



**ST ANTONY'S COLLEGE OXFORD**



**South East European Studies at Oxford (SEESOX)**

**European Studies Centre**

Occasional Paper No. 5/05

**From U Thant to Kofi Annan: UN Peacemaking in  
Cyprus, 1964-2004**

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October 2005

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## **Abstract**

2004 marked the fortieth anniversary of the United Nations presence in Cyprus. Since March 1964, the UN has been responsible for addressing and managing both peacekeeping and peacemaking efforts on the island. This paper focuses on this latter task. Starting with U Thant, who served as UN Secretary-General from 1961-71, it surveys and summarises the efforts of five successive secretaries-general of the United Nations to resolve the political differences between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots over the course of four decades. It concludes with the most recent effort to broker a settlement undertaken by the current Secretary-General, Kofi Annan. In addition to evaluating the various types of UN efforts undertaken, such as mediation and the mission of good offices, it also reviews the way in which the goals of the peacemaking process have changed along the way, such as the search for increased autonomy for the Turkish Cypriots, the creation of a bi-communal, bi-zonal federal settlement and confidence building. Looking ahead, and in view of suggestions that the European Union might take over a peacemaking role, the paper concludes that the UN will in fact continue to manage attempts at reunification in the future.

## Introduction

Over the course of four decades the Cyprus Problem has become legendary in diplomatic and political circles for its intractability. Since the first bout of intercommunal fighting in 1963, which led to the involvement of the UN as both a peacekeeper and peacemaker, five successive UN Secretaries-General have unsuccessfully attempted to bridge the political divisions between the two communities and, since 1974, bring about the reunification of the island.<sup>1</sup> All have failed. If being the Secretary-General is, as famously described by Trygve Lie, the first holder of the post, ‘the most difficult job in the world’, Cyprus has been the issue that has lent a Sisyphean element to the position. Kurt Waldheim once called Cyprus was the ‘most thankless and frustrating task’ of his tenure.<sup>2</sup>

Theories abound as to why the Cyprus problem has proven to be quite so difficult to solve. Some have concluded that the Cypriots appear not to want a settlement at all. This view is by no means implausible. In private many Cypriots, on both sides of the Green Line that divides the island, openly acknowledge that division is a better option than partnership. Others have taken a more optimistic view. The failure to reach a deal is not based on any deep-rooted inability of the two sides to live together. Instead, it is based on a fundamental lack of goodwill between the two communities. It is this lack of trust that needs to be addressed before any substantive effort can be successful. Some are just sceptical that there is any solution that would satisfy the two sides. Perhaps the real problem, or so many feel, is that the parties actually enjoy arguing for argument’s sake, especially given the amount of international attention it brings the island. There are few other countries of such a small size that have been the focus of so much attention for so long. As one wit once put it, ‘When Cyprus found it could not be a world power, it decided to become a world nuisance’.<sup>3</sup> It certainly sounds plausible to those who know the island well. The two sides certainly have an uncanny knack of finding even the smallest issues to debate and quibble over. As one foreign official neatly explained of Cyprus, ‘It’s not

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<sup>1</sup> U Thant (1963-1972), Kurt Waldheim (1972-81), Xavier de Perez de Cuellar (1982-1991), Boutros Boutros Ghali (1992-96) and Kofi Annan (1997-Present).

<sup>2</sup> Edward Newman, ‘The Most Impossible Job in the World: The Secretary-General and Cyprus’, in Oliver Richmond and James Ker-Lindsay (eds), *The Work of the UN in Cyprus* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2001), p.127

<sup>3</sup> This comment has been attributed to the Hungarian writer George Mikes.

so much the complexity, but the infinity of it all.’<sup>4</sup> Indeed, many feel that Cyprus richly deserves its epithet: ‘the diplomats’ graveyard’.<sup>5</sup>

This impression has only been enhanced by the failure of the most recent effort to reunite the island, which was launched in November 2001 and came to an end with the failed referendum in April 2004. Indeed, in the minds of many there is a growing belief that perhaps Cyprus is perhaps beyond solution, and that international efforts should instead focus on alleviating the symptoms of a chronic condition, rather than focus on a cure. Looking back across forty years of work by the UN to broker a settlement, it is easy to see why many might now believe that maybe the time has come for the UN to disengage from the problem entirely. Looking around the world, it is clear that there are places where life is being lost and where UN efforts might bring about a real chance of a settlement. Moreover, the fact that Cyprus is now a member of the European Union has also created a new set of dynamics that may, in time, present an alternative method of addressing Cyprus. In the meantime, four decades of effort have thus far produced very little by way of tangible results. As the UN effort now enters its fifth decade, questions are being asked as to whether its resources should continue to be allocated to the resolution of the Cyprus issue.

### **The path to independence**

On 1 April 1955, a series of explosions around Cyprus marked first salvos of what would become a bitter four year military campaign by the majority Greek Cypriots to end British rule and bring about the island’s union with Greece (*Enosis*).<sup>6</sup> Although fiercely resisted at first, by late 1958 Britain had all but given up its hopes of retaining Cyprus. As well as fending off attacks by the Greek Cypriots, the colonial authorities were increasingly at odds with the minority Turkish Cypriot community, which had by this point taken up arms in an attempt to secure the island’s partition (*Taksim*)

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<sup>4</sup> *Reuters*, 13 December 2002

<sup>5</sup> ‘Island of Troubles’, *The Economist*, 19 December 2002. The list of the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representatives for Cyprus amounts to an impressive array of diplomats and politicians: Dame Ann Hercus (1999), a former government minister in New Zealand; Diego Cordovez (1997-99), a former foreign minister of Ecuador; Han Sung-Joo (1996-97), a former minister of foreign affairs of South Korea; Joe Clark (non-resident 1993-96), a former prime minister of Canada; and Oscar Camilion, a former foreign affairs and defence minister of Argentina. As for other diplomats who have become involved with the problem, and ultimately failed to bring about a resolution, perhaps the most notable in recent years has been Richard Holbrooke, the architect of the Dayton Peace Accord that ended the Bosnian civil war. He later blamed his failure on the ‘extraordinary stubbornness’ of Rauf Denktash, the Turkish Cypriot leader. Richard Holbrooke, ‘The United States and Turkey: Mending Fences?’, Presentation given to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, November 3, 2003.

<sup>6</sup> A detailed account of the EOKA campaign and the period leading to independence can be found in Robert Holland, *Britain and the Revolt in Cyprus, 1954-59* (Oxford: OUP, 1997).

between Greece and Turkey. Naturally, the tensions on the island led to strained relations between Athens and Ankara, which in turn was destabilising NATO's south eastern flank. What at first appeared to be a small anti-colonial insurgency on a seemingly insignificant Mediterranean island was now posing a major threat to the security of the West. It was therefore with considerable relief that Britain received the news, in early 1959, that the Greek and Turkish Governments had reached a compromise solution. Rather than *Enosis* or *Taksim*, Cyprus would become an independent state.

In order to ensure a balance between the island's two main communities, a complicated power sharing structure was devised for the new republic.<sup>7</sup> The Turkish Cypriots, representing 18 per cent of the island's population, would receive 30 per cent of all public sector appointments – rising to 40 per cent in the military and security forces. They would also receive 30 per cent of the seats in the single-chamber national parliament, where all laws required separate majorities to pass. Alongside the national parliament, two communal chambers were established to deal with issues such as education, culture and religion. The executive was made up of ten ministers. Of this number, at least three would be Turkish Cypriots. A Turkish Cypriot would also hold at least one of the three key portfolios: defence, foreign affairs or finance. At the top of the structure would sit a Greek Cypriot president and a Turkish Cypriot vice-president. Both would have a veto over many vital aspects of legislation. In order to ensure that the system worked smoothly, and to prevent moves aimed at destabilising the new state, Britain, Greece and Turkey were given a constitutional responsibility to guarantee the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of the Republic. Further agreements also gave Greece and Turkey a right to station 950 and 650 troops on the island respectively. Finally, the United Kingdom would retain ninety-nine square miles of territory, the Sovereign Base Areas, for military purposes.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Colonial Office, *Conference on Cyprus: Documents Signed and Initialled at Lancaster House on February 19, 1959*, Command 679 (London: HMSO, 1959).

<sup>8</sup> The texts of the documents can be found in Nicholas Macris (ed), *The 1960 Treaties on Cyprus and Selected Subsequent Acts* (Mannheim: Bibliopolis, 2003). In addition, Britain also retained the right to use of a number of other military installations that were on the territory of the Republic of Cyprus.

### **Independence, constitutional deadlock and conflict, 1960-1964**

On 16 August 1960 the British flag came down over Cyprus ending eighty-two years of colonial rule. But independence was a disappointment for the majority of the island's Greek Cypriot community. Not only was *Enosis* banned, the Turkish Cypriots had been given a disproportionately large say in the government. It was unsurprising that most attached very little legitimacy to the new Republic of Cyprus and hoped that the island would eventually be able to unite with Greece.<sup>9</sup> Most Turkish Cypriots saw the arrangements that had been put in place as broadly acceptable, rather than desirable. Nevertheless, many regretted that partition had not occurred.<sup>10</sup> Given these feelings, it was not long before reports emerged that extremists within both communities were working to try to bring about *Enosis* or *Taksim*, by force of arms if necessary.

In the meantime, several issues stoked tension between the two communities. In addition to concerns over public appointments, a constitutional dispute arose over the administration of the Greek and Turkish quarters in the main towns. The Greek Cypriots held that it was impossible to establish separate municipalities as legally required. They therefore wanted to negotiate a change to the constitution. The Turkish Cypriots argued that the separate municipalities should be formed first. After that the two sides could discuss the issue. In May 1963 talks on the issue collapsed. Both sides now looked to see how they could change the state of affairs to suit their own interests.<sup>11</sup> In November 1963, despite having been warned against any such move by the Greek Government, Archbishop Makarios, the Greek Cypriot President of Cyprus, presented a series of thirteen constitutional amendments. Turkey immediately rejected the proposals. In the weeks that followed tensions grew between the two communities.

On 21 December 1963, fighting finally erupted in Nicosia. Within days the conflict had spread across the island. Turkey readied itself for a military intervention. However a crisis was averted. At the last moment, the three Guarantor Powers agreed to establish a joint peacekeeping force under British leadership. In mid-January 1964 a peace conference was convened in London. It quickly failed. While the Greek

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<sup>9</sup> Kyriacos C. Markides, *The Rise and Fall of the Cyprus Republic* (London: Yale University Press, 1977), p.88.

<sup>10</sup> Clement Dodd (ed), *The Political, Social and Economic Development of Northern Cyprus* (Huntingdon: The Eothen Press, 1993), p.6.

<sup>11</sup> Diana Weston Markides, *Cyprus 1957-1963: From Colonial Conflict to Constitutional Crisis* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota, 2001), p.129.

Cypriots were determined to reduce the status of the Turkish Cypriot community to a protected minority, the Turkish Cypriots sought the physical separation of the two communities.<sup>12</sup> In the weeks that followed fighting continued on the island and Turkey again renewed its threat to intervene. On 4 March 1964, following several weeks of debate, the United Nations Security Council authorised the creation of a peacekeeping operation for the island – the United Nations Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP).<sup>13</sup>

### **United Nations Mediation, 1964-1965**

At the same time as it established a peacekeeping force, the Council also recommended that the Secretary-General, in consultation with the parties and the Guarantor Powers, designate a mediator to take charge of formal peacemaking efforts.<sup>14</sup> The first nominee for the post was Jose Rolz-Bennet, the Secretary-General's representative for Cyprus. However, he was rejected by Turkey on the grounds that he did not have the required stature for the post and, surprisingly, lacked a sufficient knowledge of the island. Instead, U Thant, the UN Secretary-General, appointed Sakari Tuomioja, a Finnish diplomat to the position. While Tuomioja viewed the problem as essentially international in nature and saw *Enosis* as the most logical course for a settlement, he rejected union on the grounds that it would be inappropriate for a UN official to propose a solution that would lead to the dissolution of a UN member state.<sup>15</sup>

Such concerns were not shared by the United States. In early June, following another Turkish threat to intervene, Washington launched an independent initiative under Dean Acheson, a former Secretary of State. In July he presented a plan to unite Cyprus with Greece. In return for accepting this, Turkey would receive a sovereign military base on the island. The Turkish Cypriots would also be given minority rights, which would be overseen by a resident international commissioner. Makarios rejected the proposal. Specifically, he argued that a sovereign Turkish base on the island was a limitation to full *Enosis* and would give Ankara too strong a say in the island's

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<sup>12</sup> James Ker-Lindsay, *Britain and the Cyprus Crisis, 1963-64* (Mannheim: Bibliopolis, 2004), pp.47-48.

<sup>13</sup> *United Nations Security Council Resolution 186*, 4 March 1964.

<sup>14</sup> Oliver Richmond, 'UN Mediation in Cyprus, 1963-64', in Richmond and Ker-Lindsay, *The Work of the UN in Cyprus: Promoting Peace and Development* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), p.103.

<sup>15</sup> Claude Nicolet, *United States Policy Towards Cyprus, 1954-1974: Removing the Greek-Turkish Bone of Contention* (Mannheim: Bibliopolis, 2001), p.247.



affairs.<sup>16</sup> Soon afterwards a second version of the plan was presented. This offered Turkey a 50-year lease on a base, rather than full sovereignty. This time the offer was rejected by the Greek Cypriots and by Turkey. After several further attempts to reach an agreement, the United States was eventually forced to give up its effort.

Following the sudden death of Ambassador Tuomioja in August, the following month U Thant appointed Galo Plaza Lasso as Mediator. Rather than approach Cyprus as an international problem, Plaza instead saw it in communal terms. In March 1965 he presented a sixty-six page report that criticised both sides for not having shown enough commitment to reaching a settlement.<sup>17</sup> In terms of specific proposals, while he understood the Greek Cypriot aspiration of *Enosis*, he believed that any attempt at union should be held in voluntary abeyance. For their part, the Turkish Cypriots should refrain from demanding a federal solution to the problem. Controversially, he also agreed that the abrogation of the core constitutional treaties by the Greek Cypriots should be recognised. Although the Greek Cypriots eventually accepted the report, in spite of its opposition to immediate *Enosis*, Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots rejected the plan and called on Plaza to resign on the grounds that he had exceeded his mandate. He was not authorised to submit proposals. He was simply meant to broker an agreement. But the Greek Cypriots made it clear that if Galo Plaza resigned they would refuse to accept a replacement. U Thant was left with no choice but to abandon the mediation effort. Instead he decided to make his Good Offices available to the two sides. The end of mediation effort was effectively confirmed when, at the end of the year, Plaza resigned and was not replaced.

#### **Intercommunal discussions 1967-1974**

In March 1966, a more modest attempt at peacemaking was initiated under the auspices of Carlos Bernades, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Cyprus. Instead of trying to develop formal proposals for the parties to bargain over, he aimed to encourage the two sides to agree to settlement through direct dialogue. However, ongoing political chaos in Greece prevented any substantive discussions from developing. The situation changed the following year. On 21 April 1967, a coup

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<sup>16</sup> In April, Makarios had visited Athens and had agreed with Papandreou that any future efforts to deal with Cyprus would be based on four principles: a) the resolution of the problem would be achieved only through the UN b) that the ultimate target would be enosis c) every effort would be made not to provoke Turkey and d) that Greece would come to the assistance of the Greek Cypriots if Turkey attacked. Andreas Papandreou, *Democracy at Gun Point* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1970), p.100.

<sup>17</sup> *United Nations Security Council Document*, S/6253, 26 March 1965.

in Greece brought to power a military administration that appeared determined to settle the Cyprus issue. On 9-10 September 1967, the Greek and Turkish foreign ministers met for two meetings on either side of their border in Thrace. The discussions were a fiasco. Following an indication from Washington that it would be met with a sympathetic ear, the Greek Junta proposed *Enosis* as a solution.<sup>18</sup> The Turkish Government immediately and categorically rejected the idea. Greece was now forced to abandon the idea of union for the foreseeable future.<sup>19</sup>

Two months later, in November 1967, Cyprus witnessed its most severe bout of intercommunal fighting since 1964. Responding to a major attack on Turkish Cypriot villages in the south of the island, which left 27 dead, Turkey bombed Greek Cypriot forces and appeared to be readying itself for an invasion. Greece was forced to capitulate. It agreed to recall General Grivas, the Commander of the Greek Cypriot National Guard and former EOKA leader, and reduce its forces on the island. Capitalising on the weakness of the Greek Cypriots, the Turkish Cypriots proclaimed their own provisional administration. Makarios immediately declared the new administration illegal. Nevertheless, a major change had occurred. The Archbishop, along with most other Greek Cypriots, began to accept that the Turkish Cypriots would have to have some degree of political autonomy. It was also realised that unification of Greece and Cyprus was unachievable under the prevailing circumstances.<sup>20</sup>

In May 1968, intercommunal talks began between the two sides under the auspices of the Good Offices of the UN Secretary-General. It was an important moment. Quite apart from being supported by Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom, the talks were also supported by Washington, which had hitherto favoured a settlement decided by Athens and Ankara.<sup>21</sup> It also marked a coming together of two men who would play an enormous role in future talks. Rather than hold talks between Makarios and Vice-President Kuchuk, it was instead decided that the discussions would be conducted by the presidents of the communal chambers, Glafcos Clerides and Rauf Denktas. However, the talks made little progress. During the first round, which lasted until August 1967, the Turkish Cypriots were prepared to make several

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<sup>18</sup> Nicolet, *United States Policy Towards Cyprus*, p.370.

<sup>19</sup> CM Woodhouse, *Modern Greece* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p.293.

<sup>20</sup> Oliver Richmond, *Mediating in Cyprus* (London: Frank Cass, 1998), p.109.

<sup>21</sup> Claude Nicolet, 'American and British Policy towards Cyprus (1968-1974): New Conclusions in Light of New Evidence', *Hellenic Studies*, Volume 12, Number 1, Spring 2004, pp.170-71.

concessions regarding constitutional matters, but Makarios refused to grant them greater autonomy. The second round of talks, which focused on local government, was equally unsuccessful, even though the Junta lobbied hard for a settlement. In December 1969 a third round of discussion started. This time they focused on constitutional issues. Yet again there was little progress and when they ended in September 1970 the Secretary-General blamed both sides for the lack of movement.<sup>22</sup> A fourth and final round of intercommunal talks also focused on constitutional issues, but again failed to make headway before they were forced to a halt in 1974.

### **Invasion and division, 1974**

While tensions between Greek and Turkish Cypriots subsided after 1967, a dangerous new conflict had arisen within the Greek Cypriot community. Although Makarios had effectively abandoned *Enosis* in favour of an 'attainable solution', many others continued to believe that the only legitimate political aspirations for Greek Cypriots was union with Greece.<sup>23</sup> In September 1971 Grivas secretly returned to the island and formed EOKA-B, a vehemently pro-union organisation. Over the next few years it would repeatedly try to overthrow Makarios.<sup>24</sup> In early 1974 Grivas died and EOKA-B fell under the direct control of Brigadier Dimitrios Ioannidis, the new head of the Junta in Athens.<sup>25</sup> Ioannidis was determined to bring about *Enosis* as soon as possible.<sup>26</sup> Fearing the consequences of such a step, in early July 1974 Makarios wrote an open letter to the military dictatorship requesting that all Greek officers be removed from the island.<sup>27</sup> On 15 July, Ioannidis replied by ordering the overthrow of the Archbishop. He was replaced by Nicos Sampson, a former EOKA gunman, who was well known for both his anti-Turkish views and his avid support for union between Greece and Cyprus.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *United Nations Security Council Document, S/10199*, 20 May 1971.

<sup>23</sup> Stavros Panteli, *The Making of Modern Cyprus: From Obscurity to Statehood* (London: Interworld Publications, 1990), p.224.

<sup>24</sup> See Brendan O'Malley and Ian Craig, *The Cyprus Conspiracy: America, Espionage and the Turkish Invasion* (London: IB Tauris, 1999), pp.131-139.

<sup>25</sup> 'Ioannidis, the real master of power, was a man who would have been perfectly at home in the Gestapo, whereas Papadopoulos had been no more formidable than a Latin-American *caudillo*.' Woodhouse, *Modern Greece*, p.304.

<sup>26</sup> Nicolet, *United States Policy Towards Cyprus, 1954-1974*, p.412.

<sup>27</sup> 'Letter Sent by Archbishop Makarios to the President of the Greek Republic, General Phaedon Gizikis on 2 July 1974'. Translation published in the *Sunday Times*, 21 July, 1974.

<sup>28</sup> Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons, *Cyprus*, Second Report of the Session 2004-2005 (London: HMSO, 2005), para.39.

Turkey immediately started planning its response. After failing to secure British support for a joint intervention under the Treaty of Guarantee, Bulent Ecevit, the Turkish prime minister, decided to act unilaterally.<sup>29</sup> On 20 July Turkey launched a military invasion of the island. Within two days Turkish forces had established a narrow corridor linking the north coast with Nicosia. The invasion led to turmoil in Greece. On 23 July the military Junta collapsed. Two days later formal peace talks were convened in Geneva between Greece, Turkey and Britain. Over the course of the following five days Turkey agreed to halt its advance on the condition that it would remain on the island until a political settlement was reached between the two sides. On 8 August another round of discussion was held in Switzerland. Unlike before, this time the talks involved the Greek and Turkish Cypriots. During the discussions the Turkish Cypriots, supported by Turkey, insisted on some form of geographical separation between the two communities. Makarios refused to accept the demand, insisting that Cyprus must remain a unitary state. Despite efforts to break the deadlock, the two sides refused to budge. The talks collapsed on 14 August. Within hours, Turkey had resumed its offensive.<sup>30</sup> By the time a new, and permanent, ceasefire was called 36 per cent of the island was under the control of the Turkish military.

The effect of the division was catastrophic. Thousands of Greek and Turkish Cypriots had been killed and wounded and many more were missing. A further two hundred thousand Greek and Turkish Cypriots had been displaced. In addition to the entire north coast and the Karpas peninsula, the Greek Cypriots had also lost Varosha, the predominantly Greek Cypriot region of the eastern port city of Famagusta.<sup>31</sup> All this changed the parameters of a settlement. For a start, *Enosis* was finally dead as an aspiration for Greek Cypriots. The Turkish Cypriots had no reason to accept union with Greece for the sake of minority rights. Moreover, the territory held by the Turkish Cypriots ensured that talk of a continuance of a unitary state was out of the question. Any settlement would have to be based on a state that would include some form of Turkish Cypriot territorial entity. To prove the point, in February 1975 the

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<sup>29</sup> The most comprehensive account of Turkey's actions over July and August 1974 can be found in Mehmet Ali Birand, *Thirty Hot Days* (Nicosia: Rustem, 1985).

<sup>30</sup> Birand, *Thirty Hot Days*, p.50.

<sup>31</sup> Turkey, which had never intended to take the city, quickly fenced the area off for use as a bargaining chip in the future. General Kenan Evren, interview with *CNN-Turk*, 20 November 2002.

Turkish Cypriots announced the formation of the Turkish Federated State of Northern Cyprus.

### **The Vienna Talks and the High Level Agreements, 1975-1981**

On 28 April 1975, Kurt Waldheim, the UN Secretary-General, launched a new mission of Good Offices. Starting in Vienna, over the course of the following ten months Clerides and Denktash discussed a range of humanitarian issues relating to the events of the previous year. However, attempts to make progress on the substantive issues – such as territory and the nature of the central government – failed to produce any results. After five rounds the talks fell apart in February 1976. In January 1977, the UN managed to organise a meeting in Nicosia between Makarios and Denktash. This led to a major breakthrough. On 12 February, the two leaders signed a four point agreement confirming that a future Cyprus settlement would be based on a federation made up of two states (bi-zonal) and two communities (bi-communal). The size of the states would be determined by economic viability and land ownership. The central government would be given powers to ensure the unity of the state. Various other issues, such as freedom of movement and freedom of settlement, would be settled through discussion.

The agreement marked a monumental change of direction for the Greek Cypriots, who now accepted that Cyprus would be reunited as a federation and that the Turkish Cypriots would have their own zone of control. *Enosis* was officially dead. For their part, the Turkish Cypriots had recognised the essential unity of the state. *Taksim* was now out of the question. Significantly, the agreement opened the way for a sixth round of the Vienna Talks, held from 31 March-7 April 1977. However these quickly showed that, in spite of the four-point agreement on the broad generalities of a solution, the two sides were an ocean apart on the specifics. The Greek Cypriots presented proposals on territorial issues that took little notice of the principle of bi-zonality. Meanwhile, the Turkish Cypriot presented ideas on the role and functions of the central government that were more confederal, rather than federal, in nature. Little progress was made and discussions soon came to an end.

Just months later, in August 1977, Makarios died. He was replaced by Spyros Kyprianou, the foreign minister. The following November a new twelve-point proposal was drafted by the United States, Britain and Canada and presented to the

two sides by the Secretary-General.<sup>32</sup> In line with the 1977 Agreement, the proposal envisaged a federation of two states. One would be predominantly Greek Cypriot and the other mainly Turkish Cypriot. The central government would deal with foreign affairs, external defence, currency and central banking, inter-regional and foreign trade, communications, federal finance, customs, immigration and civil aviation. Any issue not specifically covered by the central government would be the responsibility of the states. A bicameral parliament would be established. The upper chamber would be composed of equal numbers of representatives from the two communities. The lower chamber would be proportional to the size of the two populations. The system of a Greek Cypriot president and a Turkish Cypriot vice-president would be maintained. Importantly, the number of Greek and Turkish troops on the island would be reduced to 1960 levels – 950 and 650 respectively. Moreover, the plan stated that Varosha would be re-settled by Greek Cypriots.

Despite the fact that the initiative was broadly in line with the 1977 agreement, it was rejected by the Greek Cypriots. They objected to the fact that the agreement did not enshrine the three basic freedoms that they insisted must be part of any ‘just and viable’ settlement: the freedom of movement, the freedom of settlement and the right to own property.<sup>33</sup> The UN remained undeterred. In May 1979, Waldheim visited Cyprus and secured a further ten-point set of proposals from the two sides. These not only reaffirmed the 1977 agreement, but also included a number of new provisions, such as demilitarisation and a commitment to refrain from destabilising activities and actions. It was also agreed that the question of Varosha would also be addressed as a matter of priority and that the two sides would deal with all territorial and constitutional aspects of the problem. Shortly afterwards a new round of discussions began in Nicosia. Again, they were short lived. For a start, the Turkish Cypriots did not want to discuss Varosha, which was a key issue for the Greek Cypriots. Secondly, the two sides failed to agree on the concept of ‘bicommunality’. Rather than call a complete halt to the talks, the UN decided to put the negotiations on hold.<sup>34</sup>

The following summer, 1980, Waldheim tried to resurrect the process by putting forward a proposal for an Interim Agreement. This included measures to promote a more positive atmosphere on the island, such as the return of Varosha to

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<sup>32</sup> Edward Newman, ‘The Most Impossible Job in the World: The Secretary-General and Cyprus’, in Richmond and Ker-Lindsay, *The Work of the UN in Cyprus*, p.136.

<sup>33</sup> Farid Mirbagheri, *Cyprus and International Peacemaking* (London: Hurst, 1998), pp.96-97.

<sup>34</sup> Richmond, *Mediating in Cyprus*, p.154.

civilian control and the lifting of the economic embargoes placed on the Turkish Cypriots. It also called for the opening of Nicosia International Airport, which had in fact been agreed by the two sides during the first round of the Vienna Talks. On 9 August, new negotiations opened under Hugo Gobbi, the Secretary-General's Special Representative. They focused on four areas: improving levels of goodwill between the two sides, the return and resettlement of Greek Cypriot refugees in Varosha, constitutional matters and territorial issues. But this time the talks ran into difficulties over the term 'bizonality'. The Turkish Cypriots interpreted this in terms of a confederation, arguing that the two states should have their own sovereignty. The Greek Cypriots insisted sovereignty must rest with the central state according to the standard model of a federation.

### **The 'TRNC' and the Draft Framework Agreement, 1982-1988**

In January 1982, Javier Perez de Cuellar took over as UN Secretary-General. As a former UN Special Representative for Cyprus (1977-79), he had clear ideas about what he wanted to achieve and decided to take a more active role than his predecessor. Throughout 1982 he met with the two sides and with representatives of Greece and Turkey. However, in May 1983, his effort to resume talks foundered after the UN General Assembly passed a resolution calling for the withdrawal of all occupation forces from Cyprus.<sup>35</sup> The Turkish Cypriots were furious at the resolution and threatened to declare independence. Nevertheless, in August de Cuellar gave the two sides a set of proposals for consideration that called for a rotating presidency, the establishment of a bicameral assembly along the same lines as previously suggested and 60:40 representation in the central executive. In return for increased representation in the central government, the Turkish Cypriots would surrender 8-13 per cent of the land in their possession.<sup>36</sup> Both Kyprianou and Denktash accepted the proposals in principle.

Despite the seemingly positive development, hopes for a settlement suffered a major setback just a few months later. On 15 November 1983, the Turkish Cypriots took advantage of political disruption in Turkey, which was just returning to civilian rule after a military coup in 1980, and unilaterally declared independence. While the

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<sup>35</sup> *United Nations General Assembly Resolution 37/253*, 13 May 1983. The vote on the resolution was 103 in favour and 5 against with 20 abstentions. The votes against the resolution were cast by Bangladesh, Malaysia, Pakistan, Somalia and Turkey.

<sup>36</sup> Mirbagheri, *Cyprus and International Peacemaking*, pp.127.

'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' (TRNC) was quickly recognised by Turkey, the rest of the international community condemned the move.<sup>37</sup> Within days the Security Council passed a resolution making it clear that it would not accept the new state and that the decision disrupted efforts to reach a settlement.<sup>38</sup> Denktash denied this. In a letter addressed to the Secretary-General informing him of the decision, he insisted that the move was not intended to kill off settlement hopes. Instead, it was a guarantee that any future settlement would be truly federal in nature.

In early 1984 steps were taken to resume the peace process. In March de Cuellar presented the two sides with a five-point suggestion for confidence building measures. New talks began in September. After three rounds of discussions a blueprint was reached. Cyprus would become a bizonal, bicomunal, non-aligned federation. The Turkish Cypriots would retain 29 per cent for their federal state and all foreign troops would leave the island. In January 1985, the two leaders met for their first face-to-face talks since the 1979 agreement. While the general belief was that the meeting was being held to agree a final settlement, Kyprianou insisted that it was a chance for further negotiations. The talks collapsed.<sup>39</sup> In the aftermath, the Greek Cypriot leaders came in for heavy criticism, both at home and abroad. Denktash walked away with a public relations victory and a reprieve. More importantly, he made it clear that he was unlikely to make so many concessions again.<sup>40</sup>

De Cuellar nevertheless continued his efforts. In March 1986, he presented the two sides with a 'Draft Framework Agreement'. Again, the plan envisaged the creation of an independent, non-aligned, bi-communal, bi-zonal state in Cyprus. However, the Greek Cypriots were unhappy with the proposals. They argued that the questions of removing Turkish forces from Cyprus was not addressed, nor was the repatriation of the increasing number of Turkish settlers on the island. Moreover, there were no guarantees that the full three freedoms would be respected. Finally, they saw the proposed state structure as being confederal in nature.<sup>41</sup> Further efforts to produce an agreement failed as the two sides remained steadfastly attached to their

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<sup>37</sup> 'Denktash's UDI declaration is recognised by Turkey', *The Guardian*, November 16 1983.

<sup>38</sup> *UN Security Council Resolution 541*, 18 November 1983.

<sup>39</sup> Edward Newman, 'The Secretary-General and Cyprus', in Richmond and Ker-Lindsay, *The Work of the UN in Cyprus*, p.139.

<sup>40</sup> Rauf R Denktash, *The Cyprus Triangle* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1988), p.142.

<sup>41</sup> *UN Security Council Document*, S/18102/Add.1, 11 June 1986.



positions. Meanwhile, hopes of any movement the following year suffered a setback as a result of increased Greek-Turkish hostility in the Aegean.

### **The Set of Ideas and Confidence Building Measures, 1988-1994**

At the start of 1988, George Vassiliou replaced Kyprianou. As a fresh face on the political scene he was expected to take an entirely new approach. Such hopes were further fuelled by an improvement in relations between Athens and Ankara following a ground-breaking meeting between Prime Ministers Ozal and Papandreou at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Making the most of the new situation in Cyprus, and the wider region, de Cuellar called upon the two sides to meet with him in Geneva in August. There the two leaders agreed to abandon the March 1986 Draft Framework Agreement and return to the 1977 and 1979 High Level Agreements.<sup>42</sup> Negotiations resumed in August 1988 with the hope that an agreement would be secured by the following June. But yet again the talks soon faltered. This time the cause was the Greek Cypriot announcement that they intended to apply for membership of the European Community, a move strongly opposed by Denktash. In June 1989, the UN presented a new document to the two communities – the ‘Set of Ideas’. It was quickly rejected by Denktash. He not only disagreed with the substance of the proposals, he also argued that the Secretary-General had no right to present formal plans to the two sides. Following a failed attempt to open direct talks with the Greek Cypriots, free from UN involvement, the Turkish Cypriot leader was eventually persuaded to return to the table and, in February 1990, the two sides met again in New York. It was another short lived effort. Denktash demanded that the Greek Cypriots recognise the existence of two people in Cyprus and their basic right to self-determination.

On 4 July 1990, Cyprus formally applied to join the European Community (EC). Turkey, which had applied for membership in 1987, was outraged by the application, as were the Turkish Cypriots. Denktash claimed that Cyprus could only join the Community at the same time as Turkey and called off all talks with UN officials. He also threatened to open up Varosha for settlement, contrary to UN resolutions. It had little effect. In September, the EC Council of Ministers unanimously decided to refer the Cypriot application to the Commission for formal

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<sup>42</sup> Richmond, *Mediating in Cyprus*, p.193.

consideration. In retaliation, Turkey and the TRNC signed a joint declaration abolishing passport controls and introducing a customs union just weeks later. Undeterred by the deterioration in the climate, de Cuellar continued his search for a solution throughout 1991. Indeed, in the aftermath of the Gulf War there was even talk of an international conference to address the Cyprus issue. It came to nothing. In his last report to the Security Council, presented in October 1991, de Cuellar noted that progress on his set of ideas had gone no further. This was largely due to Denktash's demand that the two communities should have equal sovereignty and a right to secession.<sup>43</sup>

In January 1992 Boutros Boutros-Ghali took over as UN Secretary-General. He continued to work on the Set of Ideas. On 3 April 1992, he presented the Security Council with the outline plan for the creation of a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation that would prohibit any form of partition, secession or union with another state.<sup>44</sup> While the Greek Cypriots accepted the Set of Ideas as a basis for negotiation, Denktash refused to engage in substantive discussions on the plan as it stood and again criticised the Secretary-General for exceeding his authority. In response, the Turkish Cypriot leader again called for direct talks with the Greek Cypriots, free from UN involvement. The offer was rejected. When he did eventually return to the table, the Turkish Cypriot leader complained that the proposals failed to recognise his community. In November, Ghali called a halt to the process. Although the Turkish Cypriot side had accepted 91 of 100 of the proposals, Denktash's unwillingness to engage in substantive talks on the remaining nine core areas of difference meant that he bore ultimate responsibility for the failure to reach an agreement.<sup>45</sup> In the aftermath of yet another failure, Ghali now changed tack. Instead of focusing on a comprehensive settlement, he would try to encourage the two sides to develop a climate of goodwill through a series of eight Confidence Building Measures (CBMs). These included reducing military forces on the island, transferring Varosha to direct UN control, reducing restrictions on contacts between the two sides, undertaking an island-wide census and conducting feasibility studies regarding a solution. The Security Council endorsed the approach.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> *UN Security Council Document*, S/23121, 8 October 1991.

<sup>44</sup> *UN Security Council Document*, S/23780, paras.17-25 & 27, 2 April 1992. The Council endorsed the plan soon afterwards, see *UN Security Council Resolution 750*, 12 April 1992.

<sup>45</sup> *UN Security Council Document*, S/24472, 24 August 1992.

<sup>46</sup> *UN Security Council Resolution 789*, 25 November 1992.

In February 1993, Glafcos Clerides took over as the Greek Cypriot leader. Pre-election hopes that the long-standing relationship between Clerides and Denktash might enable the two sides reach an agreement more easily were seemingly confirmed when, shortly after the election, the two men met for dinner under UN auspices. It was the first time that the leaders of the two sides had met face-to-face for several years. Yet again the optimism was short lived. On 24 May, the Secretary-General formally presented the two sides with his CBMs. Although he was willing to accept some of the proposals, Denktash was not prepared to agree to the package as a whole. Soon afterwards he also announced that he would not attend a further round of talks that had been scheduled for mid-June. Meanwhile, Cyprus was about to take a step closer to eventual EU membership. Just weeks later, on 30 June, the European Commission returned its opinion on the Cypriot application for membership. While the decision provided a ringing endorsement of the case for Cypriot membership, it refrained from opening the way for immediate negotiations.<sup>47</sup> Instead, after noting that a settlement would further 'reinforce' its European vocation, the Commission concluded that as soon as the prospect of a settlement was surer it would be ready to start the accession process. However, the door was left nonetheless open for the Greek Cypriots in the event that the talks fell apart. The Commission stated that it felt that the issue should be reconsidered in January 1995, taking into account the 'the positions adopted by each party in the talks.'

In December, in an effort to advance the CBM process, Clerides put forward a proposal for the complete demilitarisation of the island. Denktash immediately dismissed it as an impractical propaganda stunt.<sup>48</sup> However, in January 1994, the Turkish Cypriot leader reversed his earlier position on the CBMs. He announced that he would be willing to accept the measures in principle. Proximity talks started the following month. In March, the UN presented the two sides with a draft document

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<sup>47</sup> 'Cyprus's geographical position, the deep-lying bonds which, for two thousand years, have located the island at the very fount of European culture and civilization, the intensity of the European influence apparent in the values shared by the people of Cyprus and in the conduct of the cultural, political, economic and social life of its citizens, the wealth of its contacts of every kind with the Community, all these confer on Cyprus, beyond all doubt, its European identity and character and confirm its vocation to belong to the Community.' European Commission, *Commission Opinion on the Application by the Republic of Cyprus for Membership*, Document 93/5, 30 June 1993.

<sup>48</sup> *United Nations Security Council Document*, S/1994/680, Para.26. Despite the fact that Denktash dismissed the idea, the offer was nonetheless seen as a welcome step by many observers as just the previous month Greece and Cyprus had agreed to upgrade their military co-operation by increasing the levels of liaison, planning, exercises and training between the two countries – a policy known as the Joint Defence Doctrine.

outlining the proposed measures in greater detail. In response, Clerides said that he would be willing to accept the document if Denktash did. The Turkish Cypriot leader refused, stating that it would severely affect the balance of forces on the island. Once again, Ghali had little choice but to pin the blame for another breakdown of talks on the Turkish Cypriot side. Soon afterwards Denktash relented. He would be willing to accept mutually agreed changes. But Clerides refused to negotiate any further changes to the March proposals. Further proposals put forward by the Secretary-General in an attempt to break the deadlock were rejected by both sides.

### **Raised tensions and the European Union dimension, 1994-1997**

In the months that followed tensions started to grow between the two communities. At the Corfu European Council, held on 24-25 June 1994, the EU officially confirmed that Cyprus and Malta would be included in the next wave of enlargement. Just two weeks later, on 5 July, the European Court of Justice imposed restrictions on the export of goods from Northern Cyprus into the European Union. The effects on the Turkish Cypriot economy were enormous.<sup>49</sup> Soon afterwards, in December, relations between the EU and Turkey were further damaged when Greece blocked the final implementation of a customs union. The resulting compromise between Greece and the EU, announced on 6 March 1995, only served to make matters worse. In return for dropping its opposition to the customs union, Athens had secured a commitment from its EU partners that the bloc would open up full membership talks with Cyprus six months after the completion of the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC), which was due to start in July 1996. Finally, Cyprus had a clear way forward. Ankara, however, rejected the decision out of hand and just hours later Murat Karayalcin, the Turkish Foreign Minister, warned that the decision could lead to the permanent division of the island and that any integration between the EU and the Greek Cypriots would be matched by Turkey and the TRNC.<sup>50</sup>

1996 offered few chances for a resumption of talks. A narrowly averted conflict between Greece and Turkey in the Aegean at the start of the year was followed, in August, by the most serious intercommunal clashes in Cyprus since 1974

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<sup>49</sup> Stefan Talmon, 'The Cyprus Question before the European Court of Justice', *European Journal of International Law*, Volume 12, Number 4, 2001, p.736. As the article notes, goods were not barred. They could still be exported via third countries, such as Turkey, but would face import duties up to 32 per cent, thereby rendering them uncompetitive. It is reported that 3000-4000 people lost their jobs.

<sup>50</sup> Statement made by Murat Karayalcin, Foreign Minister of Turkey, on Greek Cypriot Application for EU Membership on 6 March, 1995 during the EU-Turkey Association Council in Brussels.

when an anti-occupation motorcycle rally erupted into violence and eventually led to the death of two Greek Cypriots.<sup>51</sup> Tensions further rose at the very start of 1997 when it emerged that the Greek Cypriots intended to purchase the Russian-made S-300 anti-aircraft missile system. Even though Clerides insisted that the missiles were purely defensive in nature, the international community saw the move as presenting a dangerous shift in the military balance of power.<sup>52</sup> Fears that a regional arms race would now develop appeared to be confirmed when, shortly afterwards, Turkey announced that it had signed a joint declaration with the Turkish Cypriot administration promising to match the build up of Greek weaponry on the island. For good measure, the agreement also restated that moves by the Greek Cypriots to join the EU would quicken the pace of integration between Turkey and Northern Cyprus.<sup>53</sup> In the meantime, pressure was building on Turkey over Cyprus from other quarters. In December 1996, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) delivered a landmark ruling that declared that Turkey was an occupying power in Cyprus. The case centred on Titina Loizidou, a refugee from Kyrenia, who was judged to have been unlawfully denied the control of her property by Turkey.<sup>54</sup> In addition to being a major political embarrassment for Ankara, the case also had severe financial implications as the Court ordered Turkey to pay Mrs Loizidou US\$825,000 in compensation for the loss of use of her property. Ankara rejected the ruling as politically motivated. It was also aware that if it paid the claim it would set a precedent for further compensation cases that could, in total, amount to billions of dollars.

### **Reviving peace efforts, 1997-2001**

In January 1997 Kofi Annan took over from Boutros Boutros-Ghali as UN chief. Undeterred by the extreme levels of antagonism between the sides, he decided to try to reactivate the peace process. On 27 January he wrote to Clerides and Denktash to

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<sup>51</sup> The incidents occurred when a number of Greek Cypriots broke through UN barriers and entered the buffer zone near the eastern town of Deryneia. There they clashed with Turkish and Turkish Cypriot youths from the Grey Wolves, a paramilitary organisation. This led to the death of a Greek Cypriot. Following the funeral, another rally was held that again broke through UN lines. This time a Greek Cypriot was shot dead as he attempted to climb a Turkish flag pole. The Greek Cypriots claim to have identified the killer as being Kenan Akin, the then 'Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources' of the TRNC. *Cyprus News Agency*, 10 September 1996. Akin denied the claims. *Aktuel*, 31 October 1996. The year was also marked by several other deaths around the Green Line, including the death of a man collecting snails in the vicinity of the buffer zone.

<sup>52</sup> 'Cyprus missile buy could shift military balance', *Reuters*, 5 January 1997.

<sup>53</sup> 'Turkey-TRNC Joint Declaration', 20 January 1997.

<sup>54</sup> European Court of Human Rights, 40/1993/435/514.

invite them to hold a new set of face-to-face talks.<sup>55</sup> In July the two leaders met for the first time since 1993 for three days of talks in Troutbeck, New York. The apparently good mood that existed between the two sides opened the way for further talks in Nicosia on a range of humanitarian issues, including the subject of the missing persons. However, the situation took a turn for the worse when the European Commission confirmed that it would propose that full membership negotiations begin with Cyprus and five other Central European Countries the following year.<sup>56</sup> In retaliation, Turkey and the TRNC announced the formation of an Association Council to oversee the full economic and financial integration of Turkey and Northern Cyprus and the partial integration between the two in security, defence and foreign affairs.<sup>57</sup>

Nevertheless the two leaders met again in September in Glion-sur-Montreux, Switzerland. This time the talks foundered on the insistence by Denktash that he could not agree to anything until after the European Union had announced its final decision on the start of membership talks with Cyprus. This announcement came in December at the European Council in Luxembourg, where the members decided that formal talks would start in 1998. At the same meeting, the Council also refused to endorse Turkey's request to be formally accepted as a candidate for EU membership. The decision not only killed off any chance for new discussions, but Denktash also imposed a new condition for future talks: henceforth he would only agree to talks with Clerides if the two sides met on a fully equal basis with the Greek Cypriots recognising the existence of two sovereign states on the island.<sup>58</sup> On 31 August 1998, he went even further. He would no longer talk about a federal settlement for Cyprus, as had been agreed in 1977 and 1979. Instead, all future talks would be on the basis of a confederal model.

Even though Denktash had raised his demand to an impossibly high level, the overall tensions on the island started to subside later that year. In December, Clerides announced that the S-300 missiles would be installed in Crete, rather than Cyprus. Soon afterwards, in March 1999, a dramatic improvement in Greek-Turkish relations took place as George Papandreou and Ismail Cem, the two foreign ministers,

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<sup>55</sup> Diego Cordovez, 'The UN and Cyprus: Has the Peace Process Lost Its Way', Speech delivered to the European-Atlantic Group, 12 October 1998.

<sup>56</sup> European Commission, Agenda 2000.

<sup>57</sup> 'Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of Turkey and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus on the Establishment of an Association Council', 6 August 1997.

<sup>58</sup> *Documents Given by President Denktas to the UN Secretary-General During Their Meeting in Geneva*, 28 March 1998.

embarked on a process of rapprochement. As a result, Greece decided to lift its opposition to Turkish EU candidacy at the European Council in Helsinki in December 1999. Capitalising on the improvement in bilateral relations between Athens and Ankara, and in response to a call from the G8 at its June 1999 summit,<sup>59</sup> the UN invited the two sides to a new round of proximity talks. These started in New York, on 3 December. Even though the discussions continued through three more rounds, held in Geneva and New York, by the fifth round, held in Geneva in November 2000, Denktash was increasingly critical of the role of the European Union in the process. He therefore announced that he would not attend a sixth round of discussions that had been planned for January 2001. Despite considerable international pressure, the Turkish Cypriot leader refused to relent on his decision. Instead he again called for direct talks with the Greek Cypriot side, free from UN involvement.<sup>60</sup> In September 2001, Annan tried once more to restart the process. It was to no avail. Denktash declined the request.<sup>61</sup>

At the start of November 2001, in a speech before the parliament, Foreign Minister Cem stated that Turkey would soon have to take a serious, and perhaps final, decision regarding Cyprus. Devlet Bahçeli, the deputy prime minister and leader of the nationalist MHP, went even further. Turkey would be prepared to make every sacrifice for Cyprus, even if it meant giving up European Union membership. However, the most important statement came on 4 November when, in an interview, Prime Minister Ecevit announced that Turkey would not cave into pressure from the European Union to reach a settlement on the island. If the EU confirmed that Cyprus would join the EU, Turkey would even consider annexing Northern Cyprus.<sup>62</sup> It was the very first time that a Turkish prime minister had used the term ‘annexation’ in such a direct manner.<sup>63</sup> With the UN process in apparent abeyance and the island’s EU accession becoming ever more likely, Turkey appeared to be on a collision course with the EU over Cyprus.

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<sup>59</sup> *Conclusions of the meeting of the G8 Foreign Ministers, Cologne*, 10 June 1999.

<sup>60</sup> ‘Cyprus Veterans Share Chemistry’, *BBC News*, 4 December 2001.

<sup>61</sup> *United Nations Security Council Document*, S/2003/398, 1 April 2003.

<sup>62</sup> ‘Annexation threat by Turkey if EU admits Cyprus’, *Financial Times*, 5 November 2001.

<sup>63</sup> ‘Turkey signals defiance to EU over Cyprus’, *Turkish Daily News*, 7 November 2001.

### **Direct talks and the Annan Plan, 2002-2004**

It therefore came as a surprise when, just a couple of days later, Denktash called for new talks with his Greek Cypriot counterpart, Glafcos Clerides. Although the initiative was warmly welcomed, many suspected that it was little more than a ploy to try to delay Cypriot EU accession. This impression was quickly confirmed after talks got underway on 16 January 2002. The Turkish Cypriot leader quickly showed that he had little interest in negotiating in good faith. Despite several attempts by Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary-General, to intervene personally, and direct criticism from the UN Security Council,<sup>64</sup> the situation remained stuck in large part due to the wholehearted support Denktash was receiving from the nationalist administration in Turkey. The initial attempt to reach a settlement by July 2002 passed with little progress having been made over the previous six months.

This changed in November 2002 when the Justice and Development Party (AKP) won a landslide victory under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdogan and made it clear that its primary policy goal was to secure Turkey's eventual EU accession. This would necessitate solving the Cyprus issue. It was this commitment to a settlement that paved the way for the United Nations to present the two Cypriot sides with a blueprint for a settlement. A little less than a month later this document, which quickly came to be known as the Annan Plan, underwent its first revision. This was aimed at improving a number of key provisions in advance on the important European Council in Copenhagen, where it was hoped that a final settlement deal could be reached alongside the confirmation that Cyprus would formally join the EU, along with Malta and eight states from central Europe, on 1 May 2004.

Due to a Turkish Cypriot refusal to negotiate, it was not possible to reach a solution in Denmark.<sup>65</sup> However, discussions between the two sides nevertheless continued throughout January and February 2003 in an attempt to meet the 28 February deadline for an agreement that had originally been set down in the Annan Plan. Although facing growing pressure from his own community, which had taken to the streets in a series of mass demonstrations, Denktash remained as intransigent as ever. At the same time, the Greek Cypriots elected Tassos Papadopoulos, a known hard-liner, as their president. In view of this, few believed that an agreement could be reached between the two sides and a three day visit to the island by Kofi Annan in the

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<sup>64</sup> *United Nations Press Release, SC/7444, 9 July 2002*

<sup>65</sup> David Hannay, *Cyprus: The Search for a Solution* (London: IB Tauris, 2005), p.192-5



days before the expiry of the deadline failed to bridge the differences that existed. In a last-ditch effort to reach a settlement, Annan called upon the two leaders to put the plan directly to the people in simultaneous referendums. While the idea was grudgingly accepted by Papadopoulos, at a meeting with Annan in The Hague on 10-11 March, Denktash refused to accept the idea. As a result the UN brought its peace making efforts to a close.<sup>66</sup>

In the weeks that followed, the Turkish Cypriot leader was heavily criticised for killing off yet another peace process. At the same time, Turkey also received a clear warning that as a result of the Turkish Cypriot leader's behaviour, its own efforts to join the EU would be obstructed. In an attempt to deflect some of this criticism, the Turkish Cypriot authorities decided, on 23 April 2003, to end the thirty year restrictions imposed on crossing the Green Line and allow members of the two communities their first chance to travel around the island at will since 1974. While the move was widely welcomed, it soon became clear that there was little chance of a resumption of talks. This appeared to be confirmed when Lord Hannay announced that he had stood down as the British Special Representative, a post he had held for seven years, and Alvaro de Soto, the UN Secretary-General's Special Advisor on Cyprus, was reassigned to the Western Sahara.

However, by the autumn the prospects for new talks appeared to be improving. The Turkish Government appeared to be growing increasingly exasperated with Denktash's consistent intransigence. At the same time, the military also appeared to be increasingly ready to accept the need for a settlement in Cyprus, especially in the context of Turkey's wish to join the European Union.<sup>67</sup> Attention now focused on the Turkish Cypriot parliamentary elections, which were held on 14 December 2003. However, the main pro-solution opposition parties failed to win an outright victory and the Republican Turkish Party (CTP), led by Mehmet Ali Talat, was eventually forced into a coalition with Serdar Denktash's Democrat Party (DP). While this ensured that Rauf Denktash would remain in place as the lead Turkish Cypriot negotiator, his moral and political position was weakened. This became clear soon afterwards when, against the Turkish Cypriot leader's wishes, a high level meeting of senior Turkish foreign and security policy figures decided to pursue new Cyprus talks.

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<sup>66</sup> *United Nations Press Release*, SG/SM/8630, 11 March 2003

<sup>67</sup> For an example of the apparent change in thinking taking place within the Turkish military at the time, see the interview given by General Hilmi Ozkok, the Chief of the General Staff, to the Greek newspaper *Eleftherotipia*, 18 October 2003.

A few weeks later this decision was confirmed by the National Security Council. On 24 January 2004, Erdogan met with Annan on the margins of the World Economic Forum and requested that discussions resume at the first opportunity. Following consultations, Annan summoned Papadopoulos and Denktash to New York. On 13 February, following three days of discussions, the two sides agreed to accept a timetable for a new round of talks. These would be split into two phases. The first, lasting a month, would be held in Cyprus and would involve just the Greek and Turkish Cypriots. The Second phase, to be held elsewhere, would involve the two sides and Greece and Turkey. If, at the end of the second phase, no agreement had been reached the UN Secretary-General would complete the plan and it would then go to referendums on both sides of the line in late April.

After a break of almost a year, a new round of talks got underway on 19 February 2004. However, little was achieved. Although the various technical committees were able to make significant progress, the main differences on the core political issues remained firmly in place. The situation was also hindered by the bad atmosphere generated by Rauf Denktash, who appeared determined to scupper the process by holding frequent press conferences at which he revealed as much as he could to the media. Similarly, while the Greek Cypriots started the process in a constructive manner, by the end of the discussions they too appeared determined to weaken the process. In their case they did so by overloading the UN with paperwork in an attempt to prevent movement towards an agreed settlement. As agreed, the Nicosia round of talks was brought to a close on 22 March. Little progress had been made.

There then followed a further week of discussions in Burgenstock, Switzerland, where the two communities were joined by representatives from Greece and Turkey. As this part of the process was boycotted by Rauf Denktash, who was replaced by Mehmet Ali Talat and Serdar Denktash, many felt that the main impediment to a solution had been removed from the equation. However, and despite the best efforts of the UN, a new obstacle emerged. Throughout the week in Switzerland, Papadopoulos effectively barred any attempt to convene face-to-face discussions. As a result, the UN Secretary-General was eventually left with no choice but to fill in the parts of the plan where no consensus had been reached between the two sides. This fifth and final version of the proposals was presented to the two communities on 31 March for a vote in simultaneous referendums on 24 April.

Despite opposition from Rauf Denktash, the Annan Plan was endorsed by Turkey and the main Turkish Cypriot opposition parties. There was therefore never any real doubt that the plan would pass in the North. In contrast, most Greek Cypriots had been opposed to the agreement ever since it had first been unveiled, back in November 2002. Nevertheless, there were hopes that with the support of the two main parties, AKEL and DISY, a turnaround in attitudes could still take place. These hopes were dashed when President Papadopoulos, in a televised speech delivered on 7 April 2004, called on the Greek Cypriots to resoundingly reject the plan. Soon afterwards, AKEL backed away from its early stage support for the agreement.<sup>68</sup> Although DISY came out in favour of the agreement,<sup>69</sup> as did a number of leading political figures, including two former presidents, George Vassiliou and Glafcos Clerides, it was too late to reverse the negative climate. While 65 per cent of Turkish Cypriots voted in favour of the proposals, an overwhelming 76 per cent of Greek Cypriots opposed the agreement. Just one week later, on 1 May 2004, Cyprus joined the European Union as a divided island. After forty years of effort, yet another UN peacemaking effort had failed.

## **Conclusion**

Although occasional independent initiatives have been launched, most notably the effort led by Dean Acheson in 1964, over the course of forty years the United Nations has spearheaded efforts to address the political problems that have beset the island of Cyprus. However, these efforts have not been static. In addition to undergoing a transformation from a mediation effort to a less intrusive mission of good offices, for the first decade of its operations the UN effort was geared towards finding a way in which to ensure a higher degree of autonomy for the Turkish Cypriot community within the confines of the continuation of a unitary state. In effect, the aim was to find a way to work within the bounds of the 1960 constitution, which had created what Turkish Cypriots have often referred to as a 'functional federation', rather than a federation based on geographic entities, as is more usually understood to be the structure of a federation.

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<sup>68</sup> On 6 April the eighteen member political bureau of the party voted on the plan. Reports suggested that ten members voted in favour of supporting the agreement, four voted against and three abstained. The party leader, Dimitris Christofias, did not vote. *Macedonian Press Agency*, 7 April 2004

<sup>69</sup> At a special party congress, held on 15 April, 77.6% (686) of delegates voted in favour of the agreement as opposed to 21.3% (188) against.

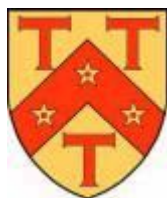
1974 marked a fundamental turning point in the UN's peacemaking mission. Following the island's division it became clear that any future settlement would be based in some measure on the physical separation of the two communities within the general framework of a more recognisable federal system of government. This framework was first confirmed in 1977 and then reconfirmed in 1979 with the signing of the High Level Agreements. While the agreements created the parameters for a settlement based on a bicomunal, bizonal federation, in practice the actual meaning of such a system was hotly contested by the two sides. For the Greek Cypriots, the nominal aim was to create a system of two entities that would be predominantly, but not wholly, made up of one community or another. However, this vision, backed with calls for a full right to movement and settlement, was seen by the Turkish Cypriots as unacceptable. Instead they wished to secure a settlement whereby the central state would be weak and the federation would be made up of two separate and ethnically homogenous entities and with guarantees in place to prevent the Greek Cypriots from overrunning the Turkish Cypriot state. Meanwhile, in 1983, UN efforts to create the conditions for the two parties to reach a settlement suffered a setback when the Turkish Cypriots unilaterally declared independence and formed the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, a state recognised only by Turkey.

Throughout the second half of the 1980s and the early 1990s several attempts were made by both Javier Perez de Cuellar and by Boutros Ghali to take a more active approach and put down on the table a blueprint for an eventual agreement. However, these attempts met with little success. In large part this was due to the continuing intransigence of Rauf Denktash, the Turkish Cypriot leader. As the problem moved into its third decade, in 1994, the very nature of the Cyprus issue was undergoing a profound transformation with the island's application to join the European Union. Although fiercely opposed by Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot leadership, the European Union made it clear that Cyprus would be eligible for membership, with or without a settlement. As a result, Denktash moved away from calls for a federation and instead called for the establishment of a confederation. At the same time, steps were taken to upgrade the level of integration between the TRNC with Turkey.

The process of rapprochement between Greece and Turkey, and the EU's decision to make Turkey a formal candidate for EU membership, opened the way for a new initiative. However, the first effort was short lived. Instead, it was not until

early 2002 that the process really started in earnest. Even then, it was clear that the talks were started by the Turkish Cypriot leadership more as an attempt to hold off Cyprus's EU accession, rather than as an honest attempt to reach an agreement. It was only with the advent of a new leadership in Turkey that was determined to pursue EU membership, which coincided with growing opposition to Denktash within the Turkish Cypriot community, that the conditions were created for a wider re-evaluation of Turkish attitudes towards Cyprus. It was this that allowed the process to advance on the basis of a plan for a federal settlement put forward by Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary General, in November 2002. Following further discussions in February and March 2004, the plan was put to simultaneous referendums on the two sides of the island in April 2004.

The failure to reach a settlement has certainly weighed heavily on the UN. Kofi Annan has made it clear that he will not restart an initiative until he has clear indications that a new effort will be successful. As a result, some have suggested moving away from the UN Process, perhaps putting responsibility for peacemaking under the European Union. This is not going to happen. As the EU has shown in other cases, it does not take sides. Instead, it prefers to see its role as one of creating conditions to facilitate a settlement reached between the parties, with or without outside mediation. For this reason, after four decades of effort trying to resolve Cyprus, it is almost certain that, for better or for worse, the UN will continue to remain the principle body entrusted with the responsibility for reuniting the island.



**SOUTH EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES AT OXFORD (SEESOX)  
European Studies Centre, St Antony's College  
University of Oxford**

**South East European Studies at Oxford** was launched in 2002 as part of the European Studies Centre, St Antony's College, University of Oxford. It focuses on politics and society in the Balkans, Greece, Turkey and Cyprus. Drawing on the academic excellence of the College, the University and an international network of associates, this Programme seeks to foster academic and policy relevant research and discussions on the dynamics of post-conflict reconstruction, transition emphasising the role of, and relations with the European Union. In investigating each of these poles as well as their interrelationship, its ambition is to be provocative and constructive.

General Objectives

- To support high quality action research on South East Europe with special focus on the politics of long-term EU enlargement;
- To organise conferences, workshops and research seminars;
- To promote a multi-disciplinary study of the region's developments within Oxford University (e.g. politics, law, sociology, economics, international relations) working in collaboration with students' groups, academics, Centres and Programmes within the University;
- To spearhead exchanges and debates among networks of individuals and institutions beyond Oxford on these issues;
- To foster cooperation between the academic and the policy making community.

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**St Antony's College** was founded in 1950 as a graduate college focusing on area studies. The College is the most international of the graduate colleges of the University of Oxford specializing in international relations, economics, politics and history of various parts of the world. The European Studies Centre opened in 1976 to promote the interdisciplinary study of Europe at Oxford.

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