragraph 66). He also complained that the Greek Cypriots had not participated at a major donors’ conference to discuss economic aspects of the plan at a sufficiently high level, despite their stated concerns on this issue (paragraph 70). He also noted the way in which the Greek-Cypriot media had prevented de Soto from explaining the plan (paragraph 71). In conclusion, Annan stated: “If the Greek Cypriots are ready to share power and prosperity with the Turkish Cypriots in a federal structure based on political equality, this needs to be demonstrated, not just by word, but by action.” (paragraph 86)

All in all, the report by the Secretary-General amounted to a damning indictment of the Greek Cypriots negotiating strategy and an unprecedented criticism of the Greek-Cypriot leadership by a Secretary-General. Naturally, such strong accusations necessarily required a response from the Greek-Cypriot side. This came in the form of an official letter from President Papadopoulos in which the various allegations were answered directly and which insinuated that the report by the Secretary-General had been written in anger and as an attempt to punish the Greek Cypriots for the vote against the UN agreement.⁴⁰ He also drew attention to the perceived lack of impartiality of the Secretary-General. For instance, at one point he noted that:

the section [of the report] outlining the improvements of the sides bears an uncanny resemblance to a well-known document of a permanent Security Council Member, widely circulated at the time of the B rgerstock phase of negotiations, which strangely enough even follows the same sequence for the improvements gained by both sides. The most noteworthy element, however, of this section of the Report is the omission of any reference to the benefits that Turkey, and others, accrued from the provisions of the Plan.

He also took strong exception to calls from the UN Secretary-General for steps to alleviate the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots, so long as these steps were in accordance with Security Council Resolutions 541 (1983) and 550 (1984): "this suggestion lies clearly outside the Secretary's General good offices mission and is in direct contravention to the SC resolutions and international law." At the end of the letter, a full report was attached that outlined in detail the shortcomings and inconsistencies within the UN Secretary-General's report. It left little doubt as to the position of the Greek Cypriots towards the Secretary-General at that point:

Although disappointed at and concerned by the recent Report, skilfully slanted by its drafters to present co-operative Turks and unfairly isolated Turkish Cypriots as against obstructive Greek Cypriots blocking reunification of Cyprus, the Government of the Republic believes that the United Nations will in due course revert to its hitherto impartial stance and once again use its best endeavours to promote an agreed settlement of the problem confronting Cyprus.⁴¹

Relations since the Referendum

While such a direct public confrontation between Papadopoulos and Annan was not repeated, evidence of lingering ill-will was to be found throughout the rest of Annan's term of office, which came to an end on 31 December 2006. Most notably, it appeared as though the Secretary-General wanted to keep a distance from the Cyprus issue in the absence of any clear signal from the Greek-Cypriot leadership

that it was willing to engage in talks in an effort to reach a settlement, rather than for purposes of show. This was seen in several ways. The fact that they were not ready to articulate a clear set of prioritised changes to the plan was shown in late-May 2005, when Sir Kieran Prendergast,⁴² the Undersecretary-General for Political Affairs, visited the island to take soundings on the chances for a new initiative. On his return to New York, it soon became apparent that neither Prendergast nor Annan felt that the time was right for a new settlement effort.⁴³

Meanwhile, a new dispute arose in June 2005 when Annan, following a meeting with Prime Minister Erdogan, stated that he would like to see his May 2004 report endorsed by the Security Council. The Greek Cypriots were furious at the suggestion and lodged a formal complaint to this effect.⁴⁴ It was clear that the bad relations that had emerged at the time of the referendum still remained. Indeed, following on from this, Annan appears to have decided to put Cyprus very low down on his list of priorities – no doubt a decision that is also shaped by the fact that with the ongoing oil-for-food scandal his attention was elsewhere. For example, in September 2005, when he came to appoint a replacement for his Acting Special Representative for Cyprus, Zbigniew Wlosowicz, who had held the position since 2000, Annan decided against appointing a high-profile former political figure or diplomat, as had often been the case with other Special Representatives. Instead, he appointed Michael Moller, a long-standing UN official, to take over the position.⁴⁵

In addition to the lack of any movement on the Cyprus issue, tensions also emerged over the question of the future of the United Nations Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP). In the aftermath of the referendum, Annan called for a review of the Force. Controversially, he even suggested that there might even be grounds to downgrade it to an observer mission. The Greek Cypriots were vehemently opposed to such a move, arguing that it would lead to a destabilisation of the situation. In the end, the report, which was endorsed by Annan, stopped short of making such a recommendation, instead opting to reduce the size of the Force. Despite this, Annan nevertheless left the door open for a further reappraisal of UNFICYP in the future, again with the possibility that an observer mission might replace the full scale peacekeeping force.⁴⁶

Meanwhile, the Greek-Cypriot leadership made little or no attempt to initiate a process of reconciliation with the UN Secretary-General. For example, there was no attempt on the part of the Greek-Cypriot leadership to apologise or express their regret, directly or indirectly, for the way in which the Greek-Cypriot media behaved at the time of the referendum, either in terms of the abuse heaped upon the Secretary-General and his team or in terms of the efforts to prevent them from having the chance to explain the plan to the public. Indeed, it appeared as if the Greek-Cypriot leadership remained determined to show that the UN did not act as

an honest broker at the time of the negotiations. A book published by Claire Palley, a constitutional adviser to successive presidents of Cyprus, which heavily criticises the role played by the UN during the talks, was endorsed by the government, which distributes copies as a part of its information campaign.⁴⁷ There were also reports that the Greek-Cypriot side notified Annan that they did not wish to have to work with Alvaro de Soto again.⁴⁸

As Annan entered his final year in office, there was at last some hope that relations were starting to improve. In February 2006, Annan met with Papadopoulos in Paris. At the end of the meeting the two issued a joint statement in which they recognised that any further talks under the UN Secretary-General's mission of Good Offices must be "timely" and based on "careful preparation". It was also agreed that a series of talks, held on a technical level, would take place in the hope of building confidence between the two sides. The two leaders also agreed that it would be beneficial, "if progress could be achieved on further disengagement of forces and demilitarization on the Island, on the complete de-mining of Cyprus, and on the issue of Famagusta."⁴⁹ However, it was clear that lingering suspicion remained. Significantly, and despite a clear hope by the Greek Cypriots that he would do so,⁵⁰ Annan refused to announce the appointment of a new envoy for Cyprus noting that he would only do so, "when the time is ripe". It was also significant that the UN Secretary-General dodged efforts to characterise the meeting as a step forward in his relations with the Greek-Cypriot leadership, instead stating that, "As long as you are talking you are making progress."⁵¹

In the months that followed, the tensions continued. In June 2006 Cyprus lodged an official complaint with the UN Secretariat over a statement made by the Secretary-General that the island's accession to the European Union had complicated efforts to find a settlement.⁵² At the same time, Annan also conceded that any hope of a settlement to the Cyprus issue had dimmed. Certainly, there would be no further attempts to reach a settlement over the course of his remaining term in office. As he said, "You have to admit that I got closer than most ... But we were not able to resolve it."⁵³ Despite this, it was clear that Annan was still willing to invest some time in settlement efforts. Just two weeks after this statement, on 8 July, the two leaders met with Ibrahim Gambari, the UN Undersecretary-General for Political Affairs, in Nicosia. There they reaffirmed that the basis of a settlement would be a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation. They also agreed to establish a "twin track" process for a settlement. This would include talks on "substantive matters" relating to a solution, accompanied by a second process examining "day-to-day" issues.⁵⁴ However, despite the initial hopes that this marked a "welcome step",⁵⁵ it soon became clear that no progress would be made. No talks were held. While some saw the agreement as a positive step,⁵⁶ many others believed that it was little more than an attempt to give the impression of progress where none really existed.

More importantly, by opening up an alternative solution process, it allowed the Greek Cypriots to bury Annan Plan just months before Annan himself left office,⁵⁷ thus paving the way for an entirely new approach to be taken by Ban Ki-moon, the new Secretary-General.

Conclusion

For over forty years the UN Secretary-General has played a central role in the search for a solution of the Cyprus Problem. This role first came about in 1964, when the Security Council not only authorised the creation of UNFICYP but also authorised the Secretary-General to appoint a Mediator to address the political differences between the two sides. This led to the Galo Plaza report in 1965, which, although suggesting that calls for union with Greece be put in abeyance, was broadly to the liking of the Greek-Cypriot side. Thereafter, the mission of Good Offices saw the UN back away from active intervention in peacemaking in favour of a more passive approach of overseeing negotiations. This role continued in the aftermath of the Turkish invasion of the island in 1974 and led to the formulation of the 1977 and 1979 High Level Agreements. Traditionally, therefore, it is possible to say that the UN has tended to be seen by the Greek Cypriots as a fair and impartial actor in the peace process. As an institution composed of member states it has passed resolutions, in both the Security Council and the General Assembly, that have become planks of the Greek-Cypriot case in international law. Moreover, successive Secretaries-General have tended to be seen as fair minded and committed to peace, even if inevitable differences of opinion arose from time-to-time.

So why was there such an extraordinary breakdown of relations between Annan and the Greek-Cypriot leadership at the time of the referendum? Regardless of the merits or drawbacks of the proposals, the decision was taken by President Papadopoulos to oppose the Annan Plan. Once this decision was made, and given that the plan effectively bore the name of the Secretary-General, it became almost inevitable that any criticism of the proposals would also be a criticism of Annan himself. However, at the same time, undermining the credibility of the UN Secretary-General was a necessary part of the process. How could opponents of the Annan Plan explain how an honourable, fair and unbiased individual could have produced such an unfair and partisan document? Of course, it could be argued that an alternative approach would have seen Annan presented as being weak in the face of pressure from external parties, in this case the United States and the United Kingdom. Indeed, this was a criticism that was made by some Greek Cypriots who suggested that the UN plan as little more than an Anglo-American agreement presented under UN cover. However, in reality this argument was not particularly strong. After all, why would Annan fail to take an independent

line on Cyprus when he had so obviously stood up to Washington over Iraq? But while efforts to undermine the credibility of the Secretary-General were in some senses an integral part of the campaign to undermine the plan, matters were not made any easier by the fact that the government refused to rein in the more outrageous, and openly racist, accusation made against the Secretary-General. This was coupled by efforts to malign members of his team, including his Special Adviser, Alvaro de Soto.

The result of all this was that, by the end of the referendum, there was quite clearly a belief that Annan and his team had set about creating a plan that was contrary to the best interests of the Greek Cypriots. For these reasons, it was always unlikely that the period after April 2004 would have seen a rapid return to the previous levels of trust. After such a sustained and intense attack on the credibility of the Secretary-General and his team, it was unsurprising that Greek-Cypriot public opinion registered such low levels of trust in the organisation. However, it was clear that the mistrust, if not hostility, flowed both ways. Annan himself made it clear that he no longer had confidence in the willingness of the Greek Cypriots to reach a settlement. Apart from his damning report following the vote, his failure to appoint a new special envoy and his suggestions for a downgrading of UNFICYP were clear signs that the referendum had had a profound effect on how he viewed the Cyprus Problem. In sum, it was clear that the referendum led to an unprecedented, if not irreparable, breakdown in relations between the Greek-Cypriots and Kofi Annan. The question is whether this has had any lasting impact on wider perceptions of the UN as a peacemaker in Cyprus. All eyes will now be on Ban Ki-moon's approach to a problem that has defeated every Secretary-General since U Thant.

Notes

1. The results showed the following levels of trust in descending order: National Guard (78%), charity and volunteer organisations (73%), government (65%), religious institutions (64%), the Parliament (63%), the radio (62%), television (62%), police (62%), justice system (61%), European Union (59%, which exceeds the EU average of 50%), the United Nations (43%), political parties (26%), and large companies (26%). Interestingly, 42% of Turkish Cypriots trusted the UN. Across the European Union as a whole, the figure was 54%. 'National Report: Cyprus', Eurobarometer 62: Public Opinion in the European Union, Autumn 2004, December 2004.
2. Alexandros Lordos with Muharrem Faiz and Costa Carras, 'Options for Peace: Mapping the Options for a Comprehensive Settlement in Cyprus', Poll carried out by Cymar Market Research and Kadem Cyprus Social Research, 15-30 May 2005. 22.9% said that they trusted the UN 'substantially' and 36.7% said that they trusted it 'a little'. In

contrast, the Turkish-Cypriot results were as follows: very much (8.4%), substantially (9.8%), a little (21.9%), and not at all (54.9%).

3. As reported in *Phileleftheros*, 19 July 2005.
4. The duality of the UN's role – as a body made up of sovereign states, on the one hand, and as an administrative organisation, on the other – is raised by Oliver Richmond and James Ker-Lindsay (editors), *The Work of the UN in Cyprus: Promoting Peace and Development* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), pp. xv-xix.
5. It is also worth pointing out that the UN as an institution made up of states, rather than the UN as a bureaucracy led by the Secretary-General, has also been regarded in a favourable light, even if some of its most important members – such as Britain and the United States – have been regarded as more pro-Turkish. For example, numerous Security Council resolutions, including the condemnation of the unilateral declaration of independence, and several General Assembly resolutions, such as the call for occupation troops to be removed from the island, have formed the basis of Greek-Cypriot arguments against Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots.
6. United Nations Security Council Resolution 186 (1964), 4 March 1964.
7. United Nations Security Council Document, S/6253, 26 March 1965.
8. For a fuller account of the work of the Mediator see Oliver Richmond, 'UN Mediation in Cyprus, 1964-65' in Oliver Richmond and James Ker-Lindsay (editors), *The Work of the UN in Cyprus: Promoting Peace and Development* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001).
9. Interestingly, while Denktash demanded a federal system based on two separate zones, the Turkish Government was willing to accept a cantonal model. For a full account of the talks, see Mehmet Ali Birand, *30 Hot Days* (Nicosia: Rustem, 1985).
10. United Nations General Assembly Resolution 37/253, 13 May 1983.
11. United Nations Security Council Resolution 541 (1983), 18 November 1983.
12. For an account of this process see A.J.R. Groom, 'The Cyprus Negotiations: Taking Horses to Water', *Kent Papers in Politics and International Relations*, 1993.
13. Rauf R. Denktash, *The Cyprus Triangle* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1988), p. 142.
14. Documents given by President Denktash to the UN Secretary-General during their Meeting in Geneva, 28 March 1998.
15. Richard Holbrooke, 'The United States and Turkey: Mending Fences?', Presentation given to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 3 November 2003. For another critical analysis of the role played by Denktash by someone involved in the process see David Hannay, *Cyprus: The Search for a Solution* (London: IB Tauris, 2005), pp. 17-21.
16. Hannay, *Cyprus*, p. 155.
17. James Ker-Lindsay, *EU Accession and UN Peacemaking in Cyprus* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 6.
18. 'Sombre Clerides sets off for Copenhagen', *Cyprus Mail*, 12 December 2002.
19. 'Tassos Papadopoulos', *The Guardian*, 17 February 2003.
20. United Nations Press Release, SG/SM/8621, 11 March 2003.
21. Ker-Lindsay, *EU Accession and UN Peacemaking in Cyprus*, p. 86.

22. Version five of the plan can be found as Appendix B in James Ker-Lindsay, *EU Accession and UN Peacemaking in Cyprus* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 165-193. A cross-comparison of the various elements of the five versions of the plan can be found in Claire Palley, *An International Relations Debacle: The UN Secretary-General's Mission of Good Offices in Cyprus 1999-2004* (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2005).
23. A number of Greek-Cypriot political figures were actively opposing the plan and briefing the media about its shortcomings while the talks were still taking place in Switzerland. 'Opinion - A process hijacked by prejudice and lies', *Cyprus Mail*, 2 April 2004.
24. 'It's everyone's fault but my own', *Cyprus Mail*, 2 April 2004.
25. 'Lining up for a bitter campaign', *Cyprus Mail*, 2 April 2004.
26. *Ibid.*
27. 'The advertising campaign: an uphill battle for the 'yes' camp', *Cyprus Mail*, 18 April 2004.
28. 'Declaration of the President of the Republic, Mr Tassos Papadopoulos, Regarding the Referendum of 24 April 2004', Press Release, Press and Information Office, Republic of Cyprus, 7 April 2004.
29. For a discussion of the role of security in the rejection of the plan see Hubert Faustmann, 'Cyprus: Security Concerns and the Failure of the Annan Plan', *Suedosteuropa Mitteilungen*, Number 6, 2004.
30. Rebecca Bryant, 'An Ironic Result in Cyprus', *Middle East Report Online*, 12 May 2004.
31. Tassos Papadopoulos, lunch for members of the foreign press corps in Cyprus, 1 February 2005.
32. The main Greek-language newspapers that supported the agreement were *Politis*, an independent newspaper, and *Alitheia*, which supports DISY, the party founded by Clerides. Also, the English-language *Cyprus Mail* and the *Financial Mirror* supported the agreement. *Haravghi*, the AKEL newspaper remained cautious until the position of the party was known, and even then tried to take a more cautious approach towards criticizing the Secretary-General.
33. The particularly negative role of television was highlighted in a report published by the Mass Media Institute, based at Intercollege. 'Study finds negative media campaign in Greek papers', *Cyprus Mail*, 10 April 2004. Likewise, a study conducted by the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation showed that 'no' campaigners were given significantly more air time (100 hours) than those who supported the plan (66 hours). "'No" voice given significantly more airtime over campaign', *Cyprus Mail*, 24 April 2004.
34. *Cyprus Mail*, 3 April 2004. It should be pointed out that the heavy and abusive criticism of the UN Secretary-General was not limited to the Greek-Cypriot side. Denktash also used racial insults, for instance noting that the UN had, in the case of Cyprus, adopted methods that would not be used for African Tribes. Characteristically, Denktash also followed suit with other members of the international community. Perhaps most famously, he called Gunter Verheugen, the German EU Commissioner for Enlargement, of behaving like a Nazi General. The difference, of course, was that Denktash was well known for such behaviour. It had not been seen with Greek-Cypriot leaders before.
35. Palley, *An International Relations Debacle*, p. 239.

36. Such views were not, however, limited to the Greek Cypriots. Bulent Arinc, the speaker of the Turkish parliament, noted a year earlier that, "this plan is referred [to] as Annan plan, however, in reality it is an Anglo-American plan. Famous British politician Lord David Hannay is behind this plan." TRNC Public Information, 31 January 2003.
37. Pfitter gave two major interviews at the start of March 2004, in which he explained many points of the plan. The interviews were transcribed and published in *The Blue Beret*, Public Information Office of the United Nations Force in Cyprus, February 2004. He also gave several newspaper interviews, including one published by *Politis* on 4 April 2004. In addition to this media work, he also spoke at meetings and events, including during the referendum campaign.
38. 76 per cent of Greek Cypriots voted against the plan whereas 64 per cent of Turkish Cypriots voted in favour.
39. 'Report of the Secretary-General on His Mission of Good Offices in Cyprus', S/2004/437, 28 May 2004.
40. 'Letter dated 7 June 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General', S/2004/464 (also A/58/835), 8 June 2004.
41. 'Comments by the Government of Cyprus on the Report of the Secretary General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus (S/2004/437 of 28 May 2004)', paragraph 3.
42. It is worth noting that Sir Kieren Prendergast, another key architect of the Annan Plan, and therefore a hate-figure for many Greek Cypriots (especially given that he is British), retired from the UN in June 2005. Like de Soto, he was unlikely to be involved in any new process.
43. 'Parties in Cyprus Want a Resumption of UN Good Offices, Accepted UN Plan as a Basis for Negotiations, Security Council Told', UN Press Release, SC/8422, 22 June 2005.
44. 'Annan gets Nicosia hot over report', *Kathimerini*, 11 June 2005.
45. For example, former special representatives in Cyprus have included Dame Ann Hercus (1999), a former government minister in New Zealand; Diego Cordovez (1997-1999), a former foreign minister of Ecuador; Han Sung-Joo (1996-1997), a former minister of foreign affairs of South Korea; Joe Clark (1993-1996), a former prime minister of Canada; and Oscar Camilion, a former foreign affairs and defence minister of Argentina. The posting of Mr Wlosowicz as Special Representative reflected the appointment of Alvaro de Soto as Special Adviser. The fact that no new Special Adviser has been appointed to replace de Soto and that the post of Special Representative has now been given to Mr Moller, who was previously Acting Deputy Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General, would seem to suggest that the Secretary-General has downgraded the position.
46. For an analysis of this see James Ker-Lindsay, 'The UN force in Cyprus after the 2004 reunification referendum', *International Peacekeeping*, Volume 13, Number 3, September 2006.
47. Palley, *An International Relations Debacle*, op. cit.
48. 'Summary of the Greek Cypriot Press', British High Commission, Cyprus, 6 September 2005. It was also rumoured that the Turkish Cypriots had also asked for him not to be

reappointed in the event of new talks. It is also worth pointing out that de Soto had not really been trusted by the Clerides administration, which saw him as being far too focused on achieving a settlement for his own personal ambition rather than for the sake of trying to achieve a workable and fair agreement between the sides. This was stated to the author by a senior Greek-Cypriot political figure who had been closely involved with the talks during the Clerides presidency. However, de Soto was unlikely to be reappointed as, in May 2005, he was appointed to be the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and the Secretary-General's Personal Representative to the Palestinian Liberation Organisation and the Palestinian Authority. UN Press Release, SG/A/921, 6 May 2005.

49. Joint statement made after the Papadopoulos-Annan meeting in Paris, 28 February 2006.
50. 'Envoy only when the 'time is ripe'', Cyprus Mail, 1 March 2006.
51. Ibid.
52. 'Anger at Annan dig over EU complications', Cyprus Mail, 17 June 2006.
53. 'Annan throws in the towel', Turkish Daily News, 17 June 2006.
54. 'Let's talk', Cyprus Mail, 9 July 2006.
55. Ibrahim Gambari, 'Climate Change on Cyprus?', Politis, 28 July 2007.
56. See Alexandros Lordos, '8th July 2006: The Unappreciated Breakthrough', The Cyprus Review, Vol. 18, No. 2, Fall 2006, pp. 145-151.
57. 'What's the diagnosis on the July 8 process?', Cyprus.