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Yiannis Papadakis
University of Cyprus

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Locating the Cyprus Problem: Ethnic Conflict and the Politics of Space

Yiannis Papadakis

The relation of Cyprus to this group does not simply arise from its geographical location...but more importantly from our faith in common ideals and objectives as well as from common historical experience.

Statement by the President of the Republic of Cyprus, June 1962

I thank you for offering Cyprus the possibility to accede where it belongs historically, geographically, politically and culturally.

Statement by the President of the Republic of Cyprus, April 2003¹

I. Cyprus/Kypros/Kibris

*T*he precise geopolitical location of Cyprus has been intensely disputed throughout the course of the Cyprus Problem. The standard map used in Greek Cypriot classrooms for decades was that of Greece, with *Kypros* appearing in a cut-out to the right of Crete. Cyprus was thus geologically attached to Greece, in line with the Greek Cypriot demand of *Enosis*—union with “motherland Greece.” Politically, however, the map rather favored Turkish Cypriots who spoke instead of “motherland Turkey.” No need for them to cut and paste; they only needed to extend the standard map of Turkey a little bit to the south in order to include *Kibris* in the south of their motherland. In opposition to *Enosis*, Turkish Cypriots voiced their own demand for *Taksim*, partition. Divided as the two sides stood in terms of their geopolitical identification with different motherlands, they were united in the view that they firmly belonged in Europe and “the West.” Maps of Cyprus’ general area, employed by both sides, were always cut so as to present Cyprus in the east of *Europe*, never in the north of *Africa* or the west of the *Middle East*. Thus, during April 2003 the Greek Cypriot President of the Republic of Cyprus, Tassos Papadopoulos, located Cyprus unequivocally in Europe during the signing of the Accession Treaty to the European Union (EU), as exhibited in the second quote above.

Yet, although Cyprus joins the EU, within the United Nations it remains in the Asiatic group of states, while previously it was located the Afro-Asiatic group (that eventually broke up). The first President of Cyprus, Archbishop Makarios, located Cyprus differently in his first address before the UN General Assembly during June 1962: "Our geographical location in the midst of three continents and our close relations with the peoples of these continents open great possibilities and create responsibilities for us."² Addressing the UN Afro-Asiatic group on the same day, Makarios confirmed Cyprus' belonging in the group by invoking not only a common geography but also a common history (see first quote) in words almost identical to those used forty years later by the current President of the Republic of Cyprus. Except notice that the first unequivocally located Cyprus in Afro-Asia, alluding to the politics of anti-colonialism and the Non-Aligned Movement in which Cyprus would play a significant role, while the second triumphantly located Cyprus in Europe and the West.

This essay discusses the Cyprus Problem by focusing on the politics of space to illustrate general political trends and disputes in this island inhabited by Muslims and Christians, Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots, and located at the margins of Europe, the Middle East, and Africa under the shadow of two different motherlands. In particular, it discusses the local struggles to evade the geopolitics of hybridity or categorical ambiguity that ironically resulted in what could be regarded as a most hybrid outcome: part inside and part outside of the coveted destination of the EU. One aspect of the politics of space that has, for a change, united the people of Cyprus was their avowed *anti-orientation*, a move away from the "Orient" expressed in the desire to join the EU as final confirmation of belonging in the "civilized West."³ This essay does not provide a comprehensive account or explanation of the Cyprus Problem, something that lies beyond the abilities of this particular (Greek Cypriot) author, but works on the level of how the Cyprus Problem has been interpreted in different periods and by different groups. It is written from the viewpoint of a social anthropologist, a particular angle (or bias) interested in local actors' views and agency, which is often ignored in International Relations approaches toward the Cyprus Problem.⁴ The location of Cyprus in the wider disciplinary agendas has been itself marked by ambiguity "because it cannot easily be fitted into the regional categories (Europe, Near/Middle East) of anthropology and international relations alike."⁵

II. Nicosia

Capitals often develop as the primary sites for the inscription of political ideologies, whether those of colonial elites or those of the subsequent nation-state. The British colonial period lasted from 1878 to 1960 when Cyprus became independent. During this period, Greek and Turkish nationalisms in Cyprus gained widespread appeal at the grassroots level. By the 1940s the two major communities in Cyprus (Greek Cypriots amounting to around 80% of the population and Turkish Cypriots to 18%) had come to identify themselves as Greeks and Turks: as pure Greeks and nothing but Greeks, or pure Turks and nothing but Turks.

Nicosia was the center of the British colonial administration and, as in other colonies, education was a highly politicized issue. Michael Given has provided a fascinating account of the ways in which the politics of education were embodied in the architecture of educational institutions.⁶ After 1931, when a crowd of Greeks burned the colonial Government House amidst calls for *Enosis*, the British attempted to oppose their demands by creating a new concept of local identity: the Cyprus *mélange*. The Greek's call for *Enosis* was based on the view that ever since antiquity Cyprus and its people had always been Greek. In countering this, the British proposed a different version of history. It was based on historicist premises similar to those employed by Greek nationalists in Cyprus, even as they tried to oppose it. They proposed instead the historical presence since antiquity of a uniquely Cypriot people and culture. "For a few years there was a determined, but clearly pointless, attempt on the part of imperialist ideologues, to pass off the Cypriots as a *mélange* of different races, neither wholly Eastern, nor wholly Western, but an amorphous mixture blend of the two without any original or essential character."⁷ The writings of colonial archaeologists were full of terms like *Cypriot hybrid civilization*, *fused and mingled style*, or *conglomerate style*.

The physical expression of what the British meant by the Cyprus *mélange* was the building constructed to house the Teacher's Training College of Cyprus.⁸ This was the site where local teachers were to be trained according to colonial directives (it is currently the central premises of the University of Cyprus). It was designed by utilizing various historic (Phoenician, Venetian, Ottoman) and contemporary vernacular stylistic references. Yet it contained no Classical Greek references whatsoever. The Greeks of Cyprus reacted by building Par-

thenon-like schools, with nothing but Classical Greek references. The Turks of Cyprus, having come under the influence of Turkish Kemalist nationalism, built mostly in a modern, functional style inspired by the Kemalist ideals of modernization and Westernization. The British insistence on a hybrid, amorphous Cyprus *mélange* was countered by fervent claims that the Greeks of Cyprus were pure and authentic Greeks.⁹ Regarding Turkish Cypriots, the British initially favored their local Islamic religious leaders in order to direct them away from their rising identification with Kemalist Turkish nationalism. In turn, the Turks of Cyprus reacted by fervently embracing the ideals of Kemalist Turkish nationalism.¹⁰

III. Lefkosia/Lefkosha

In 1955, the Greeks of Cyprus embarked upon an armed anti-colonial campaign with the aim of *Enosis*, setting up a fighting organization by the name of EOKA. The Turks of Cyprus responded by demanding the partition of Cyprus, *Taksim*, creating their own armed fighter's group under the name TMT. During that period, the British came to rely more on the Turks in order to fill posts in government services, especially the police, because the Greeks had stopped working for—or cooperating with—the colonial administration. This increased tension and animosity between the two communities as Turkish policemen were called into action against the Greek insurgents. This policy, which some interpret as a conscious British “Divide and Rule” ploy, led to interethnic killings, culminating in large-scale riots in Nicosia and the first physical barbed-wire division of the capital.¹¹

The 1960 independence of Cyprus found the two communities intent on pursuing their separate aims of *Enosis* and *Taksim*. The colonial capital Nicosia now passed into the hands of the independent Republic of Cyprus government, called Lefkosia by Greek Cypriots and Lefkosha by Turkish Cypriots. In December 1963, the most violent confrontations between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots took place first in Lefkosha/Lefkosia and then spread to the rest of Cyprus. Armed confrontations continued intermittently until 1967. Lefkosia/Lefkosha was divided once more, but this time the division was more permanent and large scale. In 1964, the Green Line was established, separating the two ethnic groups on a north-south axis. The UN was called in as a peacekeeper. The line passed right through the old walled city, once again dividing Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot neighborhoods. Turkish

Cypriots established their own enclaves and administrative machinery, which were out of bounds for Greek Cypriots. Turkish Cypriots moved *en masse* into such enclaves while many Greek Cypriots moved out. The population of the island was becoming increasingly segregated along ethnic lines.¹²

From 1963 to the end of 1967, the interaction between the two ethnic groups was limited. In Lefkosia/Lefkosha, along with the rest of the island, village names, place names, and road names were changed according to who administered the area. Space came to be “cleansed” from other’s references, and imbued with names reflecting the history, geography, and traditions of the ethnic group that controlled it. The two major ethnic groups were living not only in different spatial domains but also in different domains of historical time. Greek Cypriots lived in “Greek historical time,” following the major commemorative ritual calendar of Greece, while Turkish Cypriots living in “Turkish historical time” followed the ritual calendar of Turkey. During this period the economy of Cyprus was booming but it was the Greek Cypriots who benefited from these new economic opportunities, while Turkish Cypriots were living in poverty and isolation inside the enclaves.

After 1968, however, the tension between the two ethnic groups gradually eased and people slowly began to interact once more. Turkish Cypriots continued to live in the enclaves, which now opened up. They began to work and trade with Greek Cypriots. Negotiations between the two ethnic groups resumed in the hope of finding a way to break the political impasse. In July 1974, though, a Greek Cypriot right-wing extremist group by the name of EOKA B launched a coup against Makarios, the President of the Republic of Cyprus, with the aim of uniting Cyprus with Greece. They were aided by the junta that controlled Greece as well as the junta-controlled Greek army contingent in Cyprus. As a result of the coup, Turkey militarily intervened in Cyprus, and the island was divided from end to end. The ensuing population exchanges made the two parts almost totally ethnically homogeneous, resulting in a Greek Cypriot southern side and a Turkish Cypriot northern side. The 1974 division of Cyprus separating Lefkosia/Lefkosha in two is still in place while negotiations for a federal solution continue intermittently.

Even though both sides accepted a form of federation as a basis for a solution, the form this should take is highly disputed. Broadly speaking, Greek Cypriots strive for more integration while Turkish Cypriots desire more separation, all within a federal framework.¹³

Greek Cypriots aim for the integration of the island in a framework that would allow Greek Cypriot refugees to return to their pre-1974 homes. Turkish Cypriots view such integration of populations with suspicion and fear. Among Turkish Cypriots there is little, if any, desire for those displaced in 1974 or before to return. A further significant political development was the declaration in 1983 of the areas under Turkish Cypriot control as an independent state, namely, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The self-declared Turkish Cypriot state, however, has not achieved recognition by international bodies such as the UN, the EU, or other states with the exception of Turkey. It is the Republic of Cyprus, i.e., the Greek Cypriot-controlled state, which is internationally recognized as the island's legitimate government. The lack of recognition of the Turkish Cypriot state allowed Greek Cypriots to levy an international trade embargo against it. Along with other factors, this led to economic stagnation in the Turkish Cypriot side in contrast to rapid economic development in the Greek Cypriot south after 1974, creating a large economic disparity between the two sides.

The physical construction of the division itself is indicative of the two sides' official views. Ledra Palace Hotel, located just outside the walls of the old city of Lefkosia/Lefkosha, found itself inside the division, becoming a UN barracks. The two sides' checkpoints, known as the Ledra Palace checkpoints, are where tourists and (rarely) locals are allowed to cross. The Greek Cypriot checkpoint is a small, temporary structure in contrast to its Turkish Cypriot counterpart, which is a large concrete building over which a large banner proclaims "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus Forever." The Green Line, or Dead Zone as it is also called by Greek Cypriots, is constructed out of barbed wire in the south allowing visual contact with the north, which can easily be lifted. This contrasts with the walls appearing in the middle of the road, barring visual contact, built on the Turkish Cypriot side. For Greek Cypriots the division is officially constructed as impermanent; for Turkish Cypriots it is permanent.

Given that Ledra Palace is the prime site through which the flow of people has been taking place (mostly foreigners until April 2003, when the checkpoints opened, allowing freer access for locals), it gave the two sides the opportunity to present their views to everyone passing through. On the Turkish Cypriot side this took the form of posters and leaflets, mostly focusing on the events of 1963–67, while on the Greek Cypriot side such posters focused on 1974. Turkish Cypriots officially presented their case as one of ethnic persecution, killing, and victim-

ization by Greek Cypriots between 1963–74, when they lived under poor conditions inside the enclaves. The past was presented as one of unremitting conflict, thus legitimating separation with the argument that the past proved that the two communities could not live together.

Greek Cypriots made no mention of Turkish Cypriots in the presentation of their case on the south side of Ledra Palace. Instead, they focused on the effects of the Turkish military offensive (“the barbaric Turkish invasion”) and the victimization this entailed for Greek Cypriots in terms of people killed, dislocated, and missing, as well as in terms of the devastating economic consequences.

Turkish Cypriots were officially encouraged to only think of negative sides of the past when they lived together with Greek Cypriots. After 1974, they were designated as inhabitants of their own free and independent country where they could now live in peace. Lefkosha was their capital. From this perspective, the existence of another side should not even be considered; it should be forgotten. In other words, the official Turkish Cypriot viewpoint posited that there should be no sense of loss or incompleteness, but rather one of relief and wholeness in having obtained their own state. From this point of view, then, *Lefkosha* was a capital in its own right, and not a divided one. Next to it simply lay the capital of another state, Lefkosia, the capital of the Greek Cypriots.

Turkish Cypriots strove to convey this by flying the flag of their self-declared state, along with the one of Turkey, on their side of the dividing line. The two flags also flew on the tallest and most visible monument in Lefkosha, the Selimiye Mosque. While flags normally do not fly outside mosques, in this case they did due to the monument’s height and visibility from both sides. The most dramatic attempt to impress upon all the existence and authority of the Turkish Cypriot state was the creation of two enormous flags (of Turkey and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus) by whitewashing a large area of the Pentadaktylos/Beshparmak mountain range, visible from miles away in the south.

For Greek Cypriots, on the other hand, officially *Lefkosia* was a divided capital since they aspired to a united Cyprus and its capital. For Greek Cypriots, the current division was unjustly imposed by the Turkish forces and, hopefully, temporary and reversible. When Greek Cypriots spoke of the two parts of Lefkosia, the southern part was usually referred to as “free Lefkosia” (*eleftheri Lefkosia*) while the northern was “occupied Lefkosia” (*katehomeni Lefkosia*). (They also talked

of “free Cyprus” and “occupied Cyprus.”) On the Greek Cypriot side of the divide flew the flags of the Republic of Cyprus next to the flag of Greece. After 1974, Greek Cypriots adopted an official policy of *rapprochement* toward Turkish Cypriots that was both future and past oriented. Regarding the future, this necessitated expressions of good will toward Turkish Cypriots and the encouragement of meetings and joint events with the aim of persuading them to accept a common future in a united island. As for the past, Greek Cypriots stressed the positive aspects of the past, when the two groups were living together. The past was presented as one of peaceful coexistence, while periods of interethnic violence were ignored. The past was said to prove that since the two communities lived together well, they could again live together peacefully in a future reunited Cyprus. This, of course, was the counterargument to the equally historicist and selective Turkish Cypriot official construction of the past.¹⁴

The two symbols used by the municipal authorities on each side of Lefkosia/Lefkosha are revealing of the two views. Both feature the circular Venetian Walls of Nicosia, a welcome symbol of Western heritage. Both sides readily adopted Western monuments as part of their own heritage, in contrast to each other’s monuments (i.e., Greek-Byzantine or Ottoman-Turkish), which were neither adopted nor respected. The Greek Cypriot municipal symbol features a dove inside the circular outline of the walls, symbolizing past peaceful coexistence and the hope for peace and future unification. The Turkish Cypriot symbol features a Muslim monument inside the circular outline of the walls, the Mevlevi Tekke, under which the date 1958 appears. Beneath the Turkish Cypriot municipality symbol appears the inscription “Founded on 16-6-58,” referring to the *de facto* creation of separate Turkish Cypriot municipalities. It also acts as an implicit reminder of interethnic strife that took place then.

IV. In Between

Lefkosia/Lefkosha is a capital divided on the ground, though united underground (as will be explained). No mutually accepted maps of Lefkosha/Lefkosia exist because each side erases the other’s presence from official maps, leaving the other side blank. Likewise, each side’s officialdom erases the other’s experiences of suffering and its fears and concerns. Each focuses only on its own side. The events of 1974, for example, have been officially designated by the Greek Cypriot side

as “the barbaric 1974 Turkish Invasion.” It is known by the Turkish Cypriots as the “Happy 1974 Peace Operation.” The chasm of the Dead Zone has come to divide pain as each side only talks of its own victims despite the use of a common vocabulary regarding people *killed*, *displaced*, and *missing*. The Dead Zone also divides memories and official approaches toward the Cyprus Problem, allowing for no common ground, just as it absolutely divides the two sides “on the ground.”

Yet, at the same time, the Dead Zone itself has been gradually claimed by activists since the late 1980s as their own common ground. Lying in the middle, neither on one side nor the other, Ledra Palace, although symbolic of the division, became the prime site where attempts at interethnic dialogue and conflict resolution took place involving activist groups from both sides. The UN authorities often facilitated the organization of such events and allowed the use of the premises of the hotel-turned-UN-barracks for such purposes. The location of the hotel inside the dividing line and in the capital turned it into the ideal site. The bi-communal use of this in-between site is illustrative of another development in post-1974 Cyprus, whereby concerned citizens from both sides tried to find ways to meet and enter into dialogue. They also worked at intervening in the activities of both sides in ways conducive to reconciliation.

The largest and most successful bi-communal project involved the capital itself. This was a joint project initiated by the two mayors of Lefkosia/Lefkoshia, Lellos Demetriades and Mustafa Akinci. It was a common vision for the development of the city, known as the Nicosia Master Plan. Part of this effort was the creation of a jointly managed sewerage system for the whole city that unites the divided capital underground. Indeed, the only jointly accepted map of Lefkosia/Lefkoshia is the underground map.¹⁵

Bi-communal efforts—in the form of conflict resolution seminars, meetings of various groups, and cultural events—were normally given more encouragement from the Greek Cypriot authorities in line with their official policy of *rapprochement* with Turkish Cypriots. At the same time, there was marked hesitation in case they led to, or implied, the recognition of the Turkish Cypriot side as a state.¹⁶ Greek Cypriots who disagreed with such bi-communal efforts often stood outside the Greek Cypriot checkpoint of Ledra Palace in order to dissuade bi-communal activists from attending the meetings. Until the recent change of government in northern Cyprus, the Turkish Cypriot authorities were much more suspicious of such bi-communal meetings that were

characterized as “fraternizing with the barbaric Greek Cypriot enemy.” This changed when the leader of the left-wing Republican People’s Party (CTP) came to power during 2003.

Left-wing groups and political parties on both sides had taken the initiative in creating conditions conducive to contacts, cooperation, dialogue, and the emergence of understanding between the two sides.¹⁷ Before 1974 (especially before 1960), a lot of interethnic cooperation took place through left-wing institutions like trade unions. These links and feelings of solidarity among adherents of the Left on both sides persisted despite the division. After 1974, the Left on both sides began to more forcefully articulate an alternative discourse on nationalism based on what Anthony Smith would call *civic nationalism*. The two Lefts were united in articulating a sense of Cypriot identity that could join the people of a divided Cyprus, an identity based on shared territory and civic ties. In this sense, the two Lefts were trying to bridge the chasm of the Dead Zone while they became the initiators and driving force of bi-communal activities aimed at reconciliation. The two Lefts were also joined by a common experience of victimization, each by their own Right, when they tried to continue cooperating, especially during the tumultuous period from 1955 to 1974. For this reason, they were well aware that violence was never the prerogative of the other side alone.

By contrast, the two Rights preferred an alternative discourse on nationalism, what Smith would call *ethnic nationalism*, focusing on common descent, culture, and ethnic ties.¹⁸ They identified themselves first as Greeks or Turks, arguing that ties with the respective motherland were most important and that the history of Cyprus was part of the grand narrative of Greek or Turkish history.¹⁹ If the two Lefts, that frequently met in the Dead Zone, attempted to bridge the gap, the two Rights, by identifying with the two motherlands, pulled the two sides apart (toward the motherlands) and turned the division into a deeper chasm. The Left-Right divide manifested itself in the social landscape of Cyprus through the presence of separate coffee shops dotting many neighborhoods and villages. Eventually, however, the hopes that many placed on the two Lefts as the major forces that could push for a compromise solution were only partly realized during the critical referendum for a solution that took place in April 2004.

V. YES and NO

Has post-2004-referendum Cyprus reached a dead end in the road toward a reunited bi-zonal, bi-communal federal state as envisaged by UN resolutions since the late 1970s?

During February 2004, the two sides finally agreed that the long negotiated UN-brokered plan, known as the Annan Plan after the current UN Secretary-General, would be placed on separate referenda for the two sides at the end of April. Yet by that time the Republic of Cyprus had gained entry into the EU, meaning that in effect only the areas under its control, i.e., the Greek Cypriot side, would become part of the EU until the Cyprus Problem was solved. This tipped the power balance. The logic of the whole UN effort was to strike a deal using the promise of the entry of Cyprus into the EU as a bargaining tool against the side that appeared unwilling to negotiate in good faith. But time ran out and the decision had to be made. Given that it was the Turkish Cypriot leader Denktash who was deemed responsible for the repeated failure of talks in Copenhagen (December 2002) and the Hague (March 2003), the Greek Cypriots (i.e., the Republic of Cyprus-controlled side) received the green light for unconditional EU entry. The argument was that since the negotiation deadlock was the responsibility of the Turkish Cypriot side, it would be unfair to hold Greek Cypriots hostage to Turkish Cypriot intransigence and deny the more constructive Greek Cypriot side EU entry.

During the February 2004 New York meeting, however, Mr. Denktash, the Turkish Cypriot President and negotiator, relented by agreeing with the UN proposal for the plan to be put to a referendum. This time around, Denktash found himself under twin pressures coming from outside and inside. First, pressure came from the recently elected Turkish Cypriot Prime Minister Mr. Talat, leader of the left-wing CTP, who came to power with a clear pro-Annan Plan platform. The election was preceded by the largest post-1974 mobilization of Turkish Cypriots, who staged huge demonstrations in favor of the Annan-Plan and EU entry, and against Denktash's policies. Outside pressure came from Turkey, which no longer wanted to be accused of intransigence about the Cyprus Problem, an argument that could be used against its own EU accession. The Turkish government, headed by Mr. Erdogan, also feared that if Greek Cypriots entered into the EU alone (rather than as a federal, reunited Cyprus), they might then block its own path. In the meantime, the Greek Cypriot interlocutor at the negotiations changed

from President Clerides, a man known for his constructive and fair positions, to President Papadopoulos, a man notorious for his hard-line stance and dislike for the Plan, if not the notion of a federation itself. Given the positive Turkish Cypriot reply to the UN Secretary's demand for the plan to be put to referendum, like it or not, Mr. Papadopoulos also agreed, so as not to be accused of being responsible for the negotiation's failure.

In the meantime, a momentous change had occurred in the political landscape of Cyprus with the April 2003 opening of the border by Denktash. Mr. Denktash's motives were wildly disputed. Some argued that he had found himself under pressure from the huge Turkish Cypriot demonstrations, others that he simply wanted to prove his point that people could live in two separate states, open to each other for economic cooperation. In any case, tens of thousands of people took advantage of this opening, crossing to the other side. The most hopeful sign of this development was the lack of violent incidents despite the emotional upheavals—not only joy, but often anger and sadness—that the moves entailed.

The Annan Plan was perhaps the longest and most complicated technical document ever drawn by the UN, as it involved not only the two sides of Cyprus but also Greece, Turkey, Britain, and the EU. Primarily, though, it was a plan that sought to balance the numerous conflicting demands, fears, and aspirations of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. Various observers (including this author) considered it a positive step forward, which, in conjunction with simultaneous EU entry of the island as a whole, could be made to work if there was sufficient goodwill and trust among the two sides (conditions that in retrospect may have been absent on the ground).

It was broadly expected that the UN Plan would receive a positive vote on the Turkish Cypriot side and there was cautious optimism it might be endorsed on the Greek Cypriot side, too. The optimism regarding Greek Cypriots was based on the expectation that since the right-wing DISY that had brought Clerides to power was favorable, then the left-wing party (AKEL) that had brought Papadopoulos to power would also eventually say the "Big YES." The two parties together commanded almost 70% of Greek Cypriot votes. AKEL was known for its willingness to compromise, as being the party at the forefront of bi-communal efforts and highly respected on the Turkish Cypriot side, and as the most disciplined party in terms of its supporters following party directives. Its stance supporting Papadopou-

los had raised many eyebrows inside and outside of Cyprus. Yet, it was hoped that despite its recent gamble in order to come to power in a coalition with uncompromising DIKO, Mr. Papadopoulos' party, it would rise to its historical role as the most significant force among Greek Cypriots in favor of a compromise and in support of the UN proposed federal solution. In the meantime, the atmosphere on the Greek Cypriot side had turned sour, with polls showing huge support of a NO vote (even as the same polls indicated that the large majority of Greek Cypriots had not read it). AKEL wavered and two days before the referendum chose to support the NO vote, claiming that sufficient guarantees for the implementation of the Plan were not provided. The Party announcement proclaimed that "we say NO in order to cement the YES," meaning another referendum. Some observers felt that this outcome occurred because AKEL realized it was too late to turn the NO tide around (that AKEL had been partly responsible for by supporting Papadopoulos), so it chose to safeguard its political future in power rather than take a hopeless risk. DISY chose to support the Annan Plan, even though it was likely to pay a heavy political price for this (which it did, as most of its supporters in fact voted for NO and the Party subsequently split). The result of the vote on 24 May 2004 was a resounding 76% NO on the Greek Cypriot side and a strong 65% YES on the Turkish Cypriot one.

How can this be interpreted? Explanations that the Greek Cypriot government violated human rights and norms and imposed its will upon the people, though initially invoked, are not sufficient—even if there were signs of dubious interferences and EU officials openly proclaiming their dislike for the way the Greek Cypriot government handled the referendum campaign. Turkish Cypriots had much more to gain from a solution that would end their political and economic isolation, bringing them into the elite club of the EU. Perhaps that made them more willing to put aside past grievances and more willing to compromise. On the Greek Cypriot side, the stakes were not as high, given that EU entry had already been secured.

The economic disparity between the two sides was arguably very significant. Turkish Cypriots, who were in dire financial difficulties, were more willing to accept the Plan in order to end their economic and political isolation. Greek Cypriots, who had been enjoying economic prosperity, had no such motive to accept a radical change in the status quo. Greek Cypriots voted in the certainty of a high standard of living (the highest of the ten new countries under EU accession), guar-

anted EU entry, and international political recognition. In their case, the Annan Plan was a source of anxiety and uncertainty. The Greek Cypriot result was also the outcome of AKEL's negative stance (due to reasons of political expediency).

Turkish Cypriots, on the other hand, voted for the Annan Plan in order to end the uncertainties created by their economic and political isolation, mass emigration, and control by Turkey. For them, the Plan represented an end to uncertainty and a move toward a more certain and prosperous future.²⁰

But what were the foundations that the successful NO campaign built upon? This is not an easy question, given the variety of reasons that people may have voted for NO. It should be noted that Greek Cypriot political rhetoric had never been based on true compromise. (Neither had Turkish Cypriot official rhetoric, but this was more easily put aside.) For decades Greek Cypriot political rhetoric, as expressed by almost all parties, was the chant of ALL: ALL refugees back to their homes; ALL Turkish settlers out of Cyprus; ALL Turkish troops out of Cyprus. Even if on paper a federal solution had been agreed upon in 1977, even if this was to be a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation that meant not all refugees would be able to return—though all would be compensated—this had never been spelled out. The very idea of federation, although on the table for almost thirty years, had never been discussed or explained, so Greek Cypriots saw it as an alien, unnatural political arrangement. One key aspect of the federal ideal, political equality, was presented as an abhorrent notion whereby “the minority of 18% will control the majority 80%.” Intervention rights by Turkey to safeguard an independent federal Cyprus and the eventual presence of a nominal Turkish force were seen by Greek Cypriots as grave threats. Turkish Cypriot fears were never taken into account. This was a result of the amnesia over the sad events of the 1960s and of the coup, which shifted all blame to “barbaric Turkish expansionism.” The YES campaigners, employing the rhetoric of a “painful compromise,” were trying to build on thin air. “Why compromise us who have never wronged?,” many people were bound to ask. Last, but not least, the rigid Left-Right divide had foreclosed the possibility of AKEL supporting DISY in re-electing Clerides.

VI. Inside and Outside

One fine Saturday morning, Greek Cypriots, having slept in this island uncertainly placed between Asia, Africa and Europe, finally woke up firmly in Europe. This was 1 May 2004, when Cyprus officially joined the EU “forever,” as Papadopoulos proclaimed. Among spectacular fireworks and celebrations, Cyprus triumphantly became the ninth and two-thirds new country in the EU. It failed to become the tenth since only the Greek Cypriot side (the areas controlled by the Republic of Cyprus) became part of the EU. Despite the YES vote on the Turkish Cypriot side, Turkish Cypriots found themselves outside the EU.

However, the Greek Cypriot dream of becoming European once and for all soon turned into an embarrassment. Entering Europe was regarded by many Greek Cypriots as the final proof that Cyprus was not part of the Third World—the word “Third Worldly” (*tritokosmiko*) having come to mean corrupt, undemocratic, and uncivilized. Instead of escaping the so-called Third World, Greek Cypriots were shocked to see themselves treated as its exemplars, as the new barbarians of Europe. They faced accusations that the Greek Cypriot government had employed all kinds of dirty tricks during the referendum to orchestrate the NO result. Top EU officials openly spoke of being cheated by the Greek Cypriot leader (a remark soon to be repeated in more diplomatic language by the UN Secretary-General himself). As if these were not enough, a bomb exploded outside the residence of the leader of the main party that supported a YES vote—not the best sign of a tolerant, democratic society. Turkish Cypriots were disappointed but at least saw their leader, Mr. Talat, welcomed and appreciated abroad among warm talk of measures to end their isolation and help them financially. The cease-fire line of Cyprus became the EU’s new uncertain border in the east. ●

Notes

1. I am indebted to Constantinou 2004 (p. 158) for these quotes.
2. Constantinou 2004, p. 159.
3. See Argyrou (1996) for a wide-ranging discussion of how Greek Cypriots conceptualize and submit to the symbolic hegemony of Europe.
4. For a comparable situation, see Whyte’s (1990) discussion of analytical models applied to the Irish Problem, where interpretations focusing on local agency (and responsibility) only emerged at a relatively late stage. For a recent wide-ranging analysis of the Cyprus Problem that comments on the issue of local agency *vis-à-vis* external interferences, see

Heraclides (2002), who considers local agency as the most significant factor in this dispute.

5. Herzfeld 1997, p. 127.

6. Given 1997; 1998.

7. Given 1998, p. 13.

8. Given 1997.

9. See also Kitromilides (1979) for the dynamics of the historical development of Greek and Turkish nationalism in Cyprus during the colonial period and how the interplay of these two nationalisms, along with British policies, led to their assuming more extreme forms.

10. McHenry 1987.

11. Pollis 1979.

12. For general accounts of the events of this period, see Purcell (1969, pp. 300–402) and Patrick (1976). For a more detailed account of the lives of Turkish Cypriots in the enclaves, see Volkan (1979).

13. Occasionally, however, political parties or other groups within each side may dispute the idea of a federation. When this is disputed from the Greek Cypriot side, the argument usually is that a federation is still too divisive. If disputed from groups on the Turkish Cypriot side, the argument is that it is too integrationist and more separation should be allowed for, along with more integration with Turkey. The most serious official challenge to the idea of a federation emerged in 1998 when Denktash, the Turkish Cypriot leader, announced that confederation now was the Turkish Cypriot objective.

14. For the two side's official constructions of memory (and forgetting) through commemorations, see Papadakis (1993).

15. For a lively personal account of the challenges of setting up the Nicosia Master Plan and the joint sewerage system, see Demetriades (1998). For a general description of what the Master Plan entailed, see Petridou (1998).

16. In practice this meant that some bi-communal efforts were discouraged by the authorities of the Republic of Cyprus due to the overwhelming fear of recognition. The rule was that meetings, activities, and events in which people participated as *individuals* were to be encouraged but whatever implied an *official or institutional* capacity was deemed risky of lending recognition to the Turkish Cypriot state. But where the line should be drawn was never clear. For more discussion of the bi-communal movement and the politics involved, see Constantinou and Papadakis (2001) and Hadjipalvou-Trigeorgis (1997).

17. The left-wing parties referred to here are AKEL (Rising Party of the Working People) on the Greek Cypriot side, and CTP (Republican Turkish Party) along with TKP (Communal Liberation Party) on the Turkish Cypriot side.

18. The parties of the Right referred to here are DISY (Democratic Rally) on the Greek Cypriot side, and UBP (National Unity Party) along with DP (Democratic Party) on the Turkish Cypriot side.

19. For a discussion of the different narratives of the past between Left and Right on the Greek Cypriot side, see Papadakis (1998).

20. For sustained analyses of the referendum results, see Bryant (2004), Tocci (2004), and Jakobsson Hatay (2004). The issue of certainty/uncertainty and relative risk is highlighted by the first two analysts.

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