

# THE CYPRUS PROBLEM: AN OPEN AND SHUT CASE? PROBING THE GREEK-CYPRIOIOT REJECTION OF THE ANNAN PLAN

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## Abstract

*This article tries to probe the reasons for the Greek-Cypriot rejection of the Annan Plan in 2004, by following two Jines of inquiry. One is to access the dominant view among the Greek-Cypriots before and after the appearance of the Plan. A second line of reasoning is to try to chart the reasons for the rejection at the level of the Republic of Cyprus. As regards the first approach, (a) in the days before the Plan, the Greek-Cypriots were in their majority not prepared to accept a loose federation; (b) from the 1<sup>st</sup> Annan Plan and up until the Referendum there was never a clear majority for the Plan. The article then goes on to examine seven Rational Actor hypotheses as explanations for the unflinching posture of the Greek-Cypriot leadership: sheer bad faith; international conspiracy theory; tough negotiating strategy; the asset of EU membership negotiation-wise; poker strategy; a 50-year backward leap; and the nationalist mind-set.*

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The results of the 24 April 2004 Cyprus Referenda (Greek-Cypriots 'No' of almost 76%, Turkish-Cypriot 'Yes' of almost 65%), would probably go down in the annals of the Cyprus Question as a watershed. In the wake of the referendum, the spectre of a final partition pervades the atmosphere as never before, for now it is the willingness of the numerical majority for a reunification in a political system establishing equality and power-sharing between the two communities, that is seriously in doubt. At least this is the predominant view internationally. As crisply put by UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, "[w]hat was rejected was the solution itself rather than a mere blueprint"<sup>1</sup>.

The Cyprus vessel has now entered uncharted seas, in what is a fourth more opaque phase of the conflict. The other phases are 1948-1959, November 1963-August 1974 and September 1974-2003. Indeed 24 April 2004 may be the end of the Cyprus problem, as we have known it these 55 years<sup>2</sup> and it could well be that, for all practical purposes, it has eclipsed from the world scene as a major regional

ethnic problem worthy of international concern.

### **The Loss of an Historical Opportunity for Reunification**

The rejection of the Annan Plan by the Greek Cypriots represents 'another missed opportunity to resolve the Cyprus problem'.<sup>3</sup> However it is more than that; it amounts to 'a major setback'<sup>4</sup> on the road to peaceful resolution via some form of reunion. From December 2001 until the referenda we witnessed one of the most focused attempts, since 1974, to re-unite the island into one sovereign state. Three factors made this opportunity exceptional and not very likely to resurface again in the near future.

One was the prospect of EU entry, a veritable *deus ex machina*, which ignited the whole process, after almost a decade of sterile adversarial posturing. Even within a strict zero-sum assessment of the situation, there were obvious 'carrots' for both communities if Cyprus entered the EU reunified. And once in the EU, the benefits would probably have outweighed the costs for both communities; and, with the passage of time, the net result could conceivably be judged as positive-sum. Had Cyprus entered the EU as a whole, the deep-seated and understandable *Angst* of the Greek-Cypriots regarding their external security and territorial integrity would have made less sense, almost overnight, in what is after all the European zone of democracy, peace and security. Equally, the Turkish-Cypriot fears, that the Greek-Cypriots are bound to overwhelm them, would have found little ground under the protective EU shield with its vigilant institutions (Commission, Court, Parliament) on constant alert for any abuse of power by the stronger party.

Then there was the Annan Plan, which for all its shortcomings (and no doubt there were several) was the most comprehensive blueprint to date aimed at resolving the conflict and reuniting the island. It was, by and large, a sensible and balanced framework, particularly if one bears in mind the following features of the Cyprus conundrum as it unfolded: the bitter history of the conflict from November 1963 until August 1974 with the Greek-Cypriots as the main culprit until the day before the Turkish invasion; the innumerable attempts to resolve the conflict from 1975 onwards; the existence of the two communities as separate societies for decades that rendered the division between the two communities greater and deeper by the day; as well as the dominant national narratives, commemorations, anniversaries and so on, all aimed at exalting one's own side and demonising the Other. Indeed the situation was – and is – so extreme, that the heroes of one side are the villains and murderers of the other side.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the Annan Plan was not something novel. It was based on previous well-known blueprints, such as the various plans of UN Secretary Generals, de Cuellar and Boutros-Ghali, on the previous bilateral talks between the two communities from 1975 onwards and of course on the rough understanding reached in the more recent Clerides-Denktaş

talks of 2002. In view of all these the Annan Plan was widely regarded internationally as well meaning, logical and just, as a basis for establishing a loose federation along consociational lines in a situation of deep ethnic cleavage. With the possible exception of the 1986 de Cuellar Plan probably no other peace initiative since 1975 had gained such widespread acceptability and advocacy among articulate and respectable members of the two communities.

Thirdly, in the last three years, the most favourable of conditions for resolution coalesced as *never* before in the story of the Cyprus Question, at least from September 1974 onwards. They included strong encouragement for reconciliation by Greece, which was rarely in evidence from 1982 until the late 1990s; more surprisingly there was a dramatic *volte face* on the part of Turkey, from its initial uneasiness coupled with blunt threats of annexation in 2000-2002, to whole-hearted support for the Annan Plan under the Erdogan Government from late 2003 onwards; strong support and assistance for a solution by the United States, Britain and of course the EU; an unprecedented interest for reunion on the part of a large segment of the Cypriot population, especially on the Turkish-Cypriot side; and last but not least, the erosion of Denktash's power and legitimacy among the Turkish-Cypriots.

Under the circumstances one can speak in terms of 'conflict transformation', that is fundamental changes in the whole structure of the conflict situation that provide for new opportunities to find common ground.<sup>6</sup> Yet in the Cyprus case *even* this unprecedented degree of transformation could not do the trick. If reunification cannot be mustered under these unique of circumstances can it ever be achieved? Could it be that for all practical purposes, the Cyprus question is an open and shut case, with the existing *status quo* of partition, however unsavoury, the only realistic outcome for the foreseeable future?

We will try to probe the Greek-Cypriot rejection of the Annan Plan by following two lines of reasoning. One is to access, as accurately as possible, the dominant view among the Greek-Cypriot community before the appearance of the Annan Plan as well as after it was put on the table. A second line of inquiry is to try to chart the reasons behind the outright rejection by the Government of the Republic of Cyprus. One of our ultimate aims in this whole exercise is to try to access the prospects of a second chance for reunification, be it now or in the not too distant future.

### **Rejection Pervading the Atmosphere**

#### ***The Hardening of Greek-Cypriot Public Opinion before the Annan Plan***

The resounding Greek-Cypriot 'No' of 24 April 2004 may have come as a shock to

many even in this part of the world. Indeed it has left many a senior former diplomat and politician in Greece, with intimate knowledge of Cyprus and affinity with the Greek-Cypriots, utterly confounded. It was for them inconceivable that the Republic of Cyprus could miss such a unique historical opportunity to cancel the *fait accompli* of the Turkish intervention-occupation.<sup>7</sup>

Yet for those of us who have been studying the Cyprus landscape more dispassionately, the rejection was less of a surprise, above all because it had become increasingly clear that, as time went by, as one golden opportunity after another was wasted in the 1980s and early 1990s, it was not only the Turkish-Cypriots under Denktash who were digging their feet. However, with Denktash entrenched in his intransigence, the Greek-Cypriots could make themselves appear to the outside world as conciliatory, even when they were rejecting the Boutros- Ghali 'Set of Ideas', when they were ordering Russian S-300 missiles or seemed eager to set up the Joint Defensive Doctrine with Greece (which clearly solidified partition with the Greeks as a whole on one side and the Turks as a whole on the other). By the late 1990s even AKEL was showing signs of less enthusiasm for re- unification than in previous decades, as seen by its lukewarm criticism of the Joint Defensive Doctrine and of the S-300 missiles affair.<sup>8</sup>

According to my estimates for the period 2001-early 2002, that is before the launching of the first Annan Plan, the situation in the Republic of Cyprus presented itself as a fairly even split between rejectionists and supporters of reunion on a federal basis: the stark rejectionists amounted to 48%, while those supporting a reunification along federal lines did not surpass the 50-52% mark.<sup>9</sup> However this even split, with a slim edge for the pro-rapprochement supporters was misleading, as I had tried to point out at the time, for two important reasons: how a federation was conceived on the Greek-Cypriot side; and what was regarded as a just solution in the southern part of the island.

First of all, the majority of supporters of a federal solution on the Greek-Cypriot side understood it more in terms of a tight federation and not as a loose federation. Needless to say, a loose federation of two constituent parts is the only realistic avenue for re-union and for putting an end to the existing *de facto* partition, after so many years of ill-feeling and division; and it is clearly a logical 'split the difference' solution, between a unitary state or tight federation strongly favouring the Greek-Cypriots and a confederation of two sovereign states. Indeed, there is strong evidence to suggest that until the 2002 Clerides-Denktash talks, the great majority of Greek-Cypriots had little understanding of what federalism meant in the first place, let alone of what a federation with two constituent parties would have implied – above all equality between the two parties – even though they had accepted the principle of federalism as way back as 1977 and had clung to it ever since. This tendency became even more evident after the introduction of the Annan Plan,

where it was more than obvious that equality with the Turkish-Cypriot community was difficult to understand, let alone accept as the linchpin of re-unification. It would seem that the Greek-Cypriots, having enjoyed a state of their own since the beginning of 1964, found the prospect of power sharing with the Turkish-Cypriots very hard to swallow. This unusual state of affairs of a Cypriot state only for the Greek-Cypriots, is somehow seen as normal in the southern part of Cyprus, even though the Greek-Cypriots are not alone in the island. A Greek-Cypriot state is apparently preferable to the necessary compromises, sacrifices, friction and time-consuming hauling and pulling associated with ethnic power-sharing. This also applies to the economic dimension, which comes to reinforce the vital political aspect. As aptly put in the final Annan Report, "[t]he contrast between economic stagnation in the north and prosperity in the south is visible and palpable. Most of the disposed in the south, by hard work and enterprise, have carved out a prosperous livelihood, as have many others who are not originally from the north. While they strongly state their wish to reunify, many see in a settlement very little gain, and quite a lot of inconvenience and risk".<sup>10</sup>

Second and equally important is the dominant Greek-Cypriot view of what constitutes a just solution. For a solution to be reckoned just by the great majority of Greek-Cypriots, it had to include the following desiderata:<sup>11</sup> the departure of all the Turkish forces down to the last soldier; the eviction of all the settlers without any exception; the return of all the Greek-Cypriot refugees to their homes and the return of all their property (the full enjoyment of the famous 'three freedoms'); the creation of a unified state – be it a unitary state or a tight federation – in which the Turkish-Cypriots would have political and other clout on the basis of their percentage in the population, that is some 18% (as was their percentage until 1974); and concrete guarantees for security and territorial integrity with no right of intervention on the part of any power.

Clearly the above (with the exception of the last point) were incompatible with what the Turkish-Cypriots regarded – and regard – as being the elements of a just solution. However, for the majority of Greek-Cypriots the above ingredients were – and apparently continue to be – a *sine qua non* for any solution. Any wavering on the matter by their Government would almost certainly be regarded as a sell-out by at least some two-thirds of the electorate.<sup>12</sup>

### ***The Dim Prospects of Accepting the Annan Plan (November 2002-March 2004)***

But did the Annan Plan ever stand a chance of being accepted by the Greek-Cypriot community? The conclusion of a thorough recent study of opinion polls to be published in Greece is unequivocal: but for a fleeting moment in the wake of the December 2002 Copenhagen EU Summit (when the Republic of Cyprus's entry into

the EU was decided without strings attached, that is without a prior solution), the Annan Plan never stood a chance among the Greek-Cypriots. From its very first appearance onwards (that is some four months before Papadopoulos took over), the negative evaluation of the plan was unwavering, ranging from 60% to as much as 85%, with the supporters of the pivotal AKEL vacillating between a third against and more than a half against. The small opening that appeared briefly in December 2002 was apparently 45% for the Plan, 40% against with 15% undecided.<sup>13</sup>

The Annan Plan may have had a chance, but again only barely, if Glafkos Clerides had won in the presidential elections of February 2003. However, a crucial structural parameter could have made the difference: if the EU had stated in no uncertain terms that entry comes only *after* re-unification. Of course such a decision by the EU would have been regarded as a form of blackmail to many a Greek-Cypriot and mainland Greek; as 'a Catch-22 situation' given Denktash, who dominated the scene at the time with his well-known intransigent posture. But in view of the hardening on the part of the Greek-Cypriots, it was probably the only way to avoid a clear 'No' and the prospect of eventual partition. However in the Copenhagen Meeting of December 2002 the EU decided that, if necessary, it could even accept a disunited Cyprus. With entry virtually in the bag, the Greek-Cypriots could relax and simply concentrate on avoiding being seen as dragging their feet. As the Turkish-Cypriots complained at the time, the other party had little incentive to show moderation and a spirit of compromise.

But then again a marginal 'Yes' by the Greek-Cypriots would have made the implementation of the Annan Plan virtually treading on thin ice. The various 'spoilers' and rejectionist 'outflankers' in both communities would have had ample opportunity to make the implementation of the new Cyprus Constitution a living nightmare for all concerned. They could even blow the whole edifice to pieces in what could have been a messy affair. After all these years clearly no lasting settlement can be achieved without the overwhelming and enthusiastic support of the great majority of both Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots<sup>14</sup> and the corresponding willingness and single mindedness of their respective leaderships, as seen with the mayhem to the east of Cyprus, in Israel and the Occupied Territories (Palestinians).

In any event, Clerides did not win the presidential elections of February 2003. Apparently, with resolution-reunification just around the corner in early 2003, most Greek-Cypriots 'began to have cold feet'.<sup>15</sup> As a cynic would put it, when the chips were down, the Greek-Cypriots made sure to place their own diehard at the helm, Tassos Papadopoulos, who could be counted upon to reject any form of power-sharing and equality with the Turkish-Cypriot community.<sup>16</sup>

### **The Rejection by the Republic of Cyprus: Seven Hypotheses in Search of Clear Evidence**

The handling of no lesser matter than the future of Cyprus by the Government of the Republic of Cyprus has raised many an eyebrow among the supporters of a solution, even among those with a decidedly pro-Greek-Cypriot inclination.

In particular, why did President Papadopoulos formally request the re-introduction of the Annan Plan in the first place, with his December 2003 letter to the UN Secretary General? Furthermore he clearly indicated that he was prepared to 'play ball' in his Brussels meeting with Kofi Annan, on 29 January 2004. Why act in such a manner and revive the Plan, a blueprint he disliked – as it turned out – so vigorously as to call for a 'resounding' rather than a qualified 'No'? The plan was safely on the shelf and as for the Secretary General he hardly seemed in earnest to make a comeback in the shifting Cyprus sands. Was the pressure from the Greek Government so intense that Papadopoulos felt he had to make such a move? This is not very convincing as far as the last months of the Simitis Government are concerned;<sup>17</sup> and in any event the assured victory of the party of New Democracy in the March 2004 elections in Greece (a fact well known throughout the previous year), was bound to relieve Papadopoulos from any firm Greek pressure, for the upcoming New Democracy's lack of enthusiasm for the Annan Plan had not remained a secret, certainly not to the Greek-Cypriot leader. Or was he motivated by the urge to placate or perhaps to outmanoeuvre his key partner AKEL? Did the Papadopoulos camp make its move out of a strong desire not to give the impression to the EU and to the UN that it was the 'spoiler' and to conveniently put all the blame on Rauf Denktaş? Alternatively, is it possible that he was so confident and impervious to international signals that he came to believe that he could change the Annan Plan substantially rendering it virtually unrecognisable?

In an attempt to make sense of the perplexing Greek-Cypriot posture, we would entertain some seven Rational Actor hypotheses as possible explanations: (a) sheer bad faith and duplicity; (b) the belief that an international conspiracy was afoot; (c) negotiating strategy along *Realpolitik* lines coupled with vintage Makarios brinkmanship; (d) the asset of EU membership negotiation-wise; (e) poker strategy; a fifty-year backward leap; and (e) the nationalist frame of mind.

These explanations do not cancel each other out, but could be read in various combinations, one or perhaps all reinforcing each other. I have derived most of them from a careful reading of the various statements made by President Papadopoulos himself and his supporters and on the extended heated debates that took place at the time, which found their expression in the Greek-Cypriot and Greek

press and other media.

### ***Bad Faith***

As it is well known, a number of governmental and intergovernmental officials with heavy involvement in this last ditch attempt to reunite Cyprus and resolve the problem, are left with the distinct feeling that the Greek-Cypriot leadership did not act in good faith, indeed that duplicity was afoot, from December 2003 onwards or even before that, from the moment that Papadopoulos took over, in February 2003.

This serious accusation is based on a number of inter-related reasons. An attempt to summarise them would include the following:<sup>18</sup>

- (1) The well-known fact that the Annan Plan did not come out of the blue, but covered well-known ground from similar plans that had been thoroughly discussed for some three decades.
- (2) The Annan Plan was open to reformulation; it was hardly on a 'take it or leave it' basis, as had been the Zurich-London Agreements of 1959 or the August 1974 Gunes Plan – in fact a Kissinger inspired Plan – for a federation on cantonal basis. Only the final Annan Plan (Plan 5), was not to be touched, with its provision that the referenda would have the last word.
- (3) The Plan had picked up at the point where the Clerides-Denktaş talks faltered in mid-2002. However in those secret talks a number of difficulties had been overcome and there was notable headway, though this was not known to the wider public, due to the embargo on divulging information and in view of the agreed procedure, which was 'nothing is decided before everything is decided'.
- (4) The Plan, for all its drawbacks (e.g., in the economic sphere, a weakness that was apparently remedied by Plans 4 and 5, the role of the guarantor powers, which is patently an anachronism, etc.) was widely regarded, at least outside Cyprus, as a sound, balanced and fair deal for both sides, establishing a system of loose federation and power-sharing known to work in other situations of deep ethnic division.
- (5) The understanding at top EU level in December 2002 at Copenhagen (when resolution-reunion was not put as a pre-condition for entry), was that on the Greek-Cypriot side everything possible would be done to resolve the conflict before admission; rejection could come only from the Turkish-Cypriots under Denktaş, who would have suffered the consequences of intransigence. A Greek-Cypriot 'No' was simply inconceivable.

Under this light the handling of the whole matter by President Papadopoulos, appears perplexing to say the least. What makes it appear even more questionable internationally is that even before the New York Meeting, the Greek-Cypriot leader had done his utmost to undermine and demonise the Annan Plan in every



imaginable way. Characteristically, the Greek-Cypriot leader did not make realistic and constructive proposals for the amelioration of the Plan so as to meet Greek-Cypriot needs and anxieties, in spite of the repeated prompting by Alvaro de Soto, by Annan himself and by the EU, British and United States envoys and others. The last touch was of course the Russian veto in the Security Council secured by none other than the Republic of Cyprus, so as to wreck AKEL's last attempt to salvage the Annan Plan.

Of course it could be that the international society got it all wrong and that the Greek-Cypriots under their new leader were acting in good faith from day one. This is what Papadopoulos has claimed, forcefully, in his detailed official reply to the final Annan Report. Alternatively, he may indeed have acted in bad faith precisely because he was totally convinced of the nastiness of the whole Plan: not only did it spell disaster as a badly conceived plan, but it was deliberately intended to damage the Greek-Cypriots and rob them of their gains. This brings us to the next two hypotheses.

### ***Conspiracy Theory***

The international conspiracy-international collusion approach has a long tradition in Cyprus and has earned a place even among some studies of the Cyprus problem that claim scholarly credentials. The two first presidents of Cyprus, Makarios and his successor Kyprianou, are well known to have peddled this view (and this remains a favourite line in mainland Greece until this day, even among many informed people). Kyprianou for instance rejected the very promising 'ABC Plan' of 1979, a joint plan of the United States (then under a President Carter eager to placate the Greeks when he was about to lift the arms embargo on Turkey), Britain and Canada, not so much on the basis of its merits as a scheme, but because it was regarded as an imposed plan by untrustworthy authors to boot.<sup>19</sup> The international conspiracy theory is also one of the favourite lines of AKEL (and of the Left in general in Greece) particularly if it can be branded as 'an imperialist plot'. Ironically on the Turkish-Cypriot side, international conspiracy is traditionally one of the favourite hobbyhorses of none other than Rauf Denktaş, who also sees the Annan Plan in this light.

It is thus far from implausible that Papadopoulos had reached the conclusion that the Annan Plan – not least because of the active involvement on the part of the United States and Britain – was an ingenious ploy to outmanoeuvre the Greek-Cypriots, destroy their state and impose an unworkable federation that would have amounted to 'a partition in disguise'. Hence his dramatic statement that "I have not received a state to deliver a community", which created a stir among his compatriots. And Papadopoulos was not alone in this assessment. Apparently a noteworthy number of Greek-Cypriots, even sophisticated members of that

community, with liberal or leftist inclinations, had been made to believe that the international society, at UN level, had for some reason conspired against them under the guidance of Washington and 'perfidious Albion'; that the United States and Britain have huge interests in Cyprus, which, presumably, could not be met by the British bases alone; that the astute UN Secretary General and his envoy, Alvaro de Soto, were mere lackeys of the Americans.

*Tough Negotiating Strategy*

Under the circumstances and to the extent that the Plan was seen as harmful and devious, a tough negotiating strategy may have appeared as the most appropriate and effective way to deal with the matter.<sup>20</sup> According to the blunt version of the traditional Realist Paradigm of international politics, the most appropriate negotiating strategy is to put maximum pressure and appear intransigent so as to extract as many gains as possible for one's own side and inflict as many losses as possible to one's adversary.<sup>21</sup> This was after all the favourite approach of Papadopoulos's mentor, the venerable President Makarios.

If this was, by and large, the strategy followed by Papadopoulos, it is more than clear that the post-Clerides Greek-Cypriot leadership does not seem to realise that this device has run its course and in today's setting it is more likely to be counter-productive. The lesson to be drawn from its 'over-use' by the Greek-Cypriots, is that it has led to every new solution (which was rejected on the basis of 'realist' assumptions) being usually worse than the previous one, at least for them. In the case of President Makarios, his famous '*krimnovasia*' (brinkmanship) is not only an act hard to follow, but was clearly a failure in the long run. It did not lead the Greek-Cypriots very far save perhaps in the period 1964-1974, a situation that was so unreal and untenable (with the Turkish-Cypriots cramped in enclaves) that it could not have lasted very long. Note that Makarios' handiwork in all the attempts at solving the Cyprus problem – which, interestingly, has left him with many admirers till this day, particularly among Greek-Cypriots – had made him non-credible as a negotiator for the future of Cyprus. Papadopoulos will probably find himself in the same predicament should he attempt to re-open the negotiations on Cyprus's future.

The greatest mistake of the Greek-Cypriots is that in their majority they continue to see the conflict in zero-sum terms (one's gains are the other's losses and the other way round). This is a decidedly self-defeating strategy as the history of the Cyprus problem has shown from the 1950s onwards. Only 'new thinking', a problem-solving approach, aimed at a 'win-win' solution can lead to the resolution of the Cyprus problem.<sup>22</sup> After all the Greek-Cypriots are supposed to live in harmony with their Turkish-Cypriot compatriots. For this to come about the aim cannot possibly be to end up with net-losers and net-winners. The various sacrifices

should be outweighed by gains to both sides and by meeting their fundamental human needs that have suffered under the existing *de facto* partition reigning from 1974 onwards.

***EU Membership as an Asset Negotiation-wise***

The Greek-Cypriots had assured entry into the EU even without solving their 'national issue' (that is reunification). Hence they could choose to play indifferent or tough with little risk and this is precisely what Papadopoulos did once he took over power. One of the basic rationales behind the Greek-Cypriot rejection was that 'once we are in the EU we will be in a better position to negotiate the future of Cyprus'. This line was convincing even to many people outside the hardcore rejectionist camp.

To my mind this is probably the most serious argument put forward by the Papadopoulos camp. However even this seemingly 'tough nut' is far from difficult to crack. Indeed upon closer scrutiny it is almost equally unrealistic if not indefensible in the case of Cyprus. For one, the Turkish-Cypriots and Turkey will not oblige; they will not fall on their feet begging for entry at any price as Papadopoulos believed, not least because they can afford to do so, being the clear moral victors of 24 April 2004. And President Papadopoulos, try, as he might, is not likely to find supporters for such tactics among his EU partners, save perhaps lip service by an embarrassed and far from enthusiastic Greek Government. But the real problem with this line of thinking on the part of the Greek-Cypriots is that it runs against the grain of conflict resolution in the Cyprus situation, of a just and logical outcome, which can only be, as we have pointed out above, a solution with a 'win-win outcome' and not one based on outwitting and imposing one's will on the 'underdog', the Turkish-Cypriots, from a position of strength, by being in the EU.

***Poker Strategy***

Several relentless critics of Greek-Cypriot rejectionism, in Cyprus, Greece and beyond, have been discussing the situation as it evolved with the use of the 'poker game' analogy; in particular that the Greek-Cypriots were conveniently 'hiding behind Denktash'. Though obviously proof is needed to substantiate this view it is hardly far-fetched.

If one is to follow this line of reasoning, the situation probably unfolded itself as follows from December 2003 onwards. For whatever reason (strong international pressure, AKEL or other), Papadopoulos decided to re-open the discussion on the Plan in December 2003. He confidently calculated that he could afford to take the plunge for he was absolutely convinced that Denktash would not budge an inch; furthermore that Ankara would back his intransigence all the way, because its newly-found support for the Plan was only skin-deep and basically a propaganda

stunt aimed to gain a date for the start of negotiations for EU entry. At this point it was stressing that for Papadopoulos and his confidants in Cyprus and in Greece, Turkey is not – and cannot become – a normal democratic state; it is nothing more than an aggressive militaristic dictatorship in all but in name; should it try to change and try to become more democratic and European it will be committing suicide as a state.

If the presentation so far resembles what actually transpired, the New York experience (with Erdogan putting great pressure on Denktash to change his position) must have come as a huge shock to the Greek-Cypriot leader. His bluff was called, but obviously he could not stall in New York and thus reveal to the whole world that he had been conveniently 'hiding' behind Denktash all along. It seems that when Papadopoulos found himself in this dire position, Athens contacted him, to see if he needed its assistance to extract himself from the three-stage procedure that had been decided in New York (bilateral talks- talks that would include Athens and Ankara-referenda). Apparently he found the nerve to retort that he was in full control of the situation.<sup>23</sup> Yet in no way was he in control. Erdogan had deftly pulled the carpet from under his feet and he was now 'hooked', in what appeared to be an 'automatic pilot' procedure of three stages, leading almost certainly to the adoption of the Annan Plan in its final version.

However the three-stage automatic pilot process was far from watertight as some of us had pointed out at the time.<sup>24</sup> The wily Greek-Cypriot leader had one last ace up his sleeve: apart from doing nothing in stage one (the bilateral talks) and giving ample room for Denktash to make a mockery of the talks, he knew that, at the end of the day, he could muster a 'resounding No' in the Referendum. This was his first concern upon his return to Nicosia from New York: to build on the damage he had already done among his constituency to the Annan Plan. The rest is history. He pulled it off leaving the rest of the world dumfounded.

### *Going Back Half a Century*

According to yet another view, the Greek-Cypriot leader's acquiescence in New York or even before that, with his December 2003 letter to the Secretary General, was a calculated move all along to throw the Annan Plan into the dustbin for good.

This line may overestimate the guile of President Papadopoulos, but one aspect of it is worth taking on board: the goal of demolishing any prospect of power-sharing and equality with the Turkish-Cypriots. Papadopoulos is well known for decades for neither favouring the status of the Turkish-Cypriots as a community nor favouring a binational federation, let alone a loose federation. For him as for Lyssarides or the ultra-nationalist party, *Neoi Orizontes*, the Turkish-Cypriots cannot be permitted to become equals not even quasi-equals (Junior partners) in Cyprus. For them Cyprus

is 'Greek', it belongs to the 'Greeks'. Put in current legal parlance, the logic is as follows: the Turkish-Cypriots are a minority; hence, whether they like it or not, they should respect the will of the majority and be content with minority rights and protection in what would after all be a democratic Greek Cyprus, based on Westminster-style majority rule. As for the majority it goes without saying that it will not abuse its power but act compassionately towards the minority, within the confines of the rule of law.

Of course the official public line of Papadopoulos has not been to actually hark back to the pre-Zurich period, that is to the state affairs before the Turkish-Cypriots were officially acknowledged as a community, but rather to speak in terms of a workable tight federation and not the loose 'unworkable' one foreseen by the Annan Plan. But even if there has been a switch in the Papadopoulos camp from the aim of a unitary Greek-Cypriot dominated state to that of a tight federation – which is very doubtful, AKEL's claims notwithstanding – it is equally a non-starter. In present terms a tight federation implies the clear dominance of the numerical majority (as was the case with Canada many decades ago and could have been the case with Switzerland, had the German speakers asserted their status on the basis of being a clear majority of almost 70%). Furthermore, when the partners are two and not three or more, it is obvious that the relationship can only be one of equality or quasi-equality at least at the legal-constitutional level, with clear elements of consociationalism and positive discrimination to protect the weaker party from abuse of power by the far larger and more powerful group.

### ***The Nationalist Mind-Set***

As it is well known for the majority of Greek-Cypriots there is a clear preference for the Greek flag, instead of the flag of Cyprus. And the Republic of Cyprus has, incredibly, been using from around 1967 the national anthem of Greece as its official national anthem. Clearly this is the constituency likely to be moved by Papadopoulos's dramatic plea for a 'resounding No' to the apparently 'horrible' Annan Plan. One could perhaps go a bit further and place this whole development that brought Tassos Papadopoulos to power, to the nationalist backlash that surfaced in the days of Vassiliou's Presidency, placing constant obstacles to his sincere and bold attempts to resolve the Cyprus problem.

For staunch EOKA nationalists, like Papadopoulos and the hard core of his supporters, the Turks are basically outsiders, not very different from the Turkish settlers sent by Turkey after 1974; they are an alien body in the island, reminiscent of the Ottoman conquest and of the repulsive 'Turkish yoke'.<sup>25</sup> For the nationalist mind-set among the Greek-Cypriots and in Greece any compromise is deemed even worse than a sell-out; it is regarded as demeaning, as an affront to Greek national honour and dignity. For Papadopoulos, like his mentor Makarios, the goal

of the 'Greeks of Cyprus' (as he prefers to call the Greek-Cypriots), be it Enosis or a state of their own in the whole of the island, is a *belle cause*, presumably morally unassailable. The Greek of Cyprus, locked, as they are in their own 'groupthink', impervious to any negative feedback from without, basking in their glorious Greek pedigree, cannot even contemplate the Turkish-Cypriots as equals, but only as the despicable 'Trojan horse' of the great and terrible enemy, Turkey. And clearly it is beyond their capacity to grasp that the Turkish-Cypriots may also have a noble cause of their own, which in 1964-1974 was more elementary – and for this reason more laudable internationally – for it was none other than their cultural if not their physical survival.<sup>26</sup>

***Another Possible Explanation: 'No Solution is a Solution'***

Clearly more hard evidence is needed to establish which, if any, of the above seven explanations is closer to what actually transpired in the hearts and minds of the Greek-Cypriot leadership in the crucial period from February 2003 until the referenda. For my part I would also seriously toy with another possibility that would give another twist to the above seven explanations. It goes as follows: perhaps the more pragmatic Greek-Cypriot rejectionists were aware that with their stance they were throwing out the baby with the bathwater, but in fact this is precisely what they wanted. Since they realised that they could not possibly ever get all of Cyprus under their control they were prepared to accept partition though, for obvious reasons, they could not say this openly. This harks back to a famous adage on the Cyprus problem: that the 'lack of solution is a solution', for any solution on the basis of equality with Turkish Cyprus is totally unacceptable.

### **Future Scenarios**

In the wake of the referenda, a number of scenarios have been entertained for the immediate future. They include the following:

- To try to revitalise the Annan Plan by making a number of changes that would suit those Greek-Cypriots who are not in fact diehard rejectionists but could support a federation based on equality between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots.
- To let the matter stand in a state of limbo until another opportunity for resolution arrives which could perhaps be linked with Turkey's entry into the EU.
- To accept that for the time being and for the foreseeable future the conflict may not have been resolved through reunification, but that it has been settled, by default, with the crystallisation of the separation, by what is probably an irreversible process leading to final partition establishing some kind of *de facto* confederation.
- Another possibility is what could be called incremental reunification, through

the back door, as it were, by various well-calculated initiatives on the part of the EU, since Cyprus (the island of Cyprus) is after all nominally in the EU in one piece and not in two morsels.

On the basis of what we have discussed above and as long as Tassos Papadopoulos is at the helm, the prospects for a breakthrough and another go at the Annan Plan – as it is or with some minor changes – are dim if non-existent. On the other hand the ball is clearly on the Greek-Cypriot court. And even if a segment of the Greek-Cypriots could be convinced by ameliorations in the Annan Plan – notably in the economic sphere, as regards security, the guarantees question, etc. – the results of a second referendum could hardly be the exact opposite: a resounding 'Yes', which is absolutely necessary if the loose federation envisaged by the Plan is to work smoothly.

After a number of years, say in 2010, 2014 or 2024 another opportunity for reunion may arise. Reinforcing elements that one could envisage are the positive experience of having lived as members of the EU for several years that may put the Greek-Cypriots more at ease; having lived without friction side by side with the Turkish-Cypriots, in what would be a *de facto* confederal system; the rise to power of moderate Greek-Cypriot leaders in the footsteps of Vassiliou; corresponding power to staunch moderates among the Turkish-Cypriots, people like Mustafa Akinci; even more cordial relations between Greece and Turkey; and an eventual official entry of Turkey; and not just of any Turkey, but of a genuinely democratic, culturally pluralistic and Western-oriented country into the EU.

Such developments would no doubt contribute immensely to allaying the present security and other fears of the Greek-Cypriots. But they are a tall order and hard to come about. But to set the ball rolling once again, what is needed is the following, as stated by the UN Secretary General: if the Greek-Cypriots "remain willing to resolve the Cyprus problem through a bicomunal, bizonal federation, *this needs to be demonstrated*" [our emphasis].<sup>27</sup> Of course such willingness has to be reciprocated by the other side and to be seen as genuine. Yet it may well be that the recent overwhelming Greek-Cypriot rejection and the role of AKEL in this, has done irreparable damage in this regard.

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For the immediate future it would seem that Cyprus does not lend itself so much to an immediate conflict settlement, but rather to skilful and imaginative conflict management and conflict prevention under the EU, hopefully with Greece and Turkey on board as forces for moderation. The over-riding task is easing the turbulence and showing an abundance of good will. However the most pressing

task on the table boils down to one over-riding issue: how the Turkish-Cypriot side will no more be isolated and become incorporated, as soon as possible, into the EU and into the world at large. However until now very little has been done on this score. And it is not only the legalistic stance of the Republic of Cyprus that is to blame for this, but also the pusillanimity of the EU that is difficult to understand.

Of course, the ultimate question remains: are the Greek-Cypriots, in spite of their recent negative stance, in favour of living together with the Turkish-Cypriots on the basis of equality, in the post-Denktaş, post-Papadopoulos era? Or is Cyprus an open and shut case, perhaps 'a burnt out case'? For the time being at least, I think that we can safely surmise that the island of Cyprus remains 'an unimaginable community'<sup>28</sup> and will probably remain so for many years to come. It may well be that for all practical purposes the Greek-Cypriots with their 'No' have 'resolved' the 55-year Cyprus question by a divorce. After all 'marriage' by arm-twisting or even by a generous dowry can make little headway and it is more likely to be unworkable. Separation, division, partition or whatever one may call it, is one way of resolving ethnic clashes. If you cannot keep them together, keep them apart.

At the end of it all what is perplexing is the apparent determination on the Greek-Cypriot side, at this historical juncture, to have it both ways: on the one hand not having been prepared to accept the Turkish-Cypriots as an equal in the state of Cyprus and on the other wanting the whole island for their own. Obviously, the Greek-Cypriots can if they so wish, have a state only of their own. No one would dare deprive them of such an expression of self-determination, however short-sighted this may be seen to many. But in this case they will be left, inevitably, with half of Cyprus for their own. Apparently many in the southern part of the island for some reason cannot easily grasp this simple fact.

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### Notes

\* I would like to thank two anonymous referees who made valuable comments to the first version of this article.

1. 'Report of the Secretary-General on his Mission of Good-Offices in Cyprus', United Nations/Security Council, S/2004/37, 28 May 2004 [henceforth *Annan Report*], p. 20.

2. For an attempt at a brief overall appraisal of the Cyprus problem and its main features from 1948 until 2003, see Heraclides, A. (2003) 'The 55 Year Cyprus Debacle: a Bird's Eye View', *The Cyprus Review*, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 65-80.

3. *Annan Report*, p. 1.

4. *Annan Report*, p. 20.

5. On this last point see in particular Markides, K. (1995) 'I Kypros kai oi prospathies gia



omospondia' [Cyprus and the Attempts at Federation] in Peristianis, N. and Tsangaras G. (eds.), *I Anatomia mias metamorfosis: I Kypros meta to 1974* [The Anatomy of a Metamorphosis: Cyprus after 1974], Nicosia, Intercollege, p. 340; and Loizos, P. (1995) 'Katanoontas to 1974, Katanoontas to 1994' [Understanding 1974, Understanding 1994] in Peristianis, N. and Tsangaras G. (eds.), op. cit., pp. 114-115.

6. Vayrynen, R. (1991) 'To Settle or to Transform? Perspectives on the Resolution of National and International Conflicts' in Vayrynen, R. (ed.), *New Directions in Conflict Theory: Conflict Resolution and Conflict Transformation*. London, Sage.

7. Based on discussions with distinguished Greek retired ambassadors and veteran politicians with extended experience of the Cyprus affair. Others of course with deeper knowledge of Cyprus were less surprised.

8. Based on discussions in previous years with several senior leftist Greek-Cypriots, who were wary of this AKEL stance.

9. See Heraclides, A. (2002) *To Kypriako: Syngrousi kai epi/lysi* [The Cyprus Problem: Conflict and Resolution]. Athens, I. Sideris. Heraclides, A. (2002), op. cit., pp. 342-346. I ended up with this result based on the 2001 elections in the Republic of Cyprus. At the time I was far too harsh with DISY, having roughly calculated 20% of the 34% of DISY as hardliners.

10. *Annan Report*, p. 20.

11. This list is largely based on Stavrinides, Z. (1999) 'Greek Cypriot Perceptions' in Dodd, C.H. (ed.), *Cyprus: The Need for New Perspectives*. London, The Eothen Press, pp. 59-61. Interestingly, the May 2004 memorandum of eleven points explaining the reasons for the rejection of the Annan Plan which was tendered to the various embassies in Nicosia by Papadopoulos (without the previous knowledge of the National Council of the Republic of Cyprus, something which created a row in its midst) runs more or less along these lines.

12. Heraclides, A. (2002) op. cit., p. 348.

13. The research of opinion polls is by Ilias Nikolakopoulos and his colleagues. I would like to thank him for the information and for allowing me to mention his findings.

14. Bahcheli T. and Rizopoulos, N. (1996/1997) 'The Cyprus Impasse: What Next?', *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 14, No. 4, p. 28; Heraclides, A. (2002) op. cit., pp. 338 and 380.

15. Heraclides, A. (2003) op. cit., p. 66.

16. Papadopoulos's statements against power-sharing and a binational federal solution are legion. In the early 1960s he was, together with his close friend and associate, Polykarpos Yiorkantzis, an unrepentant supporter of *Enosis*. Days after the second Turkish invasion, as president of Parliament, in talks with the top leadership in Athens (Premier Constantine Karamanlis), he openly disagreed with the then Acting President Glafkos Clerides who favoured a federal solution, arguing that there was no need for haste. See *The Karamanlis Archives*, Vol. 8, pp. 122-123. In the 1980s he even accused President Spyros Kyprianou, who had made it a habit of rejecting one sound resolution plan after another (the ABC Plan and the various De Cuellar Plan), for being too soft on the Turks and Turkish-Cypriots. See Greek-Cypriot press of the time.

17. According to fairly reliable information, the Simitis Government was losing its patience with Papadopoulos but in its last months in office was pushing him less than before, to the annoyance of the Greek-Cypriot leaders who were sticking their neck out for a solution. This lax on the part of Athens was obvious from the eve of the New York meeting onward, making Papadopoulos feel more comfortable than previously with the Simitis Government.

18. Based on a series of interviews of this author with officials who prefer to be left unnamed. I have written extensively in this vein in the Greek Press. See e.g., Heraclides, A. *Ta Nea* (3 October 2002, 20 February 2003, 22 May 2003, 4 March 2004, 26 April 2004), *Eleftherotypia* (28 March 2004).

19. Groom, A. J. R. (1993) 'The Process of Negotiation, 1974-1993' in Dodd, C. H. (ed.), *The Political, Social and Economic Development of Northern Cyprus*. Huntington, The Eothen Press, p. 21.

20. This was precisely the advice put forward to President Papadopoulos by various well-known analysts of the blunt version of realism in international relations in Cyprus and Greece.

21. A characteristic recent article which follows this misleading approach is Kentas, G. I. (2003) 'A Realist Evaluation of Cyprus' Survival Dilemma as a Result of the Annan Plan', *The Cyprus Review*, Vol.15, No. 2.

22. See Hadjipavlou-Trigeorgis, M. and Trigeorgis, L. (1993) 'Cyprus: An Evolutionary Approach to Conflict Resolution', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 37, No. 2. For the positive sum approach to conflict resolution see John W. Burton's classic works.

23. This part of the jigsaw puzzle is based on interviews by the author with participants who for obvious reasons do not want to be named.

24. See Heraclides, A. 'Den arkei o aftomatos pilotos' [the automatic pilot does not suffice] *Ta Nea* (4 March 2004).

25. Incidentally Ottoman rule was far from repulsive as painted by today's Greek-Cypriots and by their dominant national narrative. Under Ottoman rule the Church grew in stature with the Archbishop of Cyprus as the *Milletbashi* (the leader of the Greek Orthodox *mille* . See Markides, K. C. (1977) *The Rise and Fall of the Cyprus Republic*. New Haven, Yale University Press, pp. 3-5; Pollis, A. (1973) 'Intergroup Conflict and British Colonial Policy: The Case of Cyprus', *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 5, No. 4, pp. 582-583.

26. Heraclides, A. (2002) op. cit., p. 98.

27. *Annan Report*, pp.1-2.

28. Taken from the sub-title of an edited volume on Cyprus, see Calotychos, V. (ed.), (1998) *Cyprus and its People: Nation, Identity, and Experience in an Unimaginable Community, 1955-1997*. Boulder, Westview Press.