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Cyprus: Reunification Proving Elusive

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Summary

As 2016 begins, Cyprus enters its 52nd year as a politically separated nation and its 42nd year as a physically divided country with a permanent solution to end these divisions still proving to be elusive. Long under the auspices of the United Nations, unification talks entered a period of frequent and often intense negotiations in 2008 and again in 2015. Nevertheless, attempts to resolve the Cyprus problem and unify the two communities have met with numerous missed opportunities over this period. Thus far a succession of Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders, including the current leaders, have been unable to achieve agreement on the difficult issues of territory, property, governance, citizenship, and security guarantees, acceptable to both sides.

From the beginning of 2012 through the beginning of 2015, negotiations between Greek Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades and former Turkish Cypriot leader Dervis Eroglu had gone through periods of active negotiations, stalemate, and suspension with no apparent agreement on any issue, leading many to question the ability of the leaders to reach a comprehensive agreement.

Some of the pessimism surrounding the stalled negotiations seemed to ease on April 26, 2015, when in a second round of voting, Mustafa Akinci of the small, center-left, Communal Democratic Party (TDA) won the election to become the new leader of the Turkish Cypriots, defeating Dervis Eroglu. Akinci and Anastasiades quickly confirmed that the negotiations would resume as soon as possible. Akinci also declared his intention to reach a settlement quickly in order that a referendum on the agreement could be held on the island by the spring of 2016, perhaps before the Greek Cypriot parliamentary elections. In addition, both sides stated that they would pursue positive confidence-building measures as a sign of a renewed commitment to a successful settlement. Some of those measures have since gone into effect.

Throughout the latter half of 2015, a new energy was seen in the negotiations, and an atmosphere of "cautious optimism" emerged as the leaders of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities met in continuous, and according to many, productive negotiating sessions. In a joint holiday appearance in late December, Anastasiades and Akinci broadcast a televised message expressing holiday greetings in both Turkish and Greek, along with the hope that the New Year would bring a peace settlement. This was a first for both leaders and underscored the reported positive atmospherics surrounding the meetings of the two leaders thus far and the personal relationship that appears to have developed between Anastasiades and Akinci.

Although the most recent negotiations seemed to indicate that more common ground had been found on several of the issues, not enough has yet been reached to achieve a comprehensive solution. On the other hand, reactions by several Greek Cypriot political leaders to a late December television interview in which Mr. Akinci seemed to outline his perspectives for an agreement suggest that the optimism referred to by many has to be tempered with some political reality and that difficult times still lay ahead. Nevertheless, both sides seem to indicate that 2016 could become the year that a potential solution could be reached as long as there is a will to do so on both sides.

The United States has long maintained interest in a resolution of the Cyprus issue. Visits to Cyprus by Vice President Biden and others in 2014, quick congratulations to Akinci on his election, upbeat comments in a June 2015 speech on Cyprus to a conference in Washington by Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Amanda Sloat, the speedy nomination of a new U.S. Ambassador to Cyprus in early summer 2015, and September and December 2015 visits to the island by both Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasia, Victoria Nuland, and then Secretary of State Kerry, seemed to suggest that positive momentum existed and that there was a reenergized U.S. interest in having the negotiations move to a conclusion.

The lack of a negotiated settlement of the Cyprus issue warrants attention because of U.S. interests in a strong relationship with Turkey, especially as both countries confront the threat from the Islamic State, and because of the prospects that the Eastern Mediterranean, including Cyprus, could play an important role in energy development and supply. In the 113th Congress, legislation (H.Res. 187) was introduced supporting the Republic of Cyprus, and letters regarding the settlement talks were sent to the White House and others by Members of Congress sympathetic to both Greek and Turkish Cypriot views of the problem. The 114th Congress has thus far continued a modest level of interest.

This report provides a brief overview of the history of the negotiations, a review of the negotiations since 2008, and a description of some of the issues involved in those talks.

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Background[1]

The island republic of Cyprus gained its independence from Great Britain in 1960. At the time, the population living on the island was approximately 77% of Greek ethnic origin and roughly 18% of Turkish ethnic origin. (This figure has changed over the years as an influx of mainland Turks have settled in the north.) Maronite Christians, Armenians, and others constitute the remainder. At independence, the republic's constitution defined elaborate power-sharing arrangements between the two main groups. It required a Greek Cypriot president and a Turkish Cypriot vice president, each elected by his own community. Simultaneously, a Treaty of Guarantee signed by Britain, Greece, and Turkey ensured the new republic's territorial integrity, and a Treaty of Alliance among the republic, Greece, and Turkey provided for Greek and Turkish soldiers to help defend the island. However, at that time, the two major communities aspired to different futures for Cyprus: Most Greek Cypriots favored union of the entire island with Greece (*enosis*), while Turkish Cypriots preferred to partition the island (*taksim*) and possibly unite the Turkish Cypriot zone with Turkey.

Cyprus's success as a stable, new republic lasted from 1960 to 1963. After President (and Greek Orthodox Archbishop) Makarios III proposed constitutional modifications that favored the majority Greek Cypriot community in 1963, relations between the two communities deteriorated, with Turkish Cypriots increasingly consolidating into enclaves in larger towns for safety. In 1964, Turkish Cypriots withdrew from most national institutions and began to administer their own affairs. Intercommunal violence occurred between 1963 and 1964 and again in 1967. On both occasions, outside mediation and pressure, including by the United States, appeared to prevent Turkey from intervening militarily on behalf of the Turkish Cypriots. On March 4, 1964, the United Nations authorized the establishment of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) to control the violence and act as a buffer between the two communities. It became operational on March 27, 1964, and still carries out its mission today.

In 1974, the military junta in Athens supported a coup against President Makarios, replacing him with a more hard-line supporter of *enosis*. In July 1974, Turkey, citing the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee as a legal basis for its move, deployed its military forces in two separate actions to the island and by August 25, 1974, had taken control of more than one-third of the island. This military intervention[2] had many ramifications. Foremost was the widespread dislocation of both the Greek and Turkish Cypriot population and related governance, refugee, and property problems.

After the conflict subsided and a fragile peace took root, Turkish Cypriots pursued a solution to the conflict that would keep the two communities separate in two sovereign states or two states in a loose confederation. In February 1975, the Turkish Cypriots declared their government the "Turkish Federated State of Cyprus" (TFSC). In 1983, Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash declared the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" (TRNC)—a move considered by some to be a unilateral declaration of independence. At the time, Denktash argued that creation of an independent state was a necessary precondition for a federation with the Greek Cypriots.

[1] Parts of this report are drawn from a more comprehensive history of the Cyprus negotiations included in an archived CRS Report RL33497, *Cyprus: Status of U.N. Negotiations and Related Issues*, by Carol Migdalovitz.

[2] Turkey officially refers to its action as a "peace operation." The Greek Cypriots and much of the international community refer to it as an "invasion." Unofficial estimates indicate that Turkish military forces currently deployed in northern Cyprus range from 20,000 to 30,000.

However, he ruled out a merger with Turkey and pledged cooperation with United Nations–brokered settlement efforts. Thirty-two years later, only Turkey has recognized the TRNC.

Between 1974 and 2002, there were numerous, unsuccessful rounds of U.N.-sponsored direct and indirect negotiations to achieve a settlement. Negotiations focused on reconciling the two sides' interests and reestablishing a central government. They foundered on definitions of goals and ways to implement a federal solution. Turkish Cypriots emphasized bi-zonality and the political equality of the two communities, preferring two nearly autonomous societies with limited contact. Greek Cypriots emphasized the freedoms of movement, property, and settlement throughout the island. The two parties also differed on the means of achieving a federation: Greek Cypriots wanted their internationally recognized national government to devolve power to the Turkish Cypriots, who would then join a Cypriot republic. For the Turkish Cypriots, two entities would join, for the first time, in a new federation. These differences in views also affected the resolution of issues such as property claims, citizenship of mainland Turks who had settled on the island, and other legal issues. These differences in views continue to plague the negotiations even today.

Figure 1. Map of Cyprus

Source: Adapted by CRS.

Annan Plan

Negotiations for a final solution to the Cyprus issue appeared to take a dramatic and positive step forward when on November 11, 2002, then U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan presented a draft of "The Basis for Agreement on a Comprehensive Settlement of the Cyprus Problem," commonly

referred to as the Annan Plan. The plan called for, among many provisions, a "common state" government with a single international legal personality that would participate in foreign and European Union relations. Two politically equal component states would address much of the daily responsibilities of government in their respective communities. The Annan Plan was a comprehensive approach and of necessity addressed highly controversial issues for both sides.

Over the course of the next 16 months, difficult negotiations ensued. Turkish Cypriot leader Denktash was replaced as chief negotiator by a more pro-settlement figure, newly elected "prime minister" Mehmet Ali Talat. Republic of Cyprus President Glafkos Clerides was replaced through an election with, according to some observers, a more skeptical president, Tassos Papadopoulos. The Annan Plan itself was revised several times in an attempt to reach compromises demanded by both sides. Complicating the matter even more, on April 16, 2003, the Republic of Cyprus signed an accession treaty with the European Union (EU) to become a member of the EU on May 1, 2004, whether or not there was a settlement and a reunited Cyprus.

Finally, after numerous meetings and negotiations and despite a lack of a firm agreement, but sensing that further negotiations would produce little else, on March 29, 2004, Secretary-General Annan released his "final revised plan" and announced that the plan would be put to referenda simultaneously in both north and south Cyprus on April 24, 2004. The Turkish Cypriot leadership split, with Denktash urging rejection and Talat urging support. Greek Cypriot President Papadopoulos, to the dismay of the U.N., EU, and United States, but for reasons he argued were legitimate concerns of the Greek Cypriot community, urged the Greek Cypriots to reject the referenda. On April 24, what remaining hope existed for a solution to the crisis on Cyprus was dashed as 76% of Greek Cypriot voters rejected the plan, while 65% of Turkish Cypriot voters accepted it. In his May 28, 2004, report following the vote, Annan said that "the Greek Cypriots' vote must be respected, but they need to demonstrate willingness to resolve the Cyprus problem through a bi-communal, bi-zonal federation and to articulate their concerns about security and implementation of the Plan with 'clarity and finality.'"

The Christofias-Talat Negotiations: 2008-2010

As early as 2004, Talat, as Turkish Cypriot "prime minister," was credited with helping convince the Turkish Cypriots to support the Annan Plan and had been seen as perhaps the one Turkish Cypriot leader who could move the Greek Cypriots toward a more acceptable solution for both sides. For his efforts at the time, Talat, on April 17, 2005, was elected "president" of the unrecognized TRNC over the National Unity Party's (UBP) Dr. Dervis Eroglu, receiving 55.6% of the vote in a field of nine.

For roughly the next four years, to little avail, Cyprus muddled through a series of offers and counter-offers to restart serious negotiations even as the Greek Cypriots solidified their new status as a member of the EU, a status not extended to the Turkish Cypriots despite an EU pledge to try to help end the isolation of the north.

On February 24, 2008, 61-year-old Demetris Christofias of the Progressive Party of Working People (AKEL) was elected to a five-year term as president of the Republic of Cyprus. Christofias was educated in the Soviet Union and is a fluent Russian speaker. He joined the communist-rooted AKEL party at the age of 14 and rose through its ranks to become leader in 1988. Christofias was elected president of the Cypriot House of Representatives in 2001 and won reelection in 2006.

Christofias's election had the backing of the Democratic (DIKO) Party and the Socialist (EDEK) Party. Christofias, in part, tailored his campaign to opposing what he believed was an uncompromising approach toward the Turkish Cypriots by his opponent, incumbent President

Papadopoulos, and the stagnation in the attempt to reach a just settlement of the Cyprus problem. Although serious differences existed between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot sides over a final settlement, Christofias took the outcome of the vote as a sign that Greek Cypriots wanted to try once again for an end to the division of the island. In his inaugural address, President Christofias expressed the hope of achieving a "just, viable, and functional solution" to the Cyprus problem. He said that he sought to restore the unity of the island as a federal, bi-zonal, bi-communal republic; to exclude any rights of military intervention; and to provide for the withdrawal of Turkish troops and, ultimately, the demilitarization of the island. Christofias also reaffirmed that the 2004 Annan Plan, which he himself opposed at the time, was null and void and could not be the basis for a future settlement.

After Christofias's election, Turkish Cypriot leader Talat, a long-time acquaintance of Christofias, declared that "a solution in Cyprus is possible by the end of 2008."[3] He also declared that "the goal is to establish a new partnership state in Cyprus, based on the political equality of the two peoples and the equal status of two constituent states."[4] While the negotiations between Christofias and Talat appeared to get off to a fast start, the differences in positions quickly became apparent, and the talks, although held on a regular basis, soon began to bog down. Talat wanted to pursue negotiations on the basis of the provisions of the old Annan Plan, while Christofias, mindful of the Greek Cypriot rejection of that plan, was keen to avoid references to it. Old differences quickly resurfaced. As the negotiations dragged on well into 2009, it appeared that impatience, frustration, and uncertainty were beginning to mount against both Christofias in the south and Talat in the north.

By the end of 2009, perspectives on both sides of the island began to change. Some suggested that the Greek Cypriots sensed that the talks would not produce a desired outcome before the April 2010 elections in the north, in which Talat, running for reelection, was trailing in the polls to Eroglu. If Talat lost, it was argued, the negotiations were likely to have to begin anew with an entirely different Turkish Cypriot leadership. Under that scenario, many Greek Cypriots, including members within the political parties of the governing coalition, seemed leery of weakening their hand by offering further concessions. Some Turkish Cypriots, on the other hand, appeared to think that the Greek Cypriot side would not offer Talat a negotiated settlement, betting from the opinion polls in the north that Eroglu would win the April elections and would pull back from serious negotiations, at least for a while as he consolidated his new government and reordered Turkish Cypriot strategy. The Greek Cypriots could then blame the anticipated hard-liners in the north and their presumed patrons in Ankara if the talks collapsed.

As the negotiations entered 2010, it appeared that the window of opportunity to reach a final settlement, at least between Christofias and Talat, was closing fast. Despite the fact that the two sides had been in negotiations for almost 18 months and in close to 60 meetings, they appeared to have had very little to show for their efforts. In his New Year message to the Greek Cypriots, Christofias suggested that while some progress had been made in a few areas, the two sides were not close to a settlement. The intensive dialogue between Christofias and Talat resumed on January 11, 2010, but after three sessions the talks seemed to have reached a standstill, with the gap between the respective positions of President Christofias and Talat on many of the tougher issues seeming to be insurmountable.

[3] *Anatolia*, "I Am Hopeful About a Solution, TRNC President Talat," February 25, 2008, BBC Monitoring European, February 26, 2008.

[4] Mehmet Ali Talat, letter to the editor, *Financial Times*, March 5, 2008.

The last formal negotiating session between Christofias and Talat concluded on March 30, 2010, with no new developments. In the run-up to the final session there was some speculation that both sides would issue a joint statement assessing the negotiations up to that point and perhaps even announcing some of the areas in which "convergences" between Christofias and Talat had been achieved. Speculation was that Talat had wanted something positive to take into the final days of the election campaign and had presented Christofias a report summarizing what the Turkish Cypriots understood to have been achieved. Christofias, however, was already under pressure from his coalition partner, DIKO, and former coalition partner, EDEK, not to issue such a statement, which could have been interpreted as an interim agreement.

On March 30, 2010, Christofias and Talat issued a short statement suggesting that they had indeed made some progress in governance and power sharing, EU matters, and the economy, but they did not go beyond that. On April 1, Talat, feeling he needed to say more to his Turkish Cypriot constituents about the negotiations, held a press conference at which he outlined his understandings of what he and Christofias had achieved to that point. Christofias would neither confirm nor deny what Talat had presented.

A New Era: Christofias and Eroglu

On April 18, 2010, Talat lost his reelection bid to his rival Dervis Eroglu of the UBP. Observers believe Talat's defeat was due to a combination of his failure to secure a settlement of the Cyprus problem after almost two years and his inability to convince the EU and others to help end what the Turkish Cypriots believed was the economic isolation of the north. Some observers also noted that an overwhelming number of mainland Turks who had settled in the north and who continued to identify more with mainland Turkey had little interest in unification with Greek Cyprus and voted for Eroglu because they believed his views were consistent with theirs.

Eroglu, then a 72-year-old physician and long-time politician, won the election with just over 50% of the vote. Eroglu was seen as having a style and harder-line views similar to former Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash, particularly in seeking more autonomy for each community. Eroglu also headed a party in which some of its followers had advocated a permanently divided island and international recognition for the TRNC. It was reported that during the campaign Eroglu may have suggested that perhaps Cyprus should consider a kind of "soft divorce" similar to what the Slovaks and Czechs did when they separated. During the campaign, Eroglu also criticized Talat for what he thought were too many concessions to the Greek Cypriot side, including the agreement that a reunited Cyprus would hold a single sovereignty through which both sides would reunite. Nevertheless, even while criticizing Talat's positions, Eroglu insisted that negotiations would continue under his presidency. Upon assuming his new office, Eroglu wrote a letter to U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon expressing his willingness to resume the negotiations under the good offices of the U.N. and at the point where the negotiations between Talat and Christofias had left off. Despite Eroglu's position regarding the resumption of talks, most political elements on the Greek Cypriot side saw Eroglu's election as a negative development and expressed their skepticism as to what the future would hold.

On May 26, 2010, President Christofias and Turkish Cypriot leader Eroglu held their first formal negotiating session. The meeting was held under the auspices of the U.N. Secretary-General's special advisor on Cyprus, Alexander Downer. Almost immediately, a controversy arose when it was reported that Downer read a statement from U.N. Secretary-General Ban congratulating the parties for starting the talks again from where they left off (including the confirmation of existing "convergences" agreed to by Christofias and Talat), for agreeing to abide by U.N. Security Council resolutions on Cyprus, and for suggesting that a final agreement could be reached in the coming months.

Downer's statement immediately drew criticism from several of the Greek Cypriot political parties that were concerned that the references to the "convergences" arrived at by Christofias and Talat were being considered as agreements by the U.N., a position not shared by the Greek Cypriots. On the other hand, apparently after the May 26 meeting, Eroglu made a statement that the Turkish Cypriots would not be bound by the statement of the U.N. Secretary-General, especially with regard to previous U.N. Security Council resolutions, some of which did include calls for Turkey to withdraw its troops from Cyprus. While Eroglu was trying to clarify that he accepted U.N. resolutions on the parameters of the negotiations, some in the Greek Cypriot leadership seem to question whether Eroglu was trying to redefine the basis under which he would proceed with the negotiations.

When the talks resumed in May 2010, Christofias and Eroglu, along with several technical committees and working groups with representatives from both sides, met regularly but made no apparent progress. In September, in an interview with Greek Cypriot press, Eroglu expressed his frustration with the process and accused the Greek Cypriots of treating Turkish Cypriot positions with contempt. He apparently suggested that Christofias needed to inform the Greek Cypriot people that any final solution would involve pain on both sides but also had to minimize social upheaval, especially among the Turkish Cypriot community. When asked what pain Eroglu was prepared to accept, however, he stated that it would not include giving up the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus or its flag or sending mainland Turks who settled in the north back to Turkey.[5] In October 2010, Turkish press reported that Eroglu appeared so frustrated with the negotiations that he suggested that Turkish Cypriots had become fed up and no longer believed in the possibility of a mutually agreeable settlement. "As time passes," he said, "the willingness of the two communities to live together is diminishing."[6] For his part, Christofias told the U.N. Secretary-General in September 2010 that both sides were not coming closer to a settlement and that Turkey, given its own domestic and regional problems, "was not ready to solve the Cyprus problem."[7]

Although assessments of the negotiations appeared to grow more pessimistic, additional sessions were held through the end of December. Talks were then suspended while Eroglu tended to medical problems. While both sides continued to talk and continued to pledge to seek a solution, neither side had indicated whether progress was being made or that any compromises were possible. On January 1, 2011, Christofias declared his disappointment over the passing of another year without a settlement and accused Turkey of not making any effort to promote a solution to the Cyprus issue.

In mid-April 2011, the Republic of Cyprus entered into a parliamentary election period that concluded on May 22. The outcome of the elections did not seem to suggest that the negotiating position of Christofias would require changes. Although opposition to what was perceived to be Christofias's concessions to the north was voiced during the campaign, none of the three parties with the most hard-line views—EDEK, the pro-Europe EVROKO party, and DIKO—increased its vote share. The impact of the elections would later prove problematic for the negotiations. Similarly, in national elections held in Turkey in June, Cyprus was barely an issue among the competing parties. After the election there was some speculation that Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, having won another five-year term, might have been prepared to inject some positive new energy into the Cyprus negotiations in order to help Turkey's flagging

[5] *Cyprus Mail*, "Eroglu: 'Treated with Contempt,'" September 19, 2010.

[6] *Hurriyet Daily News*, "Turkish Cypriot Leader Ready for Tripartite New York Meeting," October 22, 2010.

[7] *Cyprus Mail*, "Christofias: Two Sides Not Getting Closer," September 12, 2010.

accession negotiations with the EU. Later this seemed to have been a misreading of the prime minister's intentions.

New Year, Continued Stalemate, End of the Talks

Throughout 2011, Christofias and Eroglu continued their futile negotiations, which also included two meetings with U.N. Secretary-General Ban in another attempt by the U.N. to boost momentum for the talks. Ban insisted that the negotiations be stepped up and that the three would meet on October 30 to assess what progress had been achieved. The U.N. would then be prepared to organize an international conference to discuss security-related issues as Turkey suggested. This would be followed by plans to hold referenda on a final solution in both the north and south by the spring of 2012. The hope among some was that by intensifying the negotiations and reaching a solution by the end of 2011, a potentially reunified Cyprus would be prepared to assume the rotating presidency of the EU on July 1, 2012. By the fall of 2011, both sides seemed to have lost a clear urgency to achieve a final solution. Trying to reach a negotiated settlement by the end of October became impractical.

As 2011 ended, pessimism abounded, with many feeling that what had not been accomplished in the previous two years could become very difficult to achieve in 2012 as the Republic of Cyprus entered into full preparation for its EU presidency. Many felt that unless there was a major breakthrough in the negotiations by early 2012, the talks would become even more stalemated and could culminate in a potential dramatic turn of events by the summer.

Doubts about the prospects of a solution acceptable to both sides were also raised with the release of a public opinion poll that apparently found a growing negative climate and public discontent on the island, an increased ambivalence on the part of Turkish Cypriots, and a possible shift toward a no vote for reunification among Greek Cypriots. The poll also found that society on both sides needed to begin a very public discussion of the parameters of the negotiations and that confidence-building measures were needed to be implemented to increase the levels of trust in the peace process.[8]

As 2012 began, both sides were again preparing to travel to New York for a fifth meeting with Ban to assess the progress of the negotiations. Ban had asked both Christofias and Eroglu to come to New York on January 22-24 with significant offers in the areas of governance, economy, and EU affairs so that the "Greentree 2" meeting could facilitate a final deal that would allow the U.N. to convene an international conference in the spring to resolve security-related issues and allow referenda on a final agreement in both the north and south by early summer of 2012.

It appeared, however, that even before arriving in New York, neither Christofias nor Eroglu was willing or able to make necessary concessions on the difficult issues of property rights, security, territory, mainland Turks who had "settled" in the north, or citizenship—areas where both sides had long-held and very different positions. The uncertainty of what could be achieved prompted Christofias to question whether the meeting should take place at all. The lack of any progress to that point led some in the Greek Cypriot opposition to suggest the meeting be cancelled and warned Christofias not to accept any deadlines or U.N. arbitration or agree to an international conference without explicit agreements on internal issues.

Nevertheless, Greentree 2 took place, and it was reported that both sides had submitted to Ban extensive proposals that each felt could provide the basis for a solution. The Greentree meetings concluded without any new agreement to end the stalemate and led an apparently frustrated Ban

[8] Interpeace, "Latest Cyprus Poll Findings: Greek and Turkish Leadership Must Take Bold Action Now," July 5, 2011.

to say that he would wait until he received a progress report from his special advisor at the end of March 2012 before deciding whether to convene an international conference, despite Christofias's opposition to any such decision.

Christofias and Eroglu resumed their direct negotiations in mid-February, but it appeared unlikely that the stalemate could be broken at that point and that the potential for any agreement looked to be delayed—not only until after the EU presidency in the latter half of 2012, but also until after the February 2013 national elections in the republic. In early April, it was reported that the Turkish Cypriot side had suggested that the U.N.-sponsored talks be terminated once the republic assumed the EU presidency on July 1, 2012. This prompted President Christofias to respond that Turkish Cypriots were no longer interested in a solution, even though, as Christofias suggested, the talks could continue during the EU presidency, as the two issues were not related.[9]

In May 2012, and with the EU presidency fast approaching, Christofias understood that the talks could not have achieved anything positive, and although he insisted that the negotiations could have continued during the EU presidency, the U.N. did not. U.N. special envoy Alexander Downer then announced that Ban had decided not to call for an international conference on Cyprus due to the lack of agreement on core domestic issues and further stated that the U.N. would no longer host the leaders' "unproductive" talks. Downer said that the U.N. would reconvene the meetings "when there was a clear indication that both sides had something substantial to conclude."[10]

By mid-2012, the convergence of several factors led to the suspension of the talks. One factor was Christofias's intent to make the republic's presidency of the EU a success. Christofias clearly did not want a divisive debate over what would have probably been an unpopular agreement—even if he and Eroglu could have negotiated a settlement—to detract or ultimately overshadow the Cyprus EU presidency. Eroglu's pronouncement that he would not meet directly with President Christofias during the six-month EU presidency, despite the fact that the settlement negotiations were not part of the presidency's mandate, was also a factor. The emergence of the fiscal and budget crisis in Cyprus brought on in the aftermath of the larger Eurozone crisis also contributed to the demise of the negotiations. Christofias realized that managing a serious fiscal crisis and the presidency of the EU simultaneously would leave, in reality, little time for him to continue any regular negotiations with Eroglu.

On May 14, 2012, recognizing his own internal political realities and reverting back to an earlier statement that he would not seek reelection if he was not able to resolve the Cyprus problem, President Christofias announced that he would not seek reelection in 2013, stating that "there are no reasonable hopes for a solution to the Cyprus problem or for substantial further progress in the remaining months of our presidency."[11]

By the end of May 2012, the U.N.-sponsored talks, having essentially reached a stalemate, were formally suspended. Neither Christofias nor Eroglu strongly objected to the U.N. decision. While both sides blamed the other for a lack of progress on an agreement, the reaction to the downgrading of the talks appeared to be muted among both the political leaders and the general publics in both communities.

[9] *Famagusta Gazette,* "Eroglu Seeks Termination of U.N. Talks on Cyprus, President Says," April 12, 2012.

[10] *Cyprus Mail,* "U.N. Decides to Take a Back Seat," April 28, 2012.

[11] *Cyprus Mail,* "Christofias Bows Out," May 15, 2012.

In early June, Kudret Ozersay, then the chief advisor to Eroglu for the negotiations, resigned, further signaling that the talks, even at the technical level, would not continue at the same pace. However, Ozersay was soon replaced by Osman Ertuğ as chief negotiator.

Elections 2013: The Anastasiades Government and New Talks

In January 2013, the Republic of Cyprus entered a period of national elections. With Christofias out of the picture, Nicos Anastasiades of the center-right, democratic DISY party, with the backing of the conservative DIKO and EVROKO parties, emerged as the leader in early public opinion polls. DIKO had been part of the previous Christofias-led government but withdrew from the coalition in disagreement over some of the positions Christofias took in the negotiations with the Turkish Cypriots. Anastasiades's closest challenge came from the AKEL party itself, led by Stavros Malas. Although Anastasiades took the largest number of first round votes, he was forced into a runoff with Malas but eventually emerged victorious. During the campaign, neither candidate offered many concrete proposals regarding the negotiations with the Turkish Cypriots, as the fiscal and budget crisis took center stage.

Anastasiades, who had backed the 2004 Annan Plan for a Cyprus settlement, appeared cautious about his intentions other than calling for a settlement, perhaps not wanting to cause a public rift with his DIKO and EVROKO allies, who had opposed the Annan Plan. While foreclosing new discussions based on the old Annan Plan, Anastasiades had suggested that the basis of future talks would have to be broad understandings reached in 1977 and 1979 between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot leadership at the time as well as a 2006 set of principles agreed to by former Cypriot leaders. He also suggested that as president he would not be directly involved in the day-to-day negotiations but would, in time, appoint someone as his representative and principal negotiator.

Upon being sworn in as president, Anastasiades did reach out to the Turkish Cypriots, referring to them as citizens of Cyprus but not giving any clear signal as to his timetable for restarting the negotiations. On the other hand, Yiannakis Omirou, leader of the parliament, stated that a new national policy was necessary: "We need to denounce the Turkish stance to the international and European community and redefine the Cyprus problem as a problem of invasion, occupation and violation of international law." The new policy, Omirou went on, "must set out the framework for a Cyprus solution and use Cyprus's EU membership and Turkey's EU prospects to exert pressure on Ankara to terminate the island's occupation and accept a solution, in accordance with international and European law."[12]

Initially, the Turkish Cypriots appeared cautious about which negotiating partner they expected to see across the table if and when the talks resumed. Would it be Anastasiades, who earlier was sympathetic to many of the provisions of the Annan Plan, or a different negotiator, who was critical of the previous government's negotiating positions and had teamed with what the Turkish Cypriots believed to be hard-line partners who either withdrew from the previous government coalition in part because of the reported "concessions" being offered by Christofias or were consistently critical of the previous government's approach? The Turkish Cypriots had also seemed to set a new standard regarding their own status as a prelude for resuming the talks. Eroglu had stated that the talks could not resume automatically from where they left off and had begun referring to the two "states," a "new dynamic," a "new negotiating table," and a timetable for concluding whatever talks did resume.

[12] *Famagusta Gazette*, "House President: A New Policy on the Cyprus Problem Needed," March 2, 2013.

Even as Anastasiades was being inaugurated, he had to turn his attention to the serious domestic banking and fiscal crises facing the republic. At the same time, Turkish Cypriot and Turkish leadership began to publicly pressure Anastasiades to restart the settlement talks as soon as possible, although it appeared that the Turkish Cypriot side was not proposing any significant compromises or new ideas that would move the talks forward. This prompted Anastasiades to respond that he would not be forced to the bargaining table during this period of economic turmoil and was committed to first addressing the government's fiscal crisis.

In mid-May, Foreign Minister Ioannis Kasoulides traveled to New York and Washington to assure everyone that the leadership of the republic was indeed interested in resuming the negotiations but that they needed time to get a handle on the economic crisis on the island. He also made it clear that the Anastasiades Administration would not be bound by any previous "convergences" discussed between his predecessor Christofias and Eroglu and would not agree to any definitive timetable to conclude the talks. Kasoulides also floated the old idea, previously rejected by the Turkish Cypriots (and opposed by some Greek Cypriots who wanted a comprehensive agreement), that as a confidence-building measure on the part of Turkey, the abandoned town of Verosha should be returned to "its rightful owners." In exchange, the Turkish Cypriots could be permitted to use the port of Famagusta for direct trade with Europe under the supervision of the EU. Turkish Cypriots also traveled to Washington with a more upbeat message that 2014 would be a good year to reach an agreement.

The Turkish Cypriots, however, rejected the return of Verosha and began speaking more publicly and more often of "the realities on the island," referring to two separate co-equal states as well as timetables for concluding the talks. Eroglu had stated that "while there is a Greek Cypriot administration in the South, there is the TRNC state in the North." Ankara, for its part, had already suggested that while it was ready to say "yes" to a negotiated solution, a two-state option was viable if talks could not restart and produce a solution in a timely fashion.

Eroglu stated in December 2012 that "the Cyprus problem cannot be solved under existing conditions" and that "a possible settlement of the Cyprus issue could be viable only if it is based on the existing realities on the island," which acknowledges that "there were two different people having two separate languages, religions, nationality and origin and two different states" and that "certainly it was possible to find a solution to make these two people live together, however people should bear in mind, it is [not] realistic to establish one state from two separate states."[13]

In late May 2013, Anastasiades and Eroglu finally met, and Anastasiades restated his support for the resumption of the talks but again indicated that the talks could not restart until perhaps October 2013. In July, the Greek Cypriot National Council took the day-to-day responsibility for the negotiations out of the hands of the president, as had been the practice since 2008, and appointed Ambassador Andreas Mavroyiannis of the Foreign Ministry as the Greek Cypriot negotiator. This action increased speculation that the Greek Cypriots were close to proposing that preliminary discussions begin with the goal of resuming the formal negotiations.

Throughout the remainder of 2013 and into the beginning of 2014, both sides repeatedly argued over how to restart the talks despite repeated assurances from both sides that they remained committed to restarting the negotiations. Through that period, neither side had been willing to reach agreement on the language of what the Greek Cypriots insisted should be a "joint statement" redefining a set of negotiating goals or outcomes that both sides would strive to achieve. The Turkish Cypriots initially rejected the idea that such an opening statement was

[13] Statements made by Turkish Cypriot leader Eroglu on various occasions in December 2012 as provided to CRS by the Turkish Cypriots.

necessary but then decided to negotiate language they could be comfortable with. Negotiations between Mavroyiannis and Osman Ertuğ took almost six months to conclude.

On February 8, 2014, after what appeared to be a significant intervention by the United States, the Cyprus press reported that an agreement on the language of a "joint declaration" had been reached and that Anastasiades and Eroglu would meet right away to relaunch the negotiations. This was further confirmed when the "joint statement" was released to the public a few days later.[14] The Declaration, which to some became the most comprehensive agreed document since the High Level Agreements of 1977 and 1979 or the Annan Plan of 2004, on the Cyprus question now serves the basis of the current negotiations.

The agreement on the language of the joint statement, however, did not come without a political price for Anastasiades. On February 27, the leader of the government's coalition partner, DIKO, Nicolas Papadopoulos, announced that it was leaving the government in disagreement over the way President Anastasiades was handling the negotiations, much as they did when they quit the Christofias government.[15] It appeared that Papadopoulos—whose father, former President Tassos Papadopoulos, had opposed the Annan Plan—was concerned that Anastasiades had tacitly accepted some of the past "convergences" that DIKO had opposed. The fact that the joint statement referred only to a "united" Cyprus and not the Republic of Cyprus may have again suggested to DIKO that Anastasiades had come too close to accepting an autonomous Turkish Cypriot state over which the Greek Cypriots would have little or no authority or jurisdiction.

Curiously, Ertuğ left his post as negotiator after the Declaration was announced but continued to serve as Eroğlu's spokesperson. The Turkish Cypriots then reappointed former negotiator Kudret Ozersay, one seen as more willing to seek accommodation, as their representative to the talks. Negotiations resumed between Mavroyiannis and Ozersay, with Anastasiades and Eroglu meeting periodically. It remained unclear exactly where the starting point for each of the "chapters" of issues to be negotiated had been set. Both sides had earlier insisted that they would not be bound by past "convergences" thought to have been achieved in previous negotiations. However, the February joint statement referred to the fact that only "unresolved" issues would be on the table, suggesting that perhaps some previous agreements had, in fact, been accepted.

Such a long disagreement first over the need for, and then the language of, the joint statement indicated to many observers that it would continue to be difficult to reach a final solution, particularly in 2014, which marked the 40th anniversary of the 1974 deployment of Turkish military forces to the island and the 10th anniversary of the Greek Cypriot vote against the Annan Plan, events that would be observed in very different ways on each side of the island. The pessimism surrounding the potential continuation of the stalemate prompted one well-respected Washington think tank to suggest that a permanent separation of the two sides might become inevitable and that serious consideration should be given to such a possible outcome.[16]

The talks did resume in 2014, with Anastasiades and Eroglu meeting several times. In early July, Eroglu was said to have submitted a "roadmap" toward a settlement, which included a national referendum to be held by the end of 2014. This was apparently rejected by Anastasiades. Later in July it was reported that the Greek Cypriots had tabled a 17-point plan addressing their positions on issues for a future agreement while the Turkish Cypriots submitted a 15-point counter-

[14] For text of the statement, see *Cyprus Mail*, "Joint Declaration Final Version as Agreed Between the Two Leaders," February 11, 2014.

[15] *Famagusta Gazette*, "DIKO Decides to Leave Cyprus Government Coalition," February 27, 2014.

[16] International Crisis Group, "Divided Cyprus: Coming to Terms on an Imperfect Reality," Europe Report 229, March 2014.

proposal. Both proposals were apparently rejected. Not only was there disagreement on how to go forward, but there had been reports that both sides had actually backtracked on several issues (see below). These and other reported roadblocks to the negotiations prompted Greek Prime Minister Antonis Samaras to say in July that no "significant progress" had been made[17] and the Turkish Cypriot official for foreign affairs, Ozdil Nami, to suggest "the peace talks were finished."[18]

The last meeting between Anastasiades and Eroglu before a break for the summer was held on July 26 and was reportedly a somewhat tense session, with Anastasiades expressing his frustration with the Turkish Cypriot side. In late August, the United Nations named Norwegian diplomat Espen Barth Eide as the Secretary-General's new special advisor on Cyprus. The talks, hosted by Eide, resumed in September, and when Anastasiades and Eroglu renewed their meetings on September 21, Turkish Cypriot negotiator Kudret Ozersay stated that he felt that "real negotiations are starting now."[19] Unfortunately, Ozersay's optimism did not last very long. Near the end of September, Turkey, sensing an increased interaction among the Republic of Cyprus, Greece, Israel, and Egypt over energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean, decided, in what was seen as a provocative act, to move its own seismic exploration vessel into the Republic of Cyprus's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) off the southern coast of the island. Turkey then issued what was referred to as a "navigational telex" (NAVTEX) stating that the seismic operations could last until April 2015 unless the Turkish Cypriots were given more of a role in decisions regarding the island's natural resources, specifically energy. Reacting to Turkey's decision to establish a presence in the Cypriot EEZ, President Anastasiades announced in October that he was withdrawing from the settlement negotiations and declared that the talks would not resume until the Turkish seismic vessel was withdrawn from Cyprus's EEZ and the NAVTEX was rescinded. By March 2015, the seismic ship had moved to the port of Famagusta, but the NAVTEX had not been withdrawn.

Although the Greek Cypriots insisted that all of the island would eventually benefit from any resources exploited in the waters off the coast, they pointed out that energy, under the provisions of the joint statement agreed to earlier, would be considered a "federal-level" issue and would become part of the dialogue once an agreement was reached. The Turkish Cypriots, for their part, demanded that energy issues become part of the formal settlement negotiations once they resumed. In late October 2014, with the negotiations suspended, Turkish Cypriot negotiator Ozersay was replaced by Ergun Olgun. The suspension of the talks, precipitated for some by an unnecessary action and a possible overreaction, again raised serious doubts regarding the commitment of both sides to achieve a solution that left one former British foreign secretary stating that "the international community should accept the reality that there is division and that you have partition."[20]

Through the first four months of 2015, the talks remained in suspension with Anastasiades continuing to hold that Turkey would have to withdraw its seismic ship, rescind the NAVTEX issued in January, and stop threatening existing energy exploration activities off the southern coast of Cyprus. Some believed that political pressure from what would be his normal domestic political allies had forced Anastasiades into a corner, preventing him from backing down from this demand despite some domestic and international pressure to do so. Others believed he was

[17] *Famagusta Gazette*, "No "Significant Progress" in Cyprus Talks—Greek PM," July 28, 2014.

[18] "Cyprus Peace Talks Are Finished, Claims Ozdil Nami," Turkish Cypriot TV as reported in the *Famagusta Gazette*, July 18, 2014.

[19] Interview with Kudret Ozersay on Ada TV, September 2014.

[20] "Straw Calls for Acceptance of Cyprus Division," reported by the *Famagusta Gazette*, from an interview between former British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw and the Anadolu Agency, November 26, 2014.

under pressure to hold off on the talks until the national elections in the north, scheduled for April 19, were concluded.

By mid-April 2015, Turkey had removed its seismic vessel from Cyprus and did not renew the NAVTEX. However, the election campaign in the north had begun, and both sides accepted the fact that the negotiations would not resume until after the elections.

Elections 2015: Akinci and the Resumption of the Negotiations

On April 19, Turkish Cypriots went to the polls to elect a new "president." Seven candidates were on the ballot. The incumbent, Dervis Ergolu, emerged with a thin margin of votes over the runner up, Mustafa Akinci, but did not win enough to avoid a second round of voting. On April 26, in the second round of voting, Mustafa Akinci of the small, center-left, Communal Democratic Party (TDA) won the election to become the new leader of the Turkish Cypriots, defeating Eroglu with 60% of the votes. Akinci, a three-time "mayor" of the Turkish Cypriot-administered half of Nicosia, immediately announced that the negotiations would resume as soon as possible in May and that it was his intention to conclude a settlement agreement by the end of 2015. In congratulating Akinci on his election, Anastasiades confirmed that he, too, looked forward to restarting the negotiations as soon as possible.

It did not take long for the two sides to meet. On May 11, 2015 the U.N. Special Envoy hosted a dinner for the two leaders in what was described as a relaxed and positive setting. Akinci quickly named Ozdil Nami, the former "foreign minister" in the Eroglu government, as the new negotiator for the Turkish Cypriot side, and on May 17 Anastasiades and Akinci held their first formal negotiating session. On May 23, the two leaders took the unprecedented step of walking together down Ledra Street, the symbolic dividing line of the island, in a show of solidarity and hope that this time things would be different. This was the first time that a president of the republic stepped on to territory normally referred to as "occupied" land. Since then, the two leaders have met regularly, including three times in December 2015.

Akinci led a small political party that played little, if any role, in the past negotiation process, and his candidacy was criticized by some as inexperienced. For some, he entered the negotiations unencumbered with any preconditions for the talks or for a settlement. Although he did initially meet with all of the other Turkish Cypriot political parties, he seemed determined to rely on the business and NGO communities to help develop and articulate his negotiating positions.

The reaction to Akinci among the Greek Cypriots, although not all, appeared to be positive but restrained, with a somewhat upbeat "wait-and-see" attitude prevailing. Many appeared to be relieved that Eroglu and his hardline approach to the negotiations were gone, and, with little in the way of determined political opponents acting as a restraint on his negotiating strategy, some felt Akinci would been more willing to compromise on some of the issues Eroglu would not budge on. On the other hand, not knowing where his support for a final deal would actually come from, some were not sure exactly what Akinci could compromise on. In August of 2015, Akinci held a round of visits and discussions with the political parties, NGOs, and the business community apparently to assess exactly how much leeway he had for compromise.

Turkey was another factor for Akinci. Akinci was not seen as a favorite of Ankara during the elections, and Ankara was likely surprised with the margin of his victory. The government in Ankara offered the obligatory congratulations to Akinci, and Turkey's president Erdogan visited the island to meet with the new leader. In fact, it was reported in the Turkish press that Akinci and Turkish President Erdogan had exchanged some unpleasant words immediately after the election. In his victory statement, Akinci reiterated his campaign position that the status of the relationship between Turkey and Turkish Cyprus should change. "It should be a relationship of

brothers/sisters, not a relationship of a motherland and her child," he had said.[21] This provoked a somewhat angry response from Erdogan and led the Turkish press to question the future of Turkey's support for the negotiations. In an editorial in the April 28 edition of the *Hurriyet Daily News*, the author suggested that

> Akıncı has been away from active politics for more than a decade. His team is mostly composed of young people unaware of the delicacies and history of the Cyprus problem. Anastasiades might try to score an easy victory. If the Cyprus talks between the "novice" Akıncı team and a ravenous Anastasiades team somehow agree on a deal that favored the demands of the Greek Cypriots, Akinci could dangerously risk fundamental demands of the Turkish Cypriots, forcing the whole process to be derailed in a manner very difficult to revive with extreme effort.[22]

In an interview in early August with Emine Colak, the Turkish Cypriot "foreign minister," Colak indicated that Turkey was not trying to manipulate the peace talks and seemed, for the moment, content to let the Turkish Cypriots negotiate their own agreement.[23] Some observers attributed this "hands-off" approach by Turkey as a reason why a positive atmosphere has surrounded the talks and why some concrete progress seems to have been made.

Over the summer and fall of 2015, as the negotiations continued on a regular pace, several new "confidence-building" measures were initiated. The two leaders agreed on the opening of a new border crossing at Deryneia, and for the first time in 40 years, electricity connections between the two sides was reestablished. Returning Verosha to the Greek Cypriots continues to be a measure Anastaiades endorses, but that issue seems to be receiving less discussion at the moment as a separate "confidence-building" measure.

Despite the current level of optimism being displayed by the leaders of the two sides, many recall a similarly hopeful atmosphere prevalent in early 2008, after Christofias was elected president on a campaign filled with commitments of a quick conclusion to the negotiations. At that time, Turkish Cypriot leader, Ali Talat declared that because he and Christofias shared the same vision of a future for Cyprus, the two could overcome years of disagreement and mistrust and that the negotiations could conclude within six months. Akinci's declarations regarding a quick settlement by the end of 2015 raised expectations, but that deadline, never accepted by Anastasiades, has been missed and only time will tell whether Anastasiades and Akinci can overcome the traditional barriers that have blocked the ability to secure an agreement in the past. As both sides enter 2016, the mood seems to be as positive and constructive as it has ever been with more frequent references to actually being farther along on the road to a settlement than in the past. Nevertheless, it appears that road will remain difficult to travel as both sides seek a final solution.

Issues

As intensely as the Cyprus negotiations have been followed in the press and by outside political observers, it has always been difficult to determine with any specificity exactly what either side means by the term "convergences" when referring to the issues under negotiation. And although both Anastasiades and Eroglu had indicated that neither would be bound by any of the past convergences, some of the language in their February 2014 joint statement suggested that some past agreements had been adopted. Nevertheless, during the course of the negotiations over the

[21] "Erdogan Engages in War of Words with New Turkish Cypriot Leader," *Hurriyet Daily News*, April 26, 2015.

[22] "Akinci Won, Now What," *Hurriyet Daily News*, April 28, 2015.

[23] "Turkey Not Manipulating Cyprus Peace Talks," *Hurriyet Daily News*, August 2, 2015.

summer of 2014, the status of these past convergences seemed to have become more uncertain, with both sides sending mixed signals over whether they had agreed to anything.

It is still relatively early in the Akinci era, and he and Anastasiades had not indicated specifically what the starting point of the negotiations had been beyond the "joint statement" issued in 2014. Eroglu apparently drew some pretty strong "red" lines around some issues, and Akinci has not appeared, at least publically, to have adopted or refuted any particular positions advocated by Eroglu, although many expect that to happen on some issues.

This next section, on the issues under negotiation, will look back at the positions taken by previous leaders and will refer to pre-Akinci discussions. Any new developments will be noted.

In his April 1, 2010, press conference, former Turkish Cypriot leader Talat stated that 31 "joint documents" had been prepared addressing a range of issues. Talat suggested that the new federal government would have powers over external relations, EU policies, citizenship, budget matters, and economic coordination. These also appeared to be the "convergences" often referred to by Christofias and Eroglu. They were also reference points included in the language of the 2014 "joint statement" between Anastasiades and Ergolu. Another understanding suggested that one side would hold the portfolio of the foreign minister and the other the EU portfolio. Still another had the equal constituent states covering most of the remainder of the governance issues, which again seems to have been written into the joint statement. Talat also suggested that the two sides had agreed on a Senate, equally represented, and a House proportionally based on population. There was also reportedly a "convergence" on a new judicial court that would have equal Turkish and Greek Cypriot representation and that Cyprus would be represented in the European Parliament by four Greek and two Turkish Cypriot Ministers of Parliament. A federal supreme court was also identified in the joint statement.

When former President Christofias and Eroglu began their negotiations, neither side acknowledged the Christofias/Talat "convergences" as anything more than unofficial understandings, as both sides adhered to the idea that "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed," a position again stated in the joint statement. What did appear clear, however, were the issues on which little agreement had been reached or in fact had been the subject of some backtracking by both sides.

For instance, both sides continued to differ over how a *new united Cyprus* would be created. The Greek Cypriots assumed that the new unified state would evolve from the existing Republic of Cyprus. The Turkish Cypriots wanted the new state to be based on two equal "founding states." Eroglu had reiterated that he was not prepared to give up the TRNC. The Turkish Cypriots also wanted the new entity referred to as something other than the "Republic of Cyprus." The joint statement agreed to by Anastasiades and Eroglu in 2014 simply referred to a "united" Cyprus, not a united "Republic of Cyprus," and seemed to suggest two relatively separate "constituent states" united under a federal government that would have limited authority relative to the power of the two states. The Anastasiades/Akinci talks initially seemed to suggest that the new entity could be referred to something such as the "Federal Republic of Cyprus," but it was unclear how the two sides would get there. In mid-December 2015, Anastasiades stated that "no one was aiming to abolish the Republic of Cyprus" rather "what we are pursuing is the evolution of the Republic of Cyprus into a bizonal, bicommunal federation."[24]

Christofias reportedly proposed the *direct election* of a president and vice president for a six-year term on the same ticket with weighted cross-community voting. The president would be a Greek

[24] "President Anastasiades Hopes for Cyprus Solution in 2016," *Famagusta-gazette.com*, December 15, 2015.

Cypriot for four years, and the vice president would be a Turkish Cypriot; they would then rotate offices, with the Turkish Cypriot becoming president for two years. Turkish Cypriots initially proposed that the executive have two alternating presidents elected by the Senate. Turkish Cypriots were opposed to a single list of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot candidates to be elected by all of the people of Cyprus principally because Greek Cypriots, by virtue of their majority, would in effect elect the Turkish Cypriot candidate. At some point, Talat seemed to have made a significant concession in agreeing to accept the Greek position for the election of a president and vice president even though he continued to have doubts about direct popular voting. Although the idea of a rotating presidency was not new, opposition to the proposal was, and continued to be, vocal on the Greek Cypriot side as many Greek Cypriots apparently could not accept the idea of being governed by a representative of the Turkish Cypriot minority.[25] On the other hand, Eroglu seemed to want to pursue that option. It had been reported that in July 2014, Anastasiades retreated on the notion of a rotating presidency, proposing the old idea that future presidents be Greek Cypriots and future vice presidents be Turkish Cypriots elected directly by all voters. The Turkish Cypriots rejected the proposal. Akinci in early August apparently suggested that a rotating presidency was a must in order to have political equality.

The thorny and emotional issue of *property* had been the focus of a significant debate between Christofias and Eroglu and has been addressed early by Anastasiades and Akinci. As a result of the ethnic strife of the 1960s and the deployment of Turkish military forces on the island in 1974, it was estimated that over 150,000 Greek Cypriots living in the north were forced south and close to 50,000 Turkish Cypriots living in the south fled to the north, with both communities leaving behind large amounts of vacated property, especially in the north. Greek Cypriots had long insisted that the original and legal owners who lost properties in the north must have the right to decide how to deal with their property, whether through recovery, exchange, or compensation. Turkish Cypriots believe that the current inhabitant of a property must have priority and that the issue should be resolved through compensation, exchange of alternate property, or restitution. To try to help resolve some of the property issues, the Turkish Cypriots established the Immovable Property Commission (IPC) to hear cases related to Greek Cypriot property claims in the north. The Greek Cypriots initially rejected the IPC. Only a few private Greek property owners have filed claims for compensation with the IPC. Although the gap in the respective Cypriot positions on property has been wide, it now appears that positive movement has been achieved. In July 2015, Anastasiades and Akinci agreed to create a new independent property commission with both sides agreeing that former property owners would be offered various choices regarding their claims that would allow all involved to be fairly compensated. Recently, both sides seemed to indicate that a settlement could involve between 25 and 30 billion euros.

The question of overall *territory* that would come under the jurisdiction of the two equal states remains in dispute. The Turkish Cypriot side of the "green line" includes approximately 37% of the island and includes several areas that had been inhabited almost entirely by Greek Cypriots before the 1974 division, such as Varosha, Morphou, and Karpas. Greek Cypriots want that territory returned, which would leave the Turkish Cypriot side controlling about 29% of the territory. At the time, Christofias resurrected an older proposal that would have the Turkish side return the uninhabited city of Varosha to Greek Cyprus in exchange for opening the seaport of Famagusta for use by the Turkish Cypriots to conduct international trade. The port would be operated by the EU and a joint Greek/Turkish Cypriot administration, thus allowing direct trade between northern Cyprus and the EU. Eroglu, perhaps banking on a proposal at the time

[25] According to a poll conducted by the EDEK party in the spring of 2010, over 70% of Greek Cypriots polled expressed opposition to a rotating presidency.

submitted by the EU Commission to the EU parliament to open direct trade with the north, rejected the Varosha/Famagusta proposal, although some speculated that Ankara was opposed to such a deal because it then would have placed pressure on Turkey to comply with its obligations under the Ankara Protocol to open its ports to Cypriot commerce. The European Parliament declined to consider the commission's initiative on technical grounds, but its 2011 report on Turkey's EU accession progress (introduced in Parliament in 2012) called for that very trade-off Christofias offered.

After the 2013 Greek Cypriot elections, President Anastasiades resurrected the proposal in the form of a "confidence-building" measure to test the sincerity of the Turkish Cypriots and Turkey to move forward in the negotiations. Eroglu stated that territory was a key bargaining chip for the Turkish Cypriots, suggesting he would not accept any Greek Cypriot proposal on Varosha or other areas. In early August 2014, it was reported that Anastasiades had upped the ante by suggesting that no agreement could be reached unless the town of Morphou was also returned to the republic. The Turkish Cypriots quickly rejected the idea, saying the town would not be returned.[26] After newly elected Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci took office, Anastasiades again included the Varosha/Famagusta option as a confidence-building measure. Thus far, the Turkish Cypriot side does not appear ready to go much beyond inspecting the city to determine whether it actually could be re-inhabited.

On another issue, in July 2010, President Christofias, seeking to unlock the stalemate, tabled a proposal that would have linked the property and territory issues into one agreement, which also included Christofias's earlier offer to allow 50,000 mainland Turks who had settled in the north to remain in the north. Eroglu had indicated that any final solution could not result in significant social upheaval in north Cyprus, meaning that significant numbers of citizens of the north, whether from the mainland or not, could not be forced to leave, and only a small number of Greek Cypriots would be permitted to return to property in the north. Eroglu rejected the offer from Christofias stating that "no one on Cyprus is any longer a refugee" and that sending mainland Turkish settlers back to Turkey was not something he could agree to. Eroglu had also reiterated in his talks with Anastasiades that the number of mainland Turks who had settled in the north and who would be allowed to remain on the island would have to be higher than previously discussed.[27]

After the joint statement was agreed to in February 2014, Turkish Cypriot representatives were reported to have stated that no citizens of the north would be required to leave the country.[28] In a talk given at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, DC, on February 28, 2014, the Cyprus ambassador to the United States speculated that a resolution of the Cyprus problem could conceivably allow for mainland Turks, who came to the island as long ago as 40 years and had established clear roots in the north, to remain on the island. Greek Cypriot political parties, other than perhaps AKEL, appear to remain opposed to any agreement that would allow a large number of "settlers" to remain on the island. Akinci, perhaps not wishing to antagonize what is now a majority segment of the population in the north, initially stayed away from this issue. However, recently he and Anastasiades may have agreed to at least set population sizes in both of the "constituent" states that would emerge as part of an agreement. The population for the Turkish

[26] *Famagusta Gazette*, "No Solution to the Cyprus Problem Without Return of Morphou, President Says," August 14, 2014.

[27] *Cyprus Mail*, "The Most Blatant Mockery of Negotiations," July 27, 2014.

[28] *Famagusta Gazette*, "Jittery Turkish Settlers Seek Clarifications as Cyprus Talks Resume," February 19, 2014.

Cypriots would be set at 220,000, although Akinci seems to want another 50,000, while the Greek Cypriot population would be approximately 800,000.[29]

Next to the property issue, the issue of *security guarantees* continues to be one of the most difficult bridges to cross. The Greek Cypriots have long argued that all Turkish military forces would have to leave the island. They argued that the EU can offer security guarantees to all of its citizens in its member states. Therefore, once the entire island became part of the EU, they saw no reason for guarantees from third countries, such as Turkey, Greece, or the United Kingdom.[30] Turkish Cypriots and Turkey maintain that the 1960 Treaties of Guarantee and Alliance must be reaffirmed in any settlement, and Turkish security guarantees should not be lifted until Turkey joins the EU, because, without guarantees, the Turkish Cypriots would feel insecure based on their history with ethnic violence on the island in the 1960s. Eroglu had stated on several past occasions that "the security guarantees with Motherland Turkey could not be changed."[31] After the February 2014 joint statement was agreed to, it was reported that Eroglu had again stated that Turkish troops would not leave the island.[32] In late April, it was reported that the Greek foreign minister suggested that no final agreement on Cyprus could be achieved until all Turkish military forces agreed to leave the island. It was unclear whether Akinci had even raised this issue for discussion at this point, not wanting to antagonize Turkey or even give Ankara a reason to reengage in the talks. However, in an early visit to North Cyprus, Turkish Foreign Minister Feriden Hadi Sinirlioglu may have repeated the Turkish position that security for the north was important and that the "guarantor" nations would have to be included in the negotiations at some point.

The introduction of the issue of *energy resources*, as noted previously, had served to stall the negotiations between Anastasiades and Eroglu. For Eroglu, the energy issue had to be a part of the negotiations. The Greek Cypriots rejected such a proposal, stating that energy issues would be dealt with under any new "federal" system agreed to in the negotiations. Akinci seemed reluctant to press this issue, apparently accepting Anastasiades' promises that energy wealth will be shared by both sides and how that would be accomplished would be left to another time once a settlement was agreed.

Assessment

The election of Christofias in 2008 together with sitting Turkish Cypriot leader Talat ushered in a period of higher expectations for a settlement than at any time since 2004, when both Cypriot communities considered the Annan Plan. The personal relationship between Christofias and Talat and their public commitments to finding a solution to the Cyprus problem suggested that if these two leaders could not achieve a negotiated settlement, then it might take a long time before two like-minded leaders would again find themselves in a position to unify the people of Cyprus. With the April 2015 election of Mustafa Akinci as leader of the Turkish Cypriots, many believed that time had arrived.

Despite the strong commitment, good intentions, and warm relations between Christofias and Talat, progress in the talks fell victim to the harsh realities of four decades of separation, mistrust,

[29] "Pressure on Akinci to Grant Citizenship to 26,000 Turks in Cyprus," *Famagusta News*, December 7, 2015.

[30] *Cyprus News Agency*, "Cypriot FM: No Derogations from Acquis During a Solution," November 14, 2008, BBC Monitoring European, November 17, 2008.

[31] Comments from the speech of Turkish Cypriot leader Dervis Eroglu commemorating the Turkish intervention in Cyprus, July 20, 2011.

[32] *Cyprus Mail*, "AKEL: Pay No Heed to Eroglu's Rhetoric," February 22, 2014.

misunderstanding, and in some cases indifference to the need for a final settlement and unification of the island. Similarly, Christofias and Eroglu were unable, for very different reasons, to find enough common ground or make critically necessary concessions to craft an acceptable accommodation despite regular leadership meetings, technical level discussions, and five meetings with U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

The 2013 presidential elections in the republic did offer the possibility that with at least one new negotiator in the person of Anastasiades, some level of new energy might have been injected into the negotiations. After the presidential elections, however, many observers became disappointed that the resumption of the negotiations appeared to have become a much lesser priority than expected for either leader, even though they understood the need for Anastasiades to address the economic crisis that had engulfed the Greek Cypriot side and Ergolu's previous expressions of frustration with the process. In the end, Anastasiades and Ergolu fared no better and actually appeared to have made even less progress toward a solution.

With the agreement on the "joint statement" in early 2014, there appeared a glimmer of hope that the window of opportunity to reach an agreed solution had reopened even as opposition on the Greek Cypriot side began to emerge. Turkish Cypriot negotiator Ozersay's comments after the September 21, 2014, meeting between Anastasiades and Eroglu that "real negotiations are starting now" left many wondering what Ozersay felt had taken place over the previous six years and what had now changed. The subsequent negotiations proved Ozersay's optimism was premature.

The injection of the energy resource issue into the negotiations resulted in yet another complication in the talks. This led to accusations, threats, and further distrust among the republic, the Turkish Cypriots, and Ankara. While some observers thought that the energy issue could have become a rallying point for stepped up and hopefully successful negotiations in which both sides would enjoy the economic benefits of the newly found resources, the atmosphere was quickly poisoned and had become, for some, another lost opportunity.

The April 2015 election of Mustafa Akinci reopened the window of opportunity for a permanent settlement of the Cyprus problem. As "mayor" of the Turkish Cypriot portion of Nicosia, Akinci had been praised for working cooperatively with his Greek Cypriot counterparts on a number of infrastructure projects, leading some to hold a positive view of the possibilities of a settlement solution with Akinci.

Akinci, immediately after his election, spoke of resuming the negotiations as soon as possible, an action that was quickly achieved. And, both sides raised the idea of the need for a few "confidence building" measures similar to what Anastasiades had proposed, including the opening of several new "green line" crossing points as well as a Verosha/Famagusta agreement, which Eroglu had consistently rejected. Akinci was receptive to the idea of some new measures.

While the political environment on both sides of the island immediately after the election of Akinci had taken on a positive air, with congratulations and predictions that the negotiations could conclude quickly, the scene reminded Cyprus observers of the 2008 election of Dimitris Christofias and the almost giddy atmosphere that arose over a possible quick solution to the division of the island. After Christofias's election, Turkish Cypriot leader Ali Talat, a long-time acquaintance of Christofias, and a supporter of the 2004 Annan Plan, declared that a solution in Cyprus was possible by the end of 2008. Akinci, like Talat, declared that he and Anastasiades were of the same generation and could possibly relate more easily to each other and could better understand the measures that both sides would have to take in order to achieve a solution. Akinci's declarations regarding a settlement raised for some a "deja vu" feeling of "been-there-said-that" all over again. Nevertheless, the relationship between the two leaders has thus far been an improvement over the Anastasiades/Eroglu relationship, but, as was the case between

Christofias and Talat, things can change quickly. While the negotiations between Christofias and Talat appeared to get off to a fast start, the differences in positions quickly became apparent, and the talks, although held on a regular basis, soon began to bog down.

The first eight months of the Anastasiades/Akinci era seem to have gone well. Both leaders seem to enjoy meeting with each other and doing public events together in a show of solidarity. However, the two could not meet Akinci's goal of the end of 2015 for a settlement, and it is unclear whether Anastasiades wants to try to reach an agreement and hold an island-wide referendum on the agreement before the spring 2016 Greek Cypriot parliament elections. To do so before or in conjunction with those elections, both sides might have to reach an agreement by the end of March 2016. Thus, the first few months of 2016 will be critical and will show whether both sides can overcome traditional barriers to a settlement more effectively than previous attempts by Cypriot leaders.

There are two areas worth watching closely as the new era continues. One is the perception in the republic of Anastasiades's willingness and commitment to reach a solution that he knows will generate opposition from some quarters no matter what the solution contains. Christofias's apparent good relations with Talat quickly ran afoul of the Greek Cypriot opposition political parties, which became suspicious that Christofias was willing to make too many concessions just to get a deal. Similarly, after the 2014 "joint statement" was agreed to, the DIKO party quit the governing coalition over perceived concessions in the language by Anastasiades that could portend problems for a final agreement. As the talks progressed, Anastasiades sought quick joint agreements on several confidence-building measures and had achieved a few without much internal debate or objection from the opposition. However, on June 15, 2015, the socialist party, EDEK, took the decision to officially reject the notion of a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation as a part of the solution to the Cyprus problem.

Other than the EDEK action, Anastasiades appeared to be keeping his potential political foes at bay by keeping them informed of the talks and not publically agreeing to Akinci's timetables, thus avoiding public controversy and criticism of the negotiations.[33] However, in early September 2015 when Anastasiades and his team briefed the leadership of the political parties, several of them voiced dissatisfaction with the level of information they were receiving. Similarly, in late December 2015, Akinci, in an interview on Turkish television, seemed to outline some very basic bottom lines, referred to as his "wish list," on the issues under negotiation. His perspectives, although not surprising, seemed to suggest that disagreements were far being resolved. The reaction to Akinci's comments, however, drew swift and negative reaction from several Greek Cypriot political leaders suggesting that trouble for Anastasiades was brewing just below the surface. House Speaker Yiannakis Omirou described Akinci's remarks as "highly indicative of the Turkish side's intentions," and said "Turkey effectively seeks to legalize the results of its 1974 invasion. He [Akinci] continues to support the preservation of Turkey's role as a guarantor, and insists on unacceptable views on political equality and rotating presidency."[34]

Anastasiades, facing looming legislative elections in May 2016, could be hearing the opening rounds of opposition statements that could impact the negotiations in several different ways.

Similarly, Akinci was not seen as the preferred choice of Ankara, which may have been more comfortable with another five years of Eroglu. Although congratulated by Erdogan and others in Ankara, some observers felt Akinci would have to tread lightly in the opening rounds of the

[33] "EDEK Back Sizopoulos in Rejection of BBF," *Cyprusmail*, June 15, 2015.

[34] "Akinci's Insistence on 'Wish List' Will Not Bring Desired Results, Spokesman Said," *Cyprus Mail*, December 30, 2015.

negotiations lest he draw the ire of a wary Turkey. However, with Turkey's attention focused on the situation in Syria involving the Islamic State (IS) and refugees, Akinci initially appeared to have taken the opportunity to move quickly to test the waters of what the Greek Cypriots and Ankara were willing to accept as part of the compromises necessary to reach a final solution to the Cyprus problem. Nevertheless, Akinci's predecessor Dervis Eroglu recently criticised Akinci for building up the public's hope at the same time that he has been unable to point to any specific developments toward a solution.

The concern for some in the Greek Cypriot political leadership now appears to be that any potential settlement arrived at between Anastasiades and Akinci would inevitably enshrine the "two-state" concept with their authority over the northern part of the island forever limited to what weak governing powers an overlapping "federal" government structure would provide. This appears to be a non-starter for some in the political opposition and could likely become more publicly discussed as talk of a possible agreement in 2016 accelerates.

On the other hand, many Greek Cypriots may now believe that if a final settlement would not affect the benefits enjoyed by the people of the Greek Cypriot community—who are already members of the European Union—or would impose new Turkish Cypriot authority over the south, it may be the time to reach a settlement. Those in the north with closer ties to Ankara—some suggest mostly from within the community of Turks who have settled in the north—who do not wish to be governed in any way by Greek Cypriots and who would not give Akinci much support if they sensed he was making too many concessions to Anastasiades, may now also feel the time for a settlement has arrived.

In its 2009 report on the Cyprus issue, the International Crisis Group pointed out that there appeared to be a growing younger generation on both sides of the island who have never interacted with the other and saw no reason to, did not have as much of a stake in the property issue, and did not wish to face the uncertainties and potential problems that a settlement neither side likes could create. Akinci himself pointed out how "young generations on both sides of the island had become estranged from each other" and that "the current negotiations constituted the last effort of the older generations to find a solution based on a federation."[35] On the other hand, that same generation of younger Cypriots may now relish the opportunity to rid the island of much of the current-day tension and to reintroduce themselves as one Cypriot community.

Another dimension to the Cyprus problem comes in the form of the EU itself. Of all of the problems currently confronting the EU, few have been as enduring or as perplexing as the failure to resolve the political division of Cyprus after all these years of negotiations. While hardly as critical an issue for the future of the EU as others, the Cyprus problem has, nevertheless, become one of those thorns in the EU's side that has caused continued frustration in Brussels on several counts. The inability to achieve a mutually acceptable solution to Cyprus has stalled the full integration of the Turkish Cypriot community into the union, periodically raising complaints of international political and economic isolation by the Turkish Cypriots and demands that the EU address the problem, particularly through enhanced trade opportunities for the Turkish Cypriots. The lack of a solution has also created an embarrassing political status issue for the EU in that, while the EU considers all of the island having entered the union in 1974 an international organization, the United Nations must provide security along what should be an internal EU border, if any border at all. In addition, a reported 30,000 foreign troops are stationed on what Brussels, at least, considers EU territory. The lack of a resolution has also complicated the EU's on-again-off-again efforts to move forward on closer relations between the Union and Turkey and

[35] "Property, Territory and Security Issues Unresolved: Akinci," *North Cyprus News*, December 14, 2015.

perhaps even Turkey's accession to the union. Finally, the Cyprus problem has posed major problems for the EU and the republic itself as they continue to face the increasing possibility of a permanently divided island and increasing, long-term tensions with Ankara over Turkey's role in the north. Despite these "issues" for the EU, Brussels seems both unsure how or little inclined to step up its role in trying to unify what is a divided EU member state.

As stated earlier, many observers believe the positive nature of the relationship formed thus far between Anastasiades and Akinci, and the progress purportedly made by both leaders, have provided a renewed sense of optimism that a final agreement could be reached. Nevertheless, the issues that have continued to separate the two communities and that have prevented a solution for over 41 years have long been clearly defined—they have not changed significantly since the Annan Plan in 2004—and the positions and proposed solutions each side has taken on them have been thoroughly presented, debated, and rejected by each side over and over.

At the moment it is unclear whether the compromises and concessions each side will have to make in order to reach a final solution are any closer to being achieved or would be acceptable to the respective Cypriot communities, and thus reaching that final elusive settlement has still not proven to be any easier.

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