

# Solving the Cyprus Problem: An Evolutionary Approach

CHRISTOS YIANGOU<sup>1</sup>

For too many years Greek Cypriots (G/Cs) and Turkish Cypriots (T/Cs) have been trying hard, under the auspices of the United Nations (UN), to solve the Cyprus problem and reunite their beautiful island (strategically located in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea) under a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation. But regardless of the various efforts by successive Secretaries-General of the UN and their representatives, and of the international community in general, to assist both the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities reach an everlasting agreement to resolve the problem, no substantial result has so far been produced. The most significant effort by the UN to find a solution to the problem culminated in 2004 with the Annan Plan (named after the former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan). This Plan, presented to both communities in separate referenda, was accepted by the T/C community but rejected by the G/C people as non-viable. Following the Annan Plan debacle, the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) in its totality became a full member of the European Union (EU) as of 1 May 2004. That said, the implementation of the European Law (Acquis Communautaire) was temporarily suspended in the northern part of the island, which is controlled by the T/Cs under the umbrella of the non-recognised 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC)'. In 2008, after four years of stagnation, the current UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon made a decision to renew the UN efforts to resolve the Cyprus problem by inviting both sides to a new round of negotiations. The dialogue, almost six years later, is still ongoing, albeit with some interruptions but the parleys have yielded little or no result. This stalemate, however, is due to the huge gap in the positions of both sides on the core issues under discussion. Namely, the maximum concessions that one side is ready to make on the current chapters of arbitration at the negotiating table do not meet the minimum requirements which the other side is ready to accept, and vice-versa. In the short term, because of the aforementioned (non) developments, the outcome to any impartial observer is that there is no sign of light at the end of the tunnel for the Cyprus problem.

Yet why have all these rounds of negotiations to solve the Cyprus problem failed? Presumably because, via this protracted consultation process, G/Cs and T/Cs have always put the cart before the horse. In other words, instead of eradicating the causes for a non-solution, thus creating the

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1 An earlier version of this essay is available at [[www.kiatipis.org/writers/ch/christosyiangou/2013-04-23\\_solving.the.cyprus.problem.an.evolutionary.approach.pdf](http://www.kiatipis.org/writers/ch/christosyiangou/2013-04-23_solving.the.cyprus.problem.an.evolutionary.approach.pdf)].

necessary conditions for the implementation of a viable solution (i.e. trust, confidence, proven record of political, economic and cultural collaboration between the two Cypriot communities, cultivation of common interests, willingness for a change of the current *status quo*) prior to any substantial negotiation for a comprehensive solution, the two Cypriot communities have continuously attempted to negotiate a solution before these conditions were put in place. Thus, the failure!

It would seem evident from the above that a new approach is needed to assist in solving the Cyprus problem, an approach that should aim at cultivating the bi-communal socio-political and cultural ground before any comprehensive solution is negotiated and agreed. That is, rather than trying to pre-maturely reach a comprehensive solution to the problem in a single stage, the G/Cs and T/Cs could attempt to reach a solution by adopting an evolutionary (or a step-by-step) approach. A gradual approach could offer the two Cypriot communities the opportunity to fulfil their negotiating interests by creating trust and confidence concurrently; something quintessential for a future comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem based on a new future revised plan by the UN.

### **The Cyprus Problem**

The Cyprus problem is the result of a protracted conflict between the RoC – a full member of the EU – and Turkey over the Turkish occupied northern part of Cyprus. Even though the ethnic nature of this problem involves the Turkish and the Greek communities, the international complications extend beyond the boundaries of the island of Cyprus itself and primarily include the guarantor powers of the RoC (Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom (UK)) the United States of America (USA), the UN, and the EU.

More specifically, since the inter-communal hostilities broke out in December 1963, three-and-a-half years after Cyprus gained its independence from Britain under a bi-communal, power-sharing constitution, the territory of Cyprus has essentially been divided between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities making up its society ratio – re population division – of 78:18 with the remaining 4% made up by the three minority communities: the Latins, Maronites and Armenians. On 20 July 1974, following a military *coup d'état* (instigated by the Greek junta and executed by nationalists from the then Cypriot National Guard) against the then President of the RoC, Archbishop Makarios, Turkey invaded the island and occupied the northern part of internationally recognised Cyprus. This triggered the exodus of an overwhelming majority of G/Cs from the northern part to inhabit the land in the southern part of the country and transferred the T/C community from the southern to the northern part. In 1983, nine years after the Turkish invasion (formally disapproved by the UN Security Council), the T/C community, unilaterally declared independence in the northern area, forming the 'TRNC', a sovereign entity that still lacks international recognition with the exception of Turkey with whom the 'TRNC' maintains full diplomatic relations. Also, a Buffer Zone (the Green Line), created by the UN to avoid inter-

communal tensions and hostilities, has been retained since 1974. This zone still separates the Greek Cypriot-controlled south from the Turkish Cypriot-controlled north.

Since 1977 the two communities and the guarantor countries have committed themselves to finding a peaceful solution to the Cyprus problem in the form of a bi-communal, bi-zonal (or bi-regional) federation based on *political equality*, through a negotiating process under the auspices of the UN. Endless rounds of talks have been undertaken by successive leaders of both communities with no fruitful outcome, despite encouragement and advice by the UN plus other international bodies and major international powers. Today, Cyprus still remains divided between an unrecognised 'TRNC' in the north and a recognised RoC in the south, each with its own ethnic community, government and state administrations.

### **A Protracted Problem**

Why has the Cyprus problem not been solved yet? This is certainly NOT because the two communities have been traditionally deprived of constructive ideas, plans and proposals to solve the said problem. On the contrary, since 1977 the UN have literally bombarded the G/Cs and the T/Cs with many imaginative ideas, plans and proposals that could, in principle, help the two sides to reach a balanced agreement of forming a united RoC based on a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation with *political equality*. But, for different reasons, it seems that the two Cypriot communities have so far been unable to grasp the various opportunities that have been given to them and resolve the Cyprus problem in a realistic and mutually acceptable manner.

By and large it appears that the fundamental reason why the Cyprus problem has not been solved is the traditional lack of political will by both sides to find a balanced comprehensive solution that can address the current needs and interests of both sides. For instance, this absence of political will is evidenced by the fact that irrespective of time running against the interests of the two sides, thus far depriving them of many opportunities for common development and prosperity, they are still, after decades, resilient to such a solution.

The seemingly non-existent political will to find a solution to the problem is, nonetheless, a result of the current state of mistrust that survives between the two Cypriot communities to form a common state. Lack of trust is marked in the way each side perceives (or misperceives) the other's public statements and official negotiating positions. Roughly 22 years ago, the then UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his report to the UN Security Council of his mission of good offices in Cyprus, dated 19 November 1992 (S/24830), described the position of the two communities in relation to the then UN 'set of ideas' to solve the Cyprus problem as follows: He rightly observed that there was a 'deep crisis of confidence between the two sides' which made it 'difficult to envisage any successful outcome to the talks for as long as this situation prevails' (para. 63), and simultaneously suggested the implementation of a series of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs).

The lack of trust is directly related to the fact that, rightly or wrongly, both the G/Cs and the T/Cs are afraid of one another. The G/Cs are afraid that – via a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation with *political equality* – the T/Cs will one day find a pretext to secede from the new Federal State and eventually de jure divide the island into two states and the T/Cs are afraid that the G/Cs will one day find a pretext to dominate them.

This common fear (or phobia to a large extent) which has so far resulted in the failure by both sides to reach a comprehensive solution of the Cyprus Problem based on a bi-communal, bi-zonal federation with *political equality*, emanates from five basic reasons as follows:

First of all it is the continuous presence of the Turkish army in Cyprus. Even though this presence has created a feeling of security within the majority of the T/C community it has still produced the opposite result within the G/C population. The fact that Turkey continues to maintain a heavily equipped army in Cyprus – a member state of the EU – gives rise to fear and alarm within the G/C people and deprives them of the chance to see any good intentions by Turkey to facilitate a solution of the Cyprus problem. This insecurity factor played an important role in leading the G/C community to vote 'no' for the Annan Plan in 2004.

Secondly, it is a conflicting historical past exacerbated by the historical involvement in this problem of the two 'motherlands' namely, Turkey and Greece. This past has been perceived and explained by every side's overwhelming majority in a subjective and opposing manner. Indeed, as Zenon Stavrinides, a professor of philosophy, has eloquently argued:

'... the two Cypriot communities in their vast majorities, give very different explanations of the character of the Cyprus problem, how it came about, and what would be a just and viable settlement of it; and further, the two communities dismiss with disdain each other's accounts as untrue, insincere and self-serving ... each of the communities harbours a huge trauma for which it blames the injustices committed by the other side, and it wants to secure at the negotiating table concessions from the other side to remove, as far as possible, the injustices ... The Greek Cypriots in their large majority believe that the central core of the problem – the "essence of the problem" as they often say – is the terrible wrong done to them by the ... Turkish invasion of 20 July 1974 which resulted in probably more than 3,000 dead and 1,400 missing persons, as well as other victims of inhuman mistreatment and widespread rape. The continuing occupation of the northern part of the island by the Turkish army, in blatant breach of international law and morality ... [and] the displacement of some 180,000 Greek Cypriots from their homes and properties in the north, the *de facto* partitioning of the island, the illegal immigration of tens of thousands of people from Turkey intended to change the demographic composition of the island, and so on ...

On the other side of the territorial and social divide, the Turkish Cypriot community in their large majority, take the view – which is also the standard view of Turkey's officialdom and the media – that the Cyprus problem ... broke out in December 1963, when Greek Cypriots, failing to intimidate them into accepting changes to the bi-communal constitutional order as a prelude to bring about enosis, attacked them with groups of armed irregulars. Turkish Cypriots, in their

thousands, were forced to leave their homes in isolated or mixed villages and move in fear of their safety to enclaves defended by a few hundreds of Turkish troops and their own poorly armed irregulars ... The Turkish Cypriot community's experience of living as "second-class citizens" in enclaves left a deep trauma and had a formative influence on the collective mind of all those who went through it ... Turkish Cypriots have had to exist without a recognised state, without an international accepted government which was capable of speaking for them in the family of nations as an equal member ...<sup>2</sup>

In addition, the trust gap between the two sides further widened in the aftermath of the Annan Plan referenda: a traumatic experience on both sides of the divide after the T/Cs voted 'yes' to the Plan and the G/Cs voted 'no'. In the T/C minds the G/C 'no vote' to the specific plan seemed a condemnation of a solution based on a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation with *political equality*.

Thirdly, it is a reality that strong and influential ruling economic, political and religious elites on both sides oppose a bizonal, bicomunal federal solution based on political equality. These elites believe, rightly or wrongly (and predominantly, I must add, on the G/C side) that the political and socio-economic cost of a solution based on a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation with *political equality* outweighs the various benefits that such a solution might yield for their respective communities and, therefore, oppose it. Moreover, there appears to be fear and phobia by certain political, economic and religious elites on both sides that an alteration of the current *status quo*, via a solution, may potentially endanger their subjective political and economic interests. These elites have apparently seen their political, economic and social status rising in the wake of the 1974 tragic events and they are possibly convinced that any solution of the Cyprus problem might endanger all the benefits that they have accrued since 1974. In this respect it might be the case with further analysis that the self-same elites believe they are benefiting more, politically and economically, from a non-solution rather than from a solution. Therefore, these elites opt for the continuation of the *status quo* as a 'second best solution' and to this end they are able to cultivate a similar view within public opinion on both sides by using various mass media and educational means and tools.

Fourthly, it is also a fact that both G/Cs and T/Cs have not been educated to become citizens of a Federal State. The influential political elites of both sides seem to have refrained from educating Cypriot students and citizens as to what it means to be a citizen of a federal state as opposed to being a member of an ethnic community. This, for example, is why a recent initiative by Anastasiades' Administration to upgrade the lesson of 'Federation' within G/C high schools was confronted with disdain and strong objection by many G/C political and economic elites. Textbooks, in both G/C and T/C primary and secondary schools, seem to be still biased and non-objective, to a lesser or larger extent, in the way they portray the 'other side' and the island's historical past.

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2 Z. Stavrinides (2009) 'Dementia Cypria: On the Social Psychological Environment of the Intercommunal Negotiations', *The Cyprus Review*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Spring), pp. 175-186.

Last of all, it is the absence of bold leadership by both sides. That is, throughout their protracted political ordeal, both G/Cs and T/Cs have been deprived of enlightened leaders – perhaps only with the exception of former President George Vassiliou – who might be able to inspire the two communities and persuade them that the benefits of a unified Cyprus outweigh those of a divided country. Up to now there appears to be no leaders on either side of the divide who can pinpoint a way to peace and reconciliation that both communities would be willing to follow.

Based on the above it is, in my opinion, futile to keep trying to find a comprehensive solution of the Cyprus Problem before eradicating the five primary reasons outlined which have nurtured the dispute for so many years. In any event, in order to achieve this it is necessary to reverse the causality chain via an out-of-the box approach, based on breakthrough thinking. This, I believe, can be achieved by an evolutionary approach.

### The Evolutionary Approach

To be more specific, after substantial preparation and consultation with all interested parties, the UN Secretary-General ought to call an International Conference convoking the participation of: the three Guarantor powers of the RoC (i.e. Greece, Turkey and the UK), the EU, the five permanent members of the UN, and the two Cypriot communities. The said Conference should aim at leading the two communities to a Provisional Agreement for an evolutionary solution of the Cyprus problem. Such an Agreement should incorporate a preamble which will, inter alia, include the *Joint Declaration* agreed between the leaders of the two sides on 11 February 2014 and which delineates and reaffirms the general framework of the end goal of both sides, explicitly, the adoption of a bi-zonal, bi-communal federal state based on political equality. Moreover, within the said preamble the two communities should commit themselves to refraining from actions that would change the demographic character or would distort the population balance on the island. In addition, a clause may perhaps be included in the Agreement that empowers the UN Secretary-General to monitor its implementation and rebuke any party that *justifiably* violates and/or breaches the said Agreement at any time. Finally, this Provisional Agreement should incorporate a five to ten-year road-map (or until the final status of Turkey's relation with the EU is decided). Within this road-map both G/Cs and T/Cs might *concurrently* implement a series of substantial Confidence Building Measures (CBMs). On the one hand such measures would engage them in a creative, constructive and trustful political, economic, military and cultural collaboration, and on the other hand would satisfy each side's core negotiating interests. The goal of CBMs would be to gradually eradicate the five primary causes detailed above that have cultivated the Cyprus problem over many years. An indicative list of five *substantial* CBMs might be the following:

*First, return by Turkey of the fenced-off section of the Turkish occupied city of Famagusta to the administration of the UN and subsequently to its legal G/C*

*inhabitants in return for a RoC legitimate approval of the opening of the port of the said city and the Tymbou (Ercan) Turkish Cypriot airport (essentially via a commonly accepted implementation of the EU direct trade regulation).*

In particular, a large section of the city of Famagusta in the northern part of Cyprus was captured by the Turkish invading forces in August 1974. That section of Famagusta (named Varosha) was then sealed off and still remains uninhabited – a ghost place – under the direct control of the Turkish military. In consequence, the RoC has, since 1974, declared the ports and airports in the occupied areas as closed because it cannot exercise its full control over them. In this respect, direct flights to northern Cyprus and the trade traffic through Tymbou airport and Famagusta port respectively, are considered illegal by the RoC and the EU. A regulation, however, permitting direct trade between the T/Cs and the EU – thus in essence permitting the opening of the Famagusta port and Tymbou airport – is now in the hands of the European Parliament and the European Council. The said regulation has been vetoed by the government of the RoC since 2004 on the grounds that a possible implementation of this regulation – based on its current wording – would amount to recognition of the unilaterally-declared ‘TRNC’. The return of Varosha to the UN and subsequently to the city’s legal inhabitants, combined with the approval by the RoC (via a commonly agreed legal wording) of the aforementioned EU direct trade regulation for the opening of Tymbou airport and the port of Famagusta for use by both Cypriot communities – ideally both co-managed by T/Cs and G/Cs under the auspices of the EU – could be a decisive and very beneficial CBM for the two sides to agree on.

The opening and rebuilding of Varosha becomes even more necessary now because of the latest financial and economic crisis that has developed in Cyprus and has dramatically hit the G/Cs to a large extent but also indirectly affected the T/Cs to a lesser degree. This crisis has led the previous and current governments of the RoC to resort to applying for financial assistance to the European Stability Mechanism (ESM); an international organisation located in Luxembourg which provides financial assistance to members of the euro zone in financial difficulty. After several months of negotiations between Cyprus and the Troika (i.e. the International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank and the European Commission), a €10 billion bailout was announced on 25 March 2013 by the Troika in return for the RoC’s agreement on harsh austerity and government restructuring measures. Because of this crisis the Republic’s economy is expected to pass through years of recessions resulting in high levels of unemployment and increasing poverty amongst the G/Cs. In addition, the T/Cs will be negatively affected too by this situation. For many decades the T/C community has benefited much by the RoC’s booming economy. For instance, in the last decade or so many T/Cs have been working in the south of the island and a good number of G/Cs have been shopping in the northern part. Also, the T/Cs have historically enjoyed many social benefits from the RoC such as free medical care and electricity.

Undoubtedly, the opening of Varosha might well be the prime mover for rejuvenating the Cypriot economy and the creation of economic growth to the benefit of both communities. A

report, prepared by former President of the RoC, George Vassiliou and his team of consultants, indicates that 'a Resettlement of displaced persons in Varosha ... will lead to speeding up the growth of the economy, creating a huge demand for construction and other services'.<sup>3</sup>

*Secondly, the creation by the UN, with the approval of the RoC, of a bi-communal Steering Committee that should discuss the future of hydrocarbon reserves (i.e. natural gas) recently discovered in the RoC's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in return for Turkey's avoidance of any threats and actions against the RoC's legal right to exploit the island's EEZ.*

A recent Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) investor report has suggested that Cyprus 'is sitting on huge reserves of natural gas and potentially oil reserves too'. As the report claims, 'Initial gas reserves discovered [in Cyprus Republic's EEZ] are likely worth 300 per cent of [the country's] GDP. This could rise to 2,950 per cent GDP ... the Island sits on potentially huge energy wealth in excess of 600 billion euros ... Cyprus will become geopolitically important for gas pipeline routes.' Judging by various estimations by Cypriot officials and international companies, the country could have an injection of more than €1 billion annually after 2020, lasting for several decades, an amount around 6% of its current GDP, a substantial number in analogy to other gas producing states.<sup>4</sup>

Regardless of the above-mentioned report, G/Cs and T/Cs vehemently disagree on how they should allocate the wealth that will stem from the exploitation of Cyprus' hydrocarbon reserves. The RoC justly argues that it has every legal and sovereign right, under international law, to drill for oil and gas and that any future prosperity deriving from such venture will be fairly distributed to both Cypriot communities. In this regard the RoC, in 2008, signed its first hydrocarbon exploration contract with US Noble Energy (a company also currently activated in Israel's EEZ) – for offshore block 12 (adjacent to Israel's EEZ). A most recent exploratory drilling conducted by Noble revealed an estimate of gross mean resources of circa 5 trillion cubic feet of natural gas in block 12. Moreover, in early 2013 the RoC signed contracts with the Italian-Korean ENI/KOGAS consortium for hydrocarbons exploration in blocks 2, 3 and 9 in the EEZ of Cyprus. Just recently, ENI/KOGAS began the first test drills in block 9 and have planned a series of other exploratory drillings over the next 18 months. In addition, on 6 February 2013 the RoC signed hydrocarbon exploration contacts with French TOTAL for blocks 10 and 11.

Based on the above developments the RoC has also recently reaffirmed its intention to either build in the future a Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) terminal on the island's southern shore where natural gas could be loaded on to ships and exported, or to build a floating natural gas liquefaction plant (FLNG). The creation of the LNG terminal is contingent on the quantities of gas that will be discovered by ENI/KOGAS in the blocks of its jurisdiction over the next 1.5 years or so.

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3 G. Vassiliou *et al.*, (2003) 'The Economics of the Solution Based on the Annan Plan', Working Paper, mimeo, Nicosia.

4 *Natural Gas Europe's website* 'Cyprus Natural Gas Sector Sails on Fast', 4 February 2013.



Having said that, the quantities so far discovered by NOBLE do not provide viability for such a project and in order for this terminal to be feasible, additional confirmed quantities of gas are needed in the near future by ENI/KOGAS. If, eventually, there are insufficient quantities to build a LNG then the RoC could decide on the second best option, which is the creation of a FLNG. As the Chairman of the Cyprus Hydrocarbon Company, Toula Onoufriou, recently said, Cyprus could begin to export liquefied natural gas to Europe in 2022.

Furthermore the RoC seems to be concentrating on exporting Cyprus gas, recently discovered at the Aphrodite field in offshore block 12, via a pipeline to existing infrastructures in Egypt which are currently operating well below capacity.

Simultaneously the RoC is seriously keeping in mind the possibility to promote a tri-partite joint project (Israel, Cyprus and Greece) on a pipeline to transfer natural gas from the Eastern Mediterranean Israeli offshore fields to Europe via Cyprus and Greece.

What the RoC has so far ruled out is any possibility of exporting its natural gas via a pipeline connecting the Cyprus EEZ with Turkey without a comprehensive solution of the Cyprus Problem. Indeed the existence of the Cyprus problem has until now obstructed the RoC and Turkey from engaging into a fruitful dialogue on how Turkey and the RoC might collaborate in order for the island to have an unhindered and full exploitation of the country's natural gas wealth.

This is the reason why Turkey and the T/Cs have protested strongly against the RoC's energy search, branding it as 'illegal' and beginning their own exploratory missions not only on the non-recognised 'TRNC' but also in blocks in the Cyprus Republic's EEZ. More specifically, both Turkey and the T/Cs regard this exploration as one involving the exercise of sovereign rights at the international level which, they maintain, the G/Cs and T/Cs jointly possess. Furthermore, Turkey would ideally be interested in connecting the RoC's EEZ with Turkey via a pipeline even before a comprehensive solution. According to a recent report by the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), 'Turkey is likely to respond to exploration activities in the areas that the Turkish Cypriots intend to explore and which overlap with most of the blocks in Cyprus Republic's EEZ. Turkey could do so even more aggressively, in response to any exploration in Sea Blocks 1, 4, 5, 6 and 7 (which have not yet been licensed by the Cyprus Republic), which Turkey claims partly fall within its own continental shelf.' Related to this, Turkey has recently started shutting out of Turkey energy investment international companies like the Italian ENI involved in the Cyprus hydrocarbon exploration process.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, a recent new flagrant violation by Turkey of the RoC's sovereign rights in its EEZ by the Turkish research vessel 'Barbaros' has led President Nicos Anastasiades to suspend his participation in the inter-communal meetings with the Turkish Cypriot leader Dervis Eroğlu. In brief, the said vessel has begun carrying out surveys in Block 3 in line with a NAVTEX

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5 A. Gürel, F. Mullen and H. Tzimitras, *The Cyprus Hydrocarbons Issue: Context, Positions and Future Scenarios*, PRIO Cyprus Centre, PCC Report 1/2013.

(Navigational Telex) issued by Turkey in October, 2014. Accordingly Turkey has reserved a large swathe inside the island's EEZ for seismic surveys from 20 October to 30 December.

The island's hydrocarbon reserves bonanza becomes even more perplexed since it directly involves the interests of the consortium of Noble Energy (that also include Delek and Anver companies from Israel) and the state of Israel too. In light of the recent discoveries of natural gas in sea-plot 12, Noble Energy consortium (expected to be the first company to commercialise Cypriot natural gas) has seemingly taken the decision to advance with plans to process the output of offshore gas field 12 in the RoC's EEZ and of the Tamar natural gas field offshore Israel, where Noble is also activated to Egyptian LNGs via a pipeline starting from Tamar.

Over and beyond this, Israel's decision on how to export its natural gas will, inter alia, depend on the future status of its relationship with Turkey and Israel's current standing with Cyprus and Greece. To be precise, a conceivable improvement in the relations between Israel and Turkey would understandably induce Israel to seriously consider the possibility of distributing all, or almost all, of its exported natural gas to Europe from a pipeline starting from Israel's EEZ, crossing the RoC's EEZ and reaching Europe via Turkey. Moreover, at the time of writing, Israel is also seriously considering the possibility to promote the tri-partite joint pipeline project (Israel, Cyprus and Greece) alluded to earlier.

Based on the above, and even though the international community seems to support the right of the RoC to explore for oil and gas, it nevertheless expects hydrocarbon revenues to be fairly shared between the two Cypriot communities in the context of a settlement before or ideally after the solution of the Cyprus problem. In this regard the UN, the EU, the USA and others have asked the Greek and Turkish sides to refrain from future political and military actions that might endanger tranquillity in the RoC's EEZ.

All of the raised domestic and international variables affecting the hydrocarbon reserves of Cyprus make up a Gordian knot for both G/Cs and T/Cs that perhaps may only be cut by the formation of a 'Cyprus Hydrocarbon Reserves Steering Committee'; a group set up by the UN *with the approval of the RoC* and comprised of G/C and T/C experts in the field. The purpose of this committee would be to synthesise all relevant inter-communal conflicting interests in a constructive and collaborative manner with the aim of recommending to the leaderships of both Cypriot communities the best possible ways of exploiting Cypriot hydrocarbon wealth for the benefit of not just the two Cypriot communities but of the other regional states and private actors it concerns (i.e. Israel, Greece, Turkey, Noble Energy and ENI/KOGAS). This group, among other things, might: *First*, make a cost-benefit analysis of the current available options in exporting natural gas from Cyprus, which in all probability may be either the creation of a pipeline to transfer natural gas from the Eastern Mediterranean Israeli offshore fields to Europe via Cyprus and Greece as described above or the creation of a pipeline starting from the RoC's EEZ plot 12 (or ideally from Leviathan in Israel if the said country wishes) and reaching Turkey by crossing either the RoC's EEZ or its shore. Afterward, the said committee could reach a universally accepted conclusion as to the best option to be selected, without excluding the possibility of choosing both

options if necessary (the possibility to build in the future a Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) terminal on the island's southern shore could also be studied in the future). *Secondly*, create a bi-communal 'Oil and Natural Gas Fund' that will save, invest and proportionally allocate promptly to both Cypriot communities – before or after any comprehensive solution of the Cyprus problem takes place – any profits accrued as a result of the exploitation of Cyprus' natural resources. In response to the creation of the above tabled committee, Turkey should commit itself to refrain from future action that might violate the RoC's sovereign rights in its EEZ.

The engagement of both interested parties into a committee of this type should no doubt help to alleviate the suspicions of the international community who fear that the discovery of natural gas in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea could constitute a continuous source of regional political anomaly and military conflict in the region.

*Thirdly, implementation by Turkey of the 'Ankara Protocol' in return for a de-freezing by the RoC of the six negotiating chapters of Turkish accession negotiations that the RoC has been blocking since 2009.*

Turkey began accession negotiations with the EU on 3 October 2005. However, the accession talks have since been affected by a number of domestic (slowdown in Turkish reform process) and external problems (the Cyprus issue). Due to these setbacks, the talks came to a halt in December 2006. During that year the EU member states decided not to open eight chapters in Turkey's accession negotiations and to suspend the conclusion of the remaining chapters in process on the grounds that Turkey had failed to fulfil its responsibilities stemming from the 'Additional Protocol' (or 'Ankara Protocol') to the Association Agreement, which stipulates that Turkey must open its ports and airports to Greek Cypriot ships and planes. In December 2009, the RoC blocked another six chapters of Turkish accession negotiations, arguing that Turkey needs to first normalise relations with Cyprus by implementing the 'Ankara Protocol'. Turkey has been rejecting this action on the premise that it would indirectly connote the recognition of the RoC. Without doubt, the implementation of the Ankara Protocol from the Turkish side in return for the RoC's decision to de freeze the six chapters of Turkish Accession negotiations, blocked since 2009, plus the other 8 blocked by the EU as described above, should impact positively on the efforts by all interested parties to solve the Cyprus problem. The initiative could inevitably lead to a normalisation of the bilateral relations between Turkey and the RoC; something which would reflect positively on the negotiating atmosphere between the two Cypriot communities.

*Fourthly, gradual withdrawal of the Turkish troops from northern Cyprus and approval by Turkey of a de-mining of the island in return for a gradual reduction of the RoC's National Guard.*

It is not possible to give an accurate number of military personnel serving in northern Cyprus due to conflicting public sources of information but it seems that there are an estimated 30,000 regular troops of the Turkish Army serving in northern Cyprus at any given time. To this number we

should add the Turkish Cypriot Security Force, a military and security force of the 'TRNC' estimated at approximately 9000 strong, primarily made up of conscripted T/C males between the ages of 20 and 40. It is a combined armed force, with land, air and naval elements. The Greek military contingent on the island (about 1,000 men) is supplemented by the RoC's National Guard of 12,000 active and 75,000 reserves. Air reinforcement of the Turkish troops can be effected, if necessary, within hours. All of the Greek, Turkish, Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot forces are equipped with modern weaponry making Cyprus one of the most militarised areas in the world, in terms of ratio of troops to civilian population. This creates enormous insecurity within the G/C and T/C communities.<sup>6</sup> In fact no military presence on the island is essentially justified given the fact that the RoC is a member of the EU, Turkey is currently negotiating to become a member of the EU, and both Greece and Turkey are NATO allies. The presence of the Turkish army in Cyprus appears not to be in the interest of the country itself. As US Vice-President Joe Biden said before an audience of Harvard scholars '... they [Turkey] have no interest to have troops remaining on Cyprus. None, whatsoever'.<sup>7</sup> It is therefore vital that a planned and combined reduction of troops in the northern and southern part of Cyprus is effected under the Provisional Agreement discussed above, with the supervision of the UN.

Furthermore, the UN estimates that Cyprus still has some 15,000 land mines covering an area of two million square metres in the Buffer Zone and the surrounding land. UN Peacekeepers have successfully cleared 73 minefields to date, which included some 27,000 mines. The peacekeeping operation seems to have been denied access by the Turkish army to the mined areas within the Buffer Zone (separating the northern occupied part of the island with the southern part). Additionally, since January 2011, the UN has suspended its de-mining operations because the two sides have failed to reach an agreement on de-mining outside the Buffer Zone.<sup>8</sup> The Turkish army ought to allow the UN access to mined areas within the Zone and both G/Cs and T/Cs should reach an agreement on de-mining outside the Zone. A gradual reduction of Turkish and Greek troops in Cyprus combined with a gradual de-mining of the island will undeniably reduce insecurity within the two Cypriot communities.

*Finally, the G/Cs and T/Cs ought to continue and intensify their current cultural and educational exchanges, under the UN's supervision in order to help their respective societies to understand each other.*

The goal of these exchanges is to motivate co-operation between G/C and T/C professionals, students, and community leaders through bi-communal activities, to encourage the participants to work together in order to break down barriers and find practical solutions to island-wide concerns,

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6 Electronic Library of Congress, Country Studies, Turkey, Cyprus.

7 Electronic *Cyprus Mail*, 6 October 2014.

8 United Nations Security Council Resolution 2135, 30 January 2014.

create opportunities for island-wide collaborations between G/C and T/C communities, foster a sustainable island-wide network of leaders, students and professionals active in bi-communal efforts and develop a cadre of trained individuals from both communities who can make positive contributions to Cyprus' development.<sup>9</sup> The capacity for such exchanges should gradually cultivate the bi-communal psychological and social ground necessary for the future bi-communal approval and implementation of a comprehensive solution of the Cyprus problem. A fine example of the importance of inter-communal cultural and educational collaboration is the very productive work that has until now been undertaken by a bi-communal committee – of 10 Greek and Turkish Cypriots – established five years ago to protect and preserve the rich cultural heritage of Cyprus. This committee has at present restored several places of worship plus monuments on both sides of the divide and dozens more projects are in the pipeline. This has helped to build vital trust and co-operation for more ambitious plans including the urgent restoration of the Apostolos Andreas monastery in the Karpas peninsula together with work on the Othello Tower in the walled city of Famagusta. 'The road to where we are now has not been a bed of roses', said Takis Hadjidemetriou, the head of the Greek Cypriot half of the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage in Cyprus. He continued: 'We started by accusing each other and using propaganda against each other. At the end of the day all this evolved into cooperation, a joint effort, common heritage and culture and of course looking ahead to our shared future.'<sup>10</sup>

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Unquestionably, the potential implementation of the CBMs outlined earlier could gradually eradicate the causes of the Cyprus problem as described. In other words: the gradual withdrawal of the Turkish army from Cyprus would inevitably boost a Greek Cypriot feeling of security; the everyday collaboration between the two sides on various socio-political issues should cultivate mutual empathy and therefore induce each side to look upon their historical past in an objective and understanding manner; the political, economic and religious elites on both sides that are currently opposing a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation based on *political equality* would most likely reverse their positions after they start to reap the benefits of an evolutionary solution and G/Cs and T/Cs – via collaboration – would gradually come to understand and appreciate the benefits of being citizens of a future united federal state as opposed to being members of an ethnic group in a divided country; finally the osmosis of all the above could give rise to a new generation of enlightened leaders in the two communities who could potentially lead Cyprus to a better future.

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9 UNDP Cyprus Portal.

10 Electronic *Cyprus Mail*, 24 November 2013.

### **An all-win Approach**

In unison, such an approach should point G/Cs and T/Cs in the direction of an all-win situation along with the international players involved in this protracted dispute.

A signing of the Provisional Agreement is expected to be highly beneficial for both G/Cs and T/Cs. The G/Cs would be able to: maintain the internationally recognised RoC and reclaim, for first time since 1974, an important piece of now occupied land (Varosha) plus reap the economic and financial benefits (i.e. influx of foreign direct investment plus job creation and so on) that would inevitably result from the reconstruction of this land; experience conditions of tranquillity in the RoC's EEZ and as a consequence make the exploitation of the island's relevant hydrocarbon reserves easier, safer and more lucrative; gain semi-recognition of the RoC by Turkey; save a vast amount of money from the gradual demilitarisation of the Republic's National Guard, and develop confidence with their T/C compatriots – something quintessential for a future comprehensive solution of the Cyprus problem.

Likewise the T/Cs, in return for their signing of the Provisional Agreement would earn the following: the lifting of their so called 'economic and political embargo' by the opening of Famagusta port and Tymbou airport (under the auspices and legality of the EU); reap the economic and financial benefits of the reconstruction of Famagusta; proportionally enjoy the remunerations of the exploitation of the RoC's hydrocarbon reserves; indirectly receive reaffirmation by the RoC that they are politically equal with the G/Cs; make huge monetary savings from the gradual demilitarisation of Cyprus, and develop business confidence with their G/C compatriots. Moreover, the two communities would, jointly and separately, benefit substantially by pursuing business with the now vibrant economy of Turkey.

What is more, both Turkey and Greece can benefit enormously from the signing of such an interim agreement. On the one hand, Turkey could, inter alia: enjoy a boost in its efforts to become a member of the EU; save a good sum of money from the gradual withdrawal of its troops from Cyprus and improve its relations with Greece markedly, hence creating the necessary conditions for solving the Aegean political and economic differences with Greece (differences that involve a set of interrelated issues between Greece and Turkey over sovereignty and related rights in the area of the Aegean Sea). And, on the other hand, Greece could, among other things: further improve its bilateral political and economic relations with Turkey as well as locating a solution to the Aegean differences revealed above that could allow Greece to exploit the full potential of its EEZ.

The UK should also be quite eager to see a major initiative in resolving the Cyprus problem. Being the third guarantor power of Cyprus, and maintaining sovereign bases on the island since the country's independence in 1960, Britain too has a vested interest in realising a rapprochement between the G/C and T/C communities that could lead to a gradual solution of the problem. Provided that the current status of the bases would be safeguarded Britain would obviously like to see a bone of contention between Turkey and the EU – that is the Cyprus problem – removed.

The EU should also be very positive with the signing of a Provisional Agreement between

the two Cypriot communities since this would essentially be the beginning of the end of a complicated situation that became an EU problem since the RoC's accession to the EU in 2004. The fact that Cyprus became a member of the EU prior to a solution of the Cyprus problem has left Turkey hostage to the RoC's veto on any future accession of Turkey to this Union. Occasionally, this has resulted in much friction between a member state (Cyprus Republic) and a candidate state for membership (Turkey) and such friction has triggered problems in the dialogue between the EU and NATO. The EU–NATO strategic cooperation remains expressly blocked because of mutual vetoes by the RoC in the EU and Turkey in NATO. The agenda of the regularly scheduled joint meetings of the North Atlantic Council (NAC) and the Political and Security Committee of the EU (PSC) are generally void of any new items and can only legitimately discuss the Berlin Plus operation in Bosnia. Questions of imminent concern, such as the fight against terrorism and energy security, cannot be tackled. A Provisional Agreement between the T/Cs and G/Cs would not only allow Turkey to reinvigorate its bid for membership in the EU but would also permit both Cyprus and Turkey to respectively lift the mutual vetoes discussed earlier, thus enabling the dialogue between NATO and the EU to progress.

Similarly, the USA should welcome an evolutionary solution to the Cyprus problem for this initiative could bring Greece and Turkey closer together and consequently reduce friction in the southeast flank of NATO. In addition, an evolutionary solution may enable the USA to assist the interested parties to design a new strategy in exploiting hydrocarbon reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea to the benefit of all public and private players involved in this venture. Moreover, a strategic collaboration between Greece, Turkey, Israel, Greek Cypriots, and Turkish Cypriots could dramatically reinforce US efforts to contain state and other sources of terrorism in the Middle East like the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), a Sunni, extremist, jihadist rebel group based in Iraq and Syria, where it controls territory, and operates elsewhere in the Middle East and Asia as well.

To conclude, the UN would be receptive to the fact that after countless efforts the G/Cs and T/Cs might eventually reach a modus operandi to gradually eradicate their longstanding differences. The UN has, for several decades, invested time, money and energy in solving the Cyprus problem and any breakthrough in negotiations would, of course, be favourably accepted by the organisation. And, especially since a development of this sort may potentially alleviate future friction in the UN Security Council on the Cyprus question amid the five Permanent Members (USA, UK, France, China and Russia) that comprise the UN body.

### **Moving Forward**

Cyprus is a beautiful island and a very attractive tourist destination. Every year millions of tourists from all over the world visit Cyprus in order to: enjoy the country's bright sunshine and fantastic beaches; to admire the island's unique archaeological sites, to sample the Cypriot tasty cuisine and to appreciate Cypriot hospitality. Yet this wonderful picture hides a rough historical past between

the two main Cypriot communities. Unfortunately the years of fear, mistrust, hatred, separation, violence, stereotyping, misusing of national symbols and selective use of historical memory have deterred the G/Cs and T/Cs from coming together.

In spite of everything, the two Cypriot communities need to free themselves from this past, resolve the Cyprus problem and move to the future with determination, imagination and confidence in order to commonly build a new prosperous Cyprus. But, so that Cypriots can achieve all of the above they must view the Cyprus problem from an out-of-the box, non-conventional, perspective. They need to adopt a different thinking pattern and find new solutions that will remove the 'baggage' from the problem area. As Albert Einstein once framed it agreeably 'We cannot solve a problem with the baggage of thinking that created it.'

After endless abortive efforts by all interested parties to find a comprehensive solution to the problem it seems that time is now ripe to approach the solution from a different thinking pattern – namely, from an evolutionary point of view. Adopting this approach in everyday collaboration between the G/Cs and T/Cs on high and low policy issues, based on a non-zero sum game, may be extremely productive. Such teamwork may enable the two communities to eradicate the sources that fashioned the Cyprus problem. Moreover, via this solution, both Cypriot communities could, in stages, quench their basic negotiating interests but also create a baggage of trust that would help them to renegotiate in the future with a fresher angle; a comprehensive settlement of the problem within the framework of a future plan by the UN, again based on a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation with *political equality*. Perhaps only through this type of approach will the Cypriots ever be able to reunite their island and as a result construct the conditions for an everlasting peace and prosperity in this small but significant country in the turbulent Eastern Mediterranean region.