The Cyprus Crisis and the Search for Elusive Peace

By

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Abstract

Cyprus crisis represents one of the most enduring and problematic of disputes in recent times. Since independence in 1960, the Greek and Turkish Cypriots have been in conflict, culminating in the arrival of the United Nations peacekeeping force in 1964 (that is the UN’s oldest) and the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974. The strategic location and the unique history of the island explains the involvement of many parties, all of which share responsibility for the endurance of the conflict, and the difficulty of reaching a permanent solution. Against this backdrop, this research seeks to critically analyse the Cypriot crisis and the search for elusive peace. To achieve this, the work was compartmentalized into five sections, namely: introduction, theoretical framework, brief history and nature of the crisis, causes of the crisis and conclusion. This work employs the secondary method of data collection. The group and human needs theories were the analytical tools used. Against the backdrop that the power sharing experiments of the 1960s in Cyprus has failed and the fact that the prospects of a unilateral two state federation are bleak, the paper recommends that a negotiated solution for two independent states is worth considering since such a solution does not rule out the type of integration and contacts that could be provided by EU membership of the entire island. There is no reason to think that a two state settlement will make it any harder than other solutions for the eventual reconciliation of the Greek and Turkish communities of Cyprus.

Key Words: Cyprus, Crisis, Greece, Turkey, peacekeeping, United Nations

Introduction

The Cypriot crisis is both historical and current. To begin with, the island is divided between a Greek majority community in the south and a Turkish minority community in the north. Over the years, ethnic divisions led to outbreaks of violent conflict between the groups. Greek Cypriots wanted the island to be united with Greece, while Turkish Cypriot wanted the island to be divided into two sovereign nations (kaloudis, 1999). Following centuries of Ottoman rule and British rule, the island got independence under the name of Republic of Cyprus. As a result, Greeks abandoned the idea of a union with Greece and Turks gave up their demands for partition. Great Britain, Turkey, and Greece signed the agreement as guarantors, which allowed them to intervene to protect the independence of the Republic. The peaceful period that followed the creation of the Republic of Cyprus lasted only three years. Then, violence between ethnic communities erupted in 1964, and then again in 1967 (Bahcheli, 2002).
Following a long period of fruitless negotiations between both sides and the guarantor countries (Britain, Greece and Turkey), the Cypriot National Guard in July of 1974 carried out a coup against President Makarios and named Nikos Giorgiades Sampson as his replacement. Sampson announced his intention to unite the island with Greece. The Turkish government, claiming this would be a violation of the 1960 agreement, wanted to intervene to guarantee the independence of the island. Great Britain rejected any possibility of an intervention. However, Britain’s diplomatic efforts failed when the military junta in Greece refused to negotiate. In July of 1974, Turkey invaded Cyprus. After two unsuccessful cease-fires, Turkish forces managed to control 40% of the island. Greek Cypriots in the Turkish controlled areas moved to the South and Turks from the South moved to the North. In 1984, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) was created in the Turkish controlled area. The TRNC has survived on a $200 million per year subsidy from Turkey because it faces an embargo and is still not recognized by any country other than Turkey (Hadjipavlou, 2007).

Throughout the years, the United Nations led negotiation efforts has promoted peaceful resolution which is yet to bring a permanent peace. With the European Union having considered Cyprus’ membership, efforts to find a solution acceptable to both sides have increased. Many different actors are involved in the conflict. In particular both non-governmental and inter-governmental organizations are active in the conflict. For example the United Nations, the European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and Amnesty International all have interests in the conflict. In the light of the above, this work seeks to critically periscope the Cypriot crisis with the aim of suggesting the way out.

Theoretical Framework

The Cypriot crisis from its inception has been essentially a dispute involving groups, majorly the Greek and Turkish Cypriot-each with its basic needs, yearnings and expectations seeking to be addressed. Against this backdrop, the group theory and Human needs theory will serve as suitable framework of analysis.

The central thrust of the theory is that power, instead of being concentrated in the hands of individuals or class, is treated as diffused among many interest groups competing against each other for power. According to Bentley (1908), a leading group theorist, “the raw material we study (in politics) is never found in one man by himself, it cannot even be taken as it comes in many men together, by men in groups, society, nation, government-legislation, politics, administration-all are comprised of groups of men, each group cutting across many others (Varma, 2011). The intellectual roots of the group theory lie in the doctrines of pluralism as developed by a number of early twentieth century English writers—particularly by John Figgis, F.W Maitland and G.D.H Cole. However, the origins of the group theory in its present form go back to Arthur F. Bentley, in his book The Process of Government published in 1908. But the theory was subsequently forgotten till it was revived in the 1950s and 60s by Daniel Truman, Robert Dahl, Grant McConnell, Theodora J. Lewi and other writers.

In Cyrus, the dispute is essentially one between groups—the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. Since its inception in 1964, opponents in the Cypriot ethno-national conflict tend to demonize each other and attribute the causes of suffering or experience of injustice exclusively to the other. This essentialist view puts all the blames on the enemy and excludes any situational factors. ‘Our Side’ is righteous
and justified in doing what it is doing whereas the other side is inherently aggressive, demonic and acts the way it does because ‘it has and always been like that’.

A major contention of the group theory is that group is the basis of political life. The groups are constantly competing against each other for power (Varma, 2011). In negotiating solution for Cypriot crisis, each group tends to not want to compromise “too much” its own position and interest and since both groups have seemingly incompatible interest, a working solution continues to elude fruition.

Human needs theory (Burton, 1990; Kelman, 1990, 1997) assumes that deep rooted conflicts are caused by unmet basic human needs- physical, psychological, and social. Burton (1990) cites identity, security, recognition, participation, and justice as ontological needs. In Cyprus, identity and security needs have been contested issues, along with justice and recognition. Related to this is the condition of alienation, which is created by lack of communication and contacts. Such an environment leads to an increase in stereotyping and misperceptions (Tajfel, 1970, 1981; Allport, 1954). Both economic and social inequalities were experienced by the Turkish-Cypriot community, especially from 1963 till 1974 and thereafter.

The Greek Cypriots have been running the Republic of Cyprus, enjoying all state privileges. They see or perceive Turkey as a constant threat, particularly after the events of 1974, and security became a major issue. This was reflected in the referendum in April 2004. The Turkish-Cypriot community voted 67% yes to the Annan Plan and to reunification and entry of the whole of Cyprus into the European Union, whereas the Greek-Cypriot community voted 76% no (Hadjipavlou, 2007). In deeply divided societies, where barbed wires and police checkpoints prohibit freedom of movement of both ideas and goods, there exists a suitable environment for reinforcement of a culture of conflict, mistrust, and suspicion, as well as a flourishing of enemy images. In connection to the above analysis, this work periscoped the Cypriot crisis through the lens of the group and the human needs theories.

The History and Nature of the Cypriot Crisis

Cyprus is an island country in the eastern Mediterranean Sea. Since 1974, it has been partitioned between the Greek Cypriot South and the officially unrecognized Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. It became an independent member of the British Commonwealth in 1961 and a member of the European Union in 2004. Its capital is Nicosia. Cypriot (Greek) or Cypriote (Turkish) is an adjective for describing somebody who comes from Cyprus or something relating to Cyprus.

Despite a long history of Greek-Turkish animosity, dating from the Greek struggle for independence from Turkey during the nineteenth century, the Greek and Turkish communities in Cyprus which came under British control in 1878, lived together for many years without serious strife (Kaloudis, 1999). Then in the 1950s, violent agitation by the Greek community for enosis (union with Greece) directly involved Greece and Turkey with their communities on the island. The resulting disorders were finally ended by the London and Zurich Accords, which established an independent Cyprus based on the concept of administrative separation of the two communities without geographic partition. To secure the agreement of all parties it was necessary to include a treaty of Guarantee which gave Greece, Turkey and the UK the right to intervene jointly or individually in the internal affairs of the island should this be
deemed necessary to uphold the agreement (Bahcheli, 2016).

On 16th August, 1960 Cyprus gained its independence from the United Kingdom, after the long anti-British campaign by the Greek Cypriot EOKA (National Organization of Cypriot Fighters), a guerilla group which desired political union with Greece (enosis). The 1960 Cypriot constitution provided for a presidential system of government with independent executive, judicial and legislative branches, as well as a complex system of Checks and Balances including a weighted power-sharing ratio designated to protect the interests of the Turkish Cypriots. The executive, for example, was headed by a Greek Cypriot president, Archbishop Makarios III, and a Turkish Cypriot vice president, Dr. Fazil Kucuk. The independence constitution provided the Turkish Cypriots with many rights and privileges. While they made up only about 18 percent share of the population, they were given 30 percent of the civil service positions, 40 percent share in the army, and veto power regarding all legislation (Hadjipavlou, 2015).

Lack of mutual confidence prevented the two communities from cooperating in running the government. The Greek majority (80 percent of the population) was determined to get rid of the constitutional provisions. For their part, the Turks clung rigidly to the constitutional safeguards as their best protection against the Greek majority. In late 1963, president Makarios presented 13 amendments to the constitution which would have created a unitary state under majority rule. Turkey quickly rejected these proposals.

In this tense atmosphere, a minor incident sparked violence which rapidly engulfed the island. The more numerous and better organized Greek communal forces quickly seized the initiative and isolated the Turkish community. The British peace-keeping force, which went into operation in January 1964 with the consent of the other Guarantor powers and both Cypriot communities incurred the animosity of both communities and was unable to prevent new violence.

Internal conflicts turned into full-fledged armed fighting between the two communities on the island which prompted the United Nations to send peacekeeping force in 1964; these forces are still in place today (Bolukbasi, 2015). In 1974, Greek Cypriot staged a military coup with the support of military junta in Greece. Unable to secure multilateral support against the coup, Turkey invaded the northern portion of the island. Turkish forces remained after a cease-fire, resulting in the partition of the island. The inter-communal violence, the coup, and the subsequent invasion led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Cypriots.

The de facto state of Northern Cyprus was proclaimed in 1975 under the name of the Turkish Federated State of Cyprus. The name was changed to its present form, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus on 15th November, 1983. It is recognized as a sovereign state only by Turkey (Kaloudis, 1999).

In 2002 UN then Secretary General Kofi Annan started a new round of negotiations for the unification of the island. In 2004 after long negotiations between both sides a plan for unification of the island emerged. The resulting plan was supported by United Nations, European Union and the United States. The nationalists on both sides campaigned for the rejection of the plan, the result being that Turkish Cypriots accepted the plan while Greek Cypriots rejected it.

Following the defeat of the UN plan in the referendum there has been no attempt to restart negotiations between the two sides.
To this end, the Greek Cypriots government rejected the UN idea of them presenting a written list of changes they want on the grounds that no side should be expected to present their demands in advance of negotiations. However, it appears as though the Greek Cypriots would be prepared to present their concerns orally. Another Greek Cypriot concern centres on the procedural process for new talks. Mr. Papadopoulos said that he will not accept arbitration or timetables for discussions. The UN fears that this would lead to another open-ended process that could drag on indefinitely.

In October 2012, Northern Cyprus became an “observer member” country of the Economic Cooperation Organization under the name “Turkish Cypriot State”. In February 2014, renewed negotiations to settle the Cyprus dispute began. On 11 February 2014, the leaders of Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities, Nicos Anastasiades and Dervis Eroglu, respectively, revealed the following joint declaration:

1. The status quo is unacceptable and its prolongation will have negative consequences for the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. The leaders affirmed that a settlement would have a positive impact on the entire region, while first and foremost benefiting Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots, respecting democratic principles, human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as each other’s distinct identity and integrity and ensuring their common future in a united Cyprus within the European Union.

2. The leaders expressed their determination to resume structured negotiations in a result-oriented manner. All unresolved core issues will be on the table, and will be discussed interdependently. The leaders will aim to reach a settlement as soon as possible, and hold separate simultaneous referenda thereafter.

3. The settlement will be based on a bi-communal, bi-zonal federation with political equality, as set out in the relevant Security Council Resolutions and the High level Agreements. The united Cyprus, as a member of the United Nations and of the European Union, shall have a single international legal personality and a single sovereignty, which is defined as the sovereignty which is enjoyed by all member States of the United Nations under the UN Charter and which emanates equally from Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. There will be a single united Cyprus citizenship, regulated by federal law. All citizens of the united Cyprus shall also be citizens of either the Greek-Cypriot constituent state or the Turkish-Cypriot constituent state. This status shall be internal and shall complement, and not substitute in any way, the united Cyprus citizenship.

The powers of the federal government, and like matters that are clearly incidental to its specified powers will be assigned by the constitution. The Federal constitution will also provide for the residual powers to be exercised by the constituent states. The constituent states will exercise fully and irrevocably all their powers, free from encroachment by the federal government. The federal laws will not encroach upon constituent state laws, within the constituent states’ area of competences, and the constituent states’ laws will not encroach upon the federal laws within the federal government’s competences. Any dispute in respect thereof will be adjudicated finally by the Federal Supreme Court. Neither side may claim authority or jurisdiction over the other.

4. The United Cyprus federation shall result from the settlement following the settlement’s approval by separate
simultaneous referenda. The Federal constitution shall prescribe that the united Cyprus federation shall be composed of two constituent states of equal status. The bi-zonal, bi-communal nature of the federation and the principles upon which the EU is founded will be safeguarded and respected throughout the island. The Federal constitution shall be the supreme law of the land and will be binding on all the federation’s authorities and on the constituent states. Union in whole or in part with any other country or any form of partition or secession or any other unilateral change to the state of affairs will be prohibited.

5. The negotiations are based on the principle that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed.

6. The appointed representatives are fully empowered to discuss any issue at anytime and should enjoy parallel access to all stakeholders and interested parties in the process as needed. The leaders of the two communities will meet as often as needed. They retain the ultimate decision making power. Only an agreement freely reached by the leaders may be put to separate simultaneous referenda. Any kind of arbitration is excluded.

7. The two side will seek to create a positive atmosphere to ensure the talks succeed. They commit to avoiding blame games, hate speeches or other negative public comments on the negotiations. They will also be committed to efforts to implement confidence building measures that will provide a dynamic impetus to the prospect for a united Cyprus (Cyprus Mail, 2014).

The governments of both Greece and Turkey expressed their support for renewed peace talks. The declaration was also welcomed by the European Union. However, whether or not this now theoretically laudable initiative would lead to a practical united Cyprus and put an end to the Cypriot crisis remains to be seen.

Causes of the Crisis

Any critical investigation into the Cypriot crisis would likely reveal that the root causes of the Cypriot crisis are multidimensional. This work shows that both external and internal factors have played an influential role in the creation and perpetuation of the conflict. We will argue that all the factors subsequently discussed are equally important in the understanding of the crisis.

External Causes

External causes are often cited by both the Turkish-Cypriot and Greek-Cypriot communities as the most important in the conflict and responsible for the separation of the two communities. This is due to both historical facts (the island had been ruled and occupied by different nations) and each of these onetime occupiers felt that they are major stakeholders in the island’s affairs (Hadjipavlou, 1987).

One of the external factors that cause the Cyprus crisis is divide and rule policy of the British. The Greek Cypriots had opposed British rule for decades and ended up fighting against them, for ‘enosis (union) with the motherland’ Greece, whereas the Turkish Cypriots formed the local backbone of British rule on the island as auxiliary police force or in administrative positions. As a reaction to enosis, the Turkish Cypriots demanded ‘taxim’ (partition) or return of the island to Turkey. The Greek Cypriots felt that the British colonialists exploited the minority and so used the Turkish-Cypriots as military police to fight the Greek members of EOKA (National Organization of Cypriot Fighters). The ‘divide-and-rule’ policy separated the communities and
produced mistrust, hatred and fear. Furthermore, the British policy complicated bi-communal relations by bringing in Turkey as a stakeholder in the future of the island. Greece was already involved because of the Greek Cypriots’ primordial feelings towards the Hellenic enosis (Polis, 1973).

Another external factor in the Cyprus crisis is the involvement of Greece and Turkey. The relationship of the two communities to their respective motherlands’ touches upon issues of identity, security, national interests, and historic enmity (Volkan, 1978). The concept of primordial attachments as the natural force that binds an ethnic group’s sense of self togetherness (Geetz, 1963) applies to the two Cypriot communities. Greek-Cypriot children learn that the island was and will always be Greek, and Turkish-Cypriots learn that the island is Turkish and should go back to Turkey (Hadjipavlou, 1987; Papadakis, 2005). Even after independence, each ethnic group showed more loyalty to their own ‘motherland’ than to the state of Cyprus and its state symbols. The Greek and Turkish flags were and still are more visible than the Cyprus flag.

The process of demonizing the other is evident. Among Greek Cypriots, a high number believe that Turkish expansionism was highly responsible for the creation and perpetuation of the conflict, ignoring any situational factors (Hadjipavlou, 2007). This view is often justified by invoking unsuccessful past attempts by Turkey (1964, 1967) to invade the island and its eventual success in July and August 1974, thus geographically dividing the island. Hence, for the Greek Cypriots, Turkey represents the practical embodiment of the ‘Cyprus conflict’ and its expansionist policy on Cyprus. Nevertheless, as expected, a lower percentage of Turkish Cypriots hold Turkey responsible for the Cyprus conflict, which is understandable in a historical context, given that Turkey helped Turkish Cypriots when they lived in enclaves (1963-74), and, in 1974, the Turkish intervention was experienced as a peace operation to liberate them from the threat of the Greeks (Volkan, 1978).

Greece also is seen, even by many Greek Cypriots, as responsible for the Cypriot crisis. This can be understood with reference to the rise of the junta in Greece (1967-74). The junta expressed support for the underground terrorist organization (EOKA) and their staging and involvement in the coup d’ tat on 15 July 1974 against the government of President Makarios another issue. This coup, in turn, provoked the Turkish invasion, allegedly ‘to restore constitutional order’ (Hitchens, 1984). The junta fell, but Cyprus was sacrificed, and the Greek Cypriots were disheartened when democratic Greece did not respond to their expectations for help on 20th August 1974 during the second Turkish intervention.

Among the external factors to the Cyprus crisis was the Zurich constitution which was drafted by Greece, Turkey, and Britain (external stake holders and guarantors of Cyprus independence and territorial integrity) which was viewed by the Cypriots, both elites and the general public as an ‘imposed constitution’ (Xydis, 1973; Kyriakides, 1968) with many divisive elements. A significant number of Greek Cypriots think that the Zurich constitution contributed to the creation of the conflict. This points to a contradiction in that nowadays the Cyprus Republic functions on that very constitution, and it is invoked by Greek Cypriots to promote the international recognition of the republic. Only 34% of Turkish Cypriots believe that the Zurich constitution was one of the root causes, which means other causes were more serious (Hadjipavlou, 2007).

The people of Cyprus were not asked to participate or voice their opinion about the Zurich constitution. Greek Cypriots viewed
the power-sharing constitutional provisions as unfair and undemocratic, in that the minority (18% of the population in 1960) was accorded disproportionate rights and power. The allocation of 70% Greek Cypriots and 30% Turkish Cypriots in all government positions (executive, legislative, and judicial) was viewed by the Greek Cypriots as a violation of the democratic majority principle, whereas the Turkish Cypriots welcomed it (Hadjipavlou, 2007). Neither side has yet acknowledged that underlying mistrust and the absence of good will from both leaderships and elites has made the constitution more burdensome. The culture of independence and power sharing was not created. The deep-seated fears of the Turkish Cypriots rested on their belief that the Greek Cypriots had never given up the hope of enosis. Similarly, Greek Cypriots suspected that Turkish Cypriots had not given up their desire for partition and closer attachment to Turkey.

Internal Causes

One of the internal causes is the ethnocentric nationalism of Turkish/Greek Cypriots. A high percentage of Greek Cypriots believe that the nationalism of the Turkish Cypriots has contributed very much to the creation and perpetuation of the conflict, whereas more than half of the Turkish Cypriots believe that the nationalism of the Greek Cypriots has done so. Each community constructs the other as the cause of their suffering and perceives their own side as not responsible (Hadjipavlou, 2007). However, a critical look at the Cypriot crisis would reveal that the nationalism of both communities was very, or somewhat, responsible for the creation and perpetuation of the conflict.

Another internal cause is the misrule by the Greek/Turkish Cypriot leadership. In Cyprus, leadership is often dependent on the national center, that is, ‘the motherlands’. There still exists a great deal of mistrust and mutual suspicion among the elites of both sides. This means it difficult for any proposed co-associational or federal structure to work, since this presupposes elite collaboration and a level of working trust. Today, the enemy mirror image’ prevails (Bronfenbrenner, 1961). The Turkish Cypriots view the present Greek-Cypriot leadership as not wanting a solution and this is similar to how the Greek Cypriots since 1974 have perceived Denktash, as intransigent and serving the interests of Ankara.

Furthermore, a reasonable number of Cypriots today believe that the mistakes of their own leadership have influenced the creation and perpetuation of the conflict. This is based on the view that there were many ‘lost opportunities’ regarding the solution, and thus they attribute the protractedness to their leadership’s indecisiveness.

Another internal cause is the intransigence of the two communities. People in both communities are discontent, both with their own leadership and with the other’s, whom they view as responsible for the intractability of the conflict. Whenever the official talks under the auspices of the UN reached a deadlock, each leader blamed the other for his ‘intransigence’. This is shown in the fact that many Greek Cypriots who think that the intransigence of the other side (personified in the leadership of Rauf Denktash) has contributed to the perpetuation of the conflict. Thus, they attribute full responsibility to the other side. Among Turkish Cypriots, many views the intransigence of the Greek Cypriot side as responsible, thus reinforcing the mirror imaging dynamic.

Moreover, there are ethno-religious differences between Greek and Turkish
Cypriots. The Greek Cypriots are mainly Christians while the Turkish Cypriots are mainly Muslims. Even though, according to Hadjipavlou (2007), majority of Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots are not convinced of the explanation that differences in cultures and civilizations are causes of Cypriot conflict, ethno-religious differences began to be considered as problematic and used in the propaganda of the respective elites.

Following the above, are the social and economic inequalities between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Economic inequalities are considered a more serious cause that has to be reckoned with. In inter ethnic workshops in the 1990s, this factor was brought up constantly by the Turkish Cypriots (Hadjipavlou, 1998; Broome, 2004). The GNP of Greek Cypriots today is three times higher than that of the Turkish Cypriots (Hadjipavlou, 2007). The Greek Cypriots perceive Turkish Cypriots in a stereotypical way as lazy and backward, ignoring the fact that there were both historical and political conditions that could explain the uneven economic development (Hadjipavlou, 2003). The economic wellbeing of the Greek Cypriots makes Turkish Cypriots to believe that they lack motivation for a solution and, thus, lack the desire to share power.

There was equally absence of communication between the two communities. Where there is absence of communication, rumor thrives. Usually, in conflict situations, communication and trust break down, and the ‘us and them’ mentality prevails among conflicting groups. One of the causes of negative stereotypes is often the lack of complete information and lack of contacts and direct communication with the other (Allport, 1954). For decades, Turkish Cypriots felt excluded, since Greek Cypriots had been running the state since the December 1963 inter-communal violence, when thousands of Turkish Cypriots moved to enclaves for security reasons and developed dependency on Turkey.

Both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots alike believe that lack of communication influenced the creation of the conflict (Hadjipavlou, 2007). This finding sends an important message, to both leaderships and third parties involved in the official efforts for a solution, about people’s desire for communication and the establishment of mechanisms for confidence-building. The partial opening of the ‘Green Line’, on 24th April, 2003, created new possibilities for reconnection, communication, and people-to-people reconciliation. This unofficial dynamic has not been used politically either to legitimate or to institutionalize this societal desire to break down psychological borders.

The different values, beliefs and educational systems are also factors fanning the unending crisis. Education has been a very important factor in the history of both communities in that it is the main instrument through which the national narratives are reproduced and promoted. Historically, the educating curriculum, the textbooks, and the methodologies came from the respective ‘motherlands’ (Greece for the Greek Cypriots and Turkey for the Turkish Cypriots) and to a great extent they still do. The Cypriot schools, to this day, celebrate the ‘chosen glories’ and ‘chosen traumas’ (Volkan, 1990) and these are linked to the national holidays of Greece and Turkey. There were never any joint celebrations (the 1960 Zurich constitution provided for separate schools). The children grow up feeling they are Greeks or Turks, not Cypriots.

The narrative about the ‘chosen past’ and the antagonistic interpretations of events have been important aspects of their socialization, which promoted the ‘enemy image’ as it centered around ethnic
nationalism and the perception of what constitutes a ‘bad Turk’ or a ‘bad Greek’, without much differentiation between Greek and Turkish Cypriots (Hadjipavlou, 1987; Spyrou, 2001; Bryant, 2004; Yashin, 2002). About two-thirds of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots believe that the different values and beliefs cultivated by the separate educational systems influenced the creation and perpetuation of the conflict (Hadjipavlou, 2007). This finding is also a call for a critical examination of the impact of formal and informal education in reproducing and extending the conflict.

We also have the issue of attachment to the ‘motherland’ (Greece or Turkey) by each of the Cypriot community. Closely linked to this factor has been the extensive use of the national symbols of ‘motherlands’ such as flags and anthems. To this day, the Cyprus Republic has not developed its own state anthem and uses the Greek one. Many Cypriots from both communities believe that the extensive use of ‘motherland’ symbols bears responsibility for the conflict (Hadjipavlou, 2007). This is an acknowledgement that the educational system and hidden curriculum need to change to reinforce Cypriot symbols and shared traditions and utilize the ‘super ordinate goal’ for a common political culture (Sherif et al, 1961) between the communities.

Finally, there is lack of trust between the two communities. The socialization into ‘us’ and ‘them’ have an inbuilt level of mistrust; many Greek and Turkish Cypriots have admitted this (Hadjipavlou, 2007). In addition to education, the 1960 constitution is referred to as a political structure with a built-in-mistrust whereby ethnic differences were institutionalized and citizenship was defined by ethnicity leading to competitive political relationships. Not only does the conflict culture deprive new generations of knowing the two sides to the events and their complexity, but, more importantly, it disables them from developing a critical mind toward their own society, which is a necessary quality for unity and democratic citizenship.

Conclusion

As stated in the foregoing, the conflict in Cyprus is complex and clouded with issues of ethnic nationalism, discrimination (and fear of discrimination). The use of enemy images to stereotype the “other” as barbaric and less than human, the over-involvement of guarantor powers Greece and Turkey in their co-religionists affairs which has resulted in a stunted and nearly non-existent Cypriot identity and a decades-long enforced separation which has allowed all of these elements and more to harden together until each side is almost incapable of moving from its rehearsed role and seeing half-way to the other’s position. The adoption of chosen traumas, chosen glories, the egoism of victimization and hard-held religious and ethnic identities by both sides in the dispute present a hard-to-resolve complex problem from which to embark on successful peacemaking and peace building strategies.

This is to say that, ever since the Cyprus issue appeared on the international agenda in mid-1950s, practically every conceivable formulas has been proposed to no avail in order to accommodate the interests of Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Dozens of mediators, including diplomats with distinguished records, tried but failed to broker a settlement. Since independence in 1960, the Cypriot communities have succeeded in maintaining a joint government for only three years. Since 1963, no Cypriot government has represented both communities. For almost 30 years, most Greek and Turkish Cypriots have had no contact with one another, while their leaders have fruitlessly negotiated terms for a new
settlement with considerable third party support.

A practical federal settlement, long considered capable of resolving the island’s communal problems, has eluded Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Without the presence of a sense of shared identity and a modicum of trust between the two communities, there is no reason to expect that a bi-communal federation would fare any better than the power-sharing experiments of the 1960s. The prospects for a two-state confederation are also poor. Nor can the Cypriots look at successful bi-communal federations or confederations as models to inspire them. There is none of the latter, and the few bi-communal federations that have been largely peaceful (such as Canada) have not been able to eliminate secessionist challenges like in the Quebec province of Canada.

The warming of relations between Greece and Turkey since the second half of 1999, and the subsequent endorsement of Turkey’s EU candidacy, have raised new expectations for a Cyprus settlement. With its considerable leverage over Turkish Cypriots, Ankara could induce its brethren on Cyprus to make concessions and accept a federation so that Turkey’s larger interest could be served by its admission to the EU. The main problem here is that any Turkish government willing to forsake the Turkish Cypriot claim to separate statehood will face enormous domestic opposition and accusations of sacrificing Turkish Cypriot rights. In any case, there are serious doubts that a federal settlement will prove viable in Cyprus. This is why a negotiated solution for two independent states is worth considering since such a solution does not rule out the type of integration and contacts that could be provided by EU membership of the entire island. There is no reason to think that a two state settlement will make it any harder than other solutions for the eventual reconciliation of the Greek and Turkish communities. This said, however, the true answer to the Cyprus problem lies mainly with the two communities of Cyprus, their leaders, and their native countries. The specific question is whether or not Cypriots can muster the political will and make diplomatic compromises that will bridge the gulf that divides them.
References


