

The Cyprus question, the EU and the stakes involved

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The Cyprus question is an international problem which does not only concern the Cypriots. It has several dimensions: from the bicomunal to the relations between Greece and Turkey, from the regional and security balances (or imbalances) in the eastern Mediterranean to the broader European foreign and security policy aspects as well as the wider international (for example, significance in terms of the precedent it may set). Whether and how it will be resolved will obviously and inevitably have repercussions beyond the territorial boundaries of this island-state. In relation to its domestic aspects the objective is to formulate a political structure to manage the relations of the majority and the minority community as well as all the people of the country. This objective is inevitably influenced by other considerations some of which create further complications. In this regard it should be stressed that the presence of Turkey remains overwhelming.

Introduction

This paper focuses on several aspects of the Cyprus question with an emphasis on the European dimension and the stakes involved. Within this framework we make particular suggestions in relation to the solution of the Cyprus question and in a way in which broader interests and stakes are positively addressed. A vital precondition for such an outcome though is a major policy change by Turkey. In the next session we briefly review the various dimensions of the Cyprus problem: these include the bicomunal, the Greco-Turkish, the European, the international and the broader geostrategic dimension. Section II elaborates on the various aspects and dimensions of the Cyprus question. Furthermore, we take a critical approach in relation to their importance. In Section III we address the importance of the EU-Turkish relations as well as the broader implications. In this regard it should be noted that there are different vested interests as well as philosophical approaches. Taking all these perspectives into consideration we explain in Section IV how the solution of the Cyprus question may entail wider implications. Thus, although the problem is of

fundamental concern to Cypriots inevitably additional stakes are also involved and affected. Finally, in Section V we put forward some concluding remarks as well as suggestions for further research.

The dimensions of the Cyprus question

The Cyprus question is a protracted issue/problem which overtime has been changing phases. In the 1950s the emphasis was on the anti-colonial struggle of Cyprus against Britain for self-determination, in the 1960s there was much focus on the domestic aspects and dynamics of the issue while in 1974 there was the great debacle. During this period there were repeated external interventions. The Turkish invasion and occupation of the northern part of Cyprus in 1974 and the gradual inflow of settlers have dramatically changed the focus of and the basis of the negotiations. Inevitably all phases of the Cyprus question have been affected if not determined by geostrategic factors as well as regional balances and/or imbalances. Indeed we should not forget how developments in the Balkans related to the Eastern Question in 1878 led to the end of the Ottoman period in Cyprus and the arrival of the British.

Be that as it may the major dimensions of the Cyprus question are, briefly, the following:

1. *Bicommunal/Biethnic dimension.* The two major communities of the island, the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots constituted over time 80% and 18% respectively of the population of Cyprus. Developments following 1974 related to the Turkish invasion and occupation of the northern part of the country and subsequently other socioeconomic and political developments have led to dramatic demographic changes.

In the end of 2008 the population in the government controlled area approached 800,000 including about 90,000 legal foreign workers but excluding about 40,000 foreign illegal workers. In the northern occupied part of Cyprus it was estimated that there were about 100,000 Turkish Cypriots, 180,000 settlers, 40,000 troops and up to 4,000 other residents.

Coming back to the issue of bicommunal relations it is essential to note that over time there were periods of peaceful coexistence as well as tensions and strife. Conflict became inevitable when issues revolving around the future of Cyprus were addressed; not surprisingly, the majority and the minority communities had drastically different approaches. The challenge today is whether there can be a compromise between fundamentally conflicting views. Participation of Cyprus in the EU is conducive to this desirable direction; on the other hand though, the overwhelming presence of Turkey creates additional complications. Within this framework particular attention should be given to the settlers who outnumber the Turkish Cypriots. Furthermore and inevitably, the Turkish Cypriot community is undergoing a transformation.

2. *The Cyprus question is of concern to Greece and Turkey.* Despite the fact that Cyprus has never been part of Modern Greece, nevertheless historically and culturally it has a predominantly Greek identity. Turkey vehemently opposed the Greek Cypriot goal of *enosis* as well as the objective of a truly independent unitary state. To the present day Ankara declares that it wishes to maintain its guarantor rights throughout Cyprus and also within the framework of a solution to the Cyprus problem to replace the Republic of Cyprus with a new state entity in which no major decision will be taken without the consent of the Turkish side.
3. *The Cyprus question has a strong international dimension.* It is an issue involving the invasion and continuing occupation of a small country by a stronger neighbour. The sustained expansionism of Turkey toward Cyprus should also be assessed within the framework of the increasing numbers of Anatolian settlers. Obviously the gradual change of the demography of the island has serious implications.

Furthermore, the outcome of developments in Cyprus may have regional and indeed international repercussions; it is not only the impact on the relations between Greece and Turkey, it is also the possible precedent(s) that may be created if aggression is not reversed. In addition, it is also essential to consider issues of majority minority relations in biethnic and multiethnic states. Within this framework we should also consider that especially following the end of the cold war, a major theme preoccupying governments and international organizations are relations and issues of governance in biethnic and multiethnic states and societies.

4. *The Cyprus question inevitably has a strong European dimension which over time is enhanced.* The Republic of Cyprus was guaranteed in 1960 by Greece, Turkey and Britain. Greece and Britain are members of the EU while Turkey has embarked in accession negotiations since October 2005. Yet Turkey occupies, since 1974, a substantial part of the territory of the Republic of Cyprus and also refuses to recognize this country which is now a member of the EU (and of the EMU). Obviously there are several contradictions and questions that are raised both for the EU and Turkey in relation to credibility, principles and obligations pursued. In this regard it is essential to note that Turkey has not even complied with the minimal obligations that it has undertaken toward Cyprus and the EU in 2004 when the Union agreed to start accession negotiations.

Furthermore, it should be noted that to the present day the other two guarantor powers, Britain and Greece, have not fulfilled their commitments. It is acknowledged that both Britain and Greece helped the Republic of Cyprus to become a member of the EU. On the other hand though, the northern part of Cyprus is still occupied by Turkey.

5. *The Cyprus question has also geostrategic dimensions.* This island-state is located in the heart of the Eastern Mediterranean, a region of immense geopolitical and geoeconomic significance. Inevitably over time Cyprus has been under the control or influence of the dominant power in the broader region.

To the present day the Eastern Mediterranean is of vital importance:

- it is a meeting point for three major world religions-Judaism, Christianity and Islam;
- it has a proximity to energy sources, emerging markets both to the northeast (in the Black Sea and Caspian Sea) to the southeast (the Greater Middle East);
- it is in a critical position regarding trading routes and energy pipelines;
- it is also an area where the economic north meets with the economic south; and
- it is also a meeting point between the philosophical West and East.

Not surprisingly, Turkey wishes to further expand and upgrade its presence in the region.

Within this framework Turkey still maintains its objectives of strategic control over Cyprus, despite the fact that this island-state is now a member of the EU. Strategically one of the issues raised is whether the EU aspires to have a real presence in the region.

6. *There are of course other dimensions of the Cyprus problem which are of significance: these include the historical, cultural, economic, sociological and legal aspects.* Understanding each one of these aspects enriches our comprehension about the Cyprus question as a whole.

The understanding of all these issues is of vital importance in several ways. In essence, more often than not, approaches toward the understanding of the Cyprus question focused on particular aspects of it. For example, while Greek Cypriots focus on the international aspect of the issue, the Turkish Cypriots in general pay more attention to the bicomunal dimension. It is obvious that a comprehensive understanding is vital in order to address the issue in an effective and constructive manner. Perhaps the focus of the negotiations on the bicomunal dimension has over time also influenced substantive issues.

EU and Cyprus

When the Republic of Cyprus applied for membership in the EC on 4 July 1990 it had two major objectives:

1. To become part of a family of nations with a common value system and at the same time to respond to the challenge of globalisation in a constructive manner. In this regard it should be remembered that the system of “existing socialism” was beginning to collapse while it was also evident that the Cold War was about to end. Indeed it seemed to be the beginning of a new era of high hopes and expectations and Cypriots felt that they did not want to exclude themselves from what seemed to be associated with a bright future.
2. There was a widespread expectation that the EC would play a major role in the process toward a solution of the Cyprus problem. It was also understood that in Cyprus there was an extreme imbalance of power; participation in the EC could work in several ways toward positive outcomes. At the same time it was felt that the European value system could influence the form of the solution thus providing a balance in relation to the Turkish demands — which were seen as excessive.

The European Commission in its Opinion which was issued in 1993 underlined that the Republic of Cyprus was eligible for membership and that the major (and in essence the only) stumbling block was the Cyprus problem. The solution of the Cyprus problem was desirable but Greek Cypriots understood that such a development required a fundamental change of the Turkish positions. Consequently, the Republic of Cyprus wanted to have the option of accession to the EU even prior to a solution of the Cyprus problem. The Customs Union Agreement between the Republic of Cyprus and the EC which was signed in 1987 had indeed established a notable political and legal precedent; that accession was possible even in the absence of a solution to the Cyprus problem.

This was of great importance in view of the fact that repeated rounds of bicomunal negotiations did not lead to a fruitful outcome. In this regard we should recall that in the elections of 1993 Clerides defeated President Vassiliou who wished to reach a solution based on the Ghali Set of Ideas. The new Cypriot government of President Clerides with the support of Athens paid much more attention than even before on European processes. Meanwhile the prospects for the bicomunal negotiations did not seem to be promising.

It is important to note that this was a new era for Cyprus. Following 1974 there was a strong anti-western feeling in Cyprus. It was felt that the Turkish onslaught on Cyprus had been tolerated, if not supported, by certain western powers. More specifically the US and Great Britain were considered responsible for what had happened. The EC was not at the time a real player. Be that as it may the Association Agreement

between Cyprus and the EC was renewed in 1976. Thereafter steps were taken with the contribution of Greece which led to the Customs Union Agreement in 1987.

On 6 March 1995 the European Council reached a major decision: Cyprus could start accession negotiations with the EU six months after the end of the Intergovernmental Conference. The Council also decided, after Greece lifted its veto, to advance a Customs Union Agreement with Turkey.

It is important to note that this Agreement was very important as it engaged the EU, Greece, Turkey and Cyprus. It should be stressed that this was in line with the new American geostrategic perspectives and objectives. Following the end of the Cold War, and Clinton's election to the Presidency in 1992, the US reassessed the overall situation and redefined several objectives. The US considered that sooner or later Turkey should become a member of the EU even though in 1987 the EU rejected the Turkish application for membership. Within this framework the US hoped that the traditional rivalry between Greece and Turkey as well as the Cyprus problem could be addressed accordingly. In sum, American policymakers thought that the US objectives in the broader area could be addressed effectively utilizing the EU framework.

In March 1998 accession negotiations between EU and Cyprus began. President Clerides invited the Turkish Cypriot community to join the Cypriot negotiation team but the offer was rejected. In the meantime the US was trying to advance the Turkish candidacy to the EU. There was nevertheless an understanding that in one way or another other issues would be simultaneously addressed: these included the Cyprus problem and the broader Greco-Turkish problems.

The US administration worked ceaselessly and consistently toward this direction; the period of tensions between Greece and Turkey ended with the contribution of what came to be known as the "citizens' diplomacy" following the earthquakes in August and September 1999 in Turkey and Greece respectively. The road to Helsinki had been prepared. Furthermore, in the latter part of November 1999 intercommunal talks were resumed under the auspices of the UN and with the strong support of the UK and the US. Nevertheless the gap between the positions of the two sides was huge.

In December 1999 Turkey was declared a candidate for membership of the EU. The EU Council expressed its wish that the Cyprus problem would be resolved but this was not a precondition for accession. The Council also set a timetable for the resolution of the Greco-Turkish disputes by December 2004. Indeed it was expected that the catalytic role of the EU would lead to the resolution of various problems.

It should be stressed that, among other things, it was expected that accession of the Republic of Cyprus to the EU and the granting of a date for the beginning of accession negotiations to Turkey would be great incentives for the resolution of the Cyprus question. This proved to be an erroneous assessment or at least an incomplete evaluation of the situation.

The negotiations on Cyprus based on the Annan Plan did not lead to a breakthrough. The European Council at Copenhagen in December 2002 confirmed that

Cyprus could proceed to accession even without a solution to the problem. The failure to reach even an interim agreement was laid blamed on the Turkish (Cypriot) side. Not surprisingly the European Council did not grant a date for the beginning of accession negotiations to Turkey as this country did not fulfill the relevant criteria. In one way or another, the situation in Cyprus and Turkey's responsibilities were taken into consideration.

Nevertheless the US, the UK and other allies of Turkey wished to continue their efforts for the further strengthening of the EU-Turkish relations leading eventually to the beginning of accession negotiations. The idea for the beginning of accession negotiations between EU and Turkey was further cultivated while at the same time this country was encouraged to continue the reform process.

On 16 April 2003 the then President of the Republic of Cyprus, Tassos Papadopoulos, signed the Treaty of Accession with the EU in Athens. It was an historic moment of great importance. There were jubiliations among the Greek Cypriots and expectations for a better future. In the occupied part of Cyprus there were socioeconomic distress, mounting pressures and a feeling that they were missing the train.

A week later, on 23 April, the Turkish Cypriot regime encouraged by Ankara unilaterally made a surprise move: the partial lifting of restrictions to free movement along some check points on the Green Line. What took place pleasantly surprised even the most optimistic Cypriots and foreign diplomats and observers. Thousands of Greek and Turkish Cypriots were visiting the other side with no negative incidence/incidents taking place. One of the fundamental pillars of Denktash and indeed Ankara's policy was that the two communities could not live together. That is why according to the Turkish philosophy strict bizonality was essential. What was taking place though was not confirming this hypothesis.

The "TRNC" was under severe strains. And many thought that what was taking place in actual fact was reminiscent of the fall of the Berlin Wall. In reality though the opening and the socioeconomic injections that were associated with it were destined to reduce pressures and strengthen the regime.

Encouraged by the new climate in the relations between the two communities, the UN, the US and the UK thought that there was an historic opportunity to achieve a resolution of the Cyprus problem before the date of enlargement of the EU from 15 to 25 member states on 1 May 2004. Indeed it was an historic opportunity: the Republic of Cyprus would accede to the EU as a (re)united island-state, a long protracted regional conflict and international problem would be resolved and a major stumbling bloc for Turkey's European ambitions would be removed. Nevertheless, the UN Annan Plan V which was submitted to simultaneous referenda on 24 April 2004 was overwhelmingly rejected by the Greek Cypriots by 76% and was overwhelmingly endorsed by the Turkish Cypriots (and the settlers who voted) by 66%. This in itself is indicative of a strongly imbalanced plan.

Indeed, it was important for the US and the UK to advance a plan which will be endorsed by Turkey. If the Greek Cypriots followed that would be fine; if not the

perpetuation of the Cyprus problem would not be Ankara's fault but the fault of the Greek Cypriots.

Be that as it may Cyprus became a member of the EU on May 1, 2004. On various occasions the question why the EU accepted Cyprus as a member without the prior solution to the Cyprus problem was raised. This has been the outcome of several factors: (a) Greece modestly but decisively exercised its leverage so that the enlargement will include the Republic of Cyprus; (b) the EU understood that if Cyprus was not accepted as a member, in one way or another, it would appear that this island-state was penalized once more for the occupation; (c) simultaneously, a third country, Turkey, would have been effectively given the right of veto and indirectly it would have been absolved of its responsibilities and even been rewarded. Undoubtedly, the EU would have preferred the achievement of the solution to the Cyprus problem to have taken place with the accession. In the absence of a solution though what took place was considered to be a second best.

In the months that followed Turkey was jubilant declaring that it has done everything to its abilities to resolve the Cyprus problem. The then President Papadopoulos was heavily criticized and the Republic of Cyprus lost, at least in the short run, the moral high ground. There was no talk about the occupation of the northern part of Cyprus. The politically correct concept to elaborate on was the "isolation of the Turkish Cypriots".

In 2004 it was decided that Turkey would start accession negotiation with the EU in October 2005 even though the occupation of the northern part of Cyprus continued and even though Ankara refused to recognize the Republic of Cyprus. Turkey undertook only minimal obligations: to implement the Ankara Protocol involving Customs Union provisions to the new members of the EU including Cyprus. This meant that Ankara would open its airports and ports to Cyprus' planes and ships respectively. So far Turkey has failed to implement these minimal obligations. The EU will (re)assess the overall accession progress of Turkey in December 2009.

It should be also noted that following D. Christofias' victory in the Presidential elections in 2008 there were high expectations for a solution to the Cyprus problem or at least major progress toward this direction. The implicit assumption was that it was former President Papadopoulos who was responsible for the lack of progress. Nevertheless this assumption has not proved valid so far. Despite much flexibility on the part of President Christofias it does not seem that the expectations for a solution to the Cyprus problem by the end of 2009 or even to 2010 will materialize. At the end of the day a real change of the policy of Turkey is the key to the solution of the Cyprus problem. Ankara must at last recognize the Republic of Cyprus and normalize relations with this country. This entails the withdrawal of its troops from the island, the respect of the independence and territorial integrity of this state and the recognition of the issue of the settlers as a political one. That means that most of the settlers would have to leave Cyprus.

EU-Turkish relations and broader considerations

Irrespective of Cyprus, Euro-Turkish relations constitute a major issue in both European and international affairs. No doubt the further democratisation and modernisation of Turkey would contribute to the enhancement of stability, security and cooperation in the broader region. Nevertheless, it remains unclear whether Turkey has the will and the capacity to fully comply with what it takes to become a member of the EU. Likewise, it is doubtful whether the EU can eventually absorb Turkey without changing direction, purpose and philosophy.

There are several challenges that Turkey has to address. These include reforms for a modern legal framework, economic transformation, the Kurdish issue, the Aegean, religious rights, the Armenian genocide, the alleged re-islamisation of the state under the Erdogan government, the (supreme) role of the army, women's rights and Cyprus. All these issues entail elements for which several countries, such as France, Austria, Netherlands, Germany, Greece and Cyprus have particular sensitivities. A key and broader issue is also the EU's own standing and perceived future.

Cyprus and the Cyprus question constitute an important aspect of the relations between EU and Turkey. Turkey does not recognise the Republic of Cyprus and continues to occupy, since the summer of 1974, almost 40% of its territory. Yet the EU has started accession negotiations with Turkey with the reserved consent of Cyprus, now a full member state. But Ankara seems to be reluctant to implement even the minimal obligations toward Cyprus (and by extension the EU) which derive from the Ankara Protocol (of the EU-Turkey Negotiating Framework of October 2005) in specific and from the European political cultural in general.

Accession to the EU seems to remain a strategic objective of Turkey. Yet it does not seem that Ankara fully understands what it takes to become a member of the EU. It seems to be pursuing an *a la carte* policy in relation to the multidimensional challenges it has to address. In addition to Cyprus, these include the Kurdish issue, women's rights, religious and minority rights and the role of the army.

Furthermore, a major characteristic of Turkey is a high degree of statism which also entails a supreme role for the army (as already noted); this contradicts the European value system. Ankara will have to revisit its approach if it really wishes to pursue the path toward accession. Likewise Ankara has to change its approach to Cyprus; fulfilling its minimum obligations that derive from the Ankara Protocol should be considered as a major step in the right direction. In relation to the Greco-Turkish disputes, it seems that again, there is a long way to go. Despite the efforts for change and reform, the overall impression is that Ankara does not seem willing yet to fully harmonise with the *acquis communautaire* and adjust to European political norms. Turkey exhibits assertiveness in relation to several issues in the way that it approaches an aggressive stance.

The Human Rights Report of the European Commission on Turkey on 8 November 2006 basically reflected the challenges that this country had to address. And in December 2006 the European Council set a road map for Turkey; December 2009 is

the date that the progress of this country would be reassessed. At the same time the EU froze 8 chapters. It also acknowledged that Ankara had not yet fulfilled the (minimum) obligations that it has undertaken toward the Republic of Cyprus and in effect toward the EU. Indeed this may be indicative of attitudes in Turkey – attitudes which seem to address the obligations in an *a la carte* way. Perhaps the strong support that Turkey has been receiving by various countries has encouraged this policy pattern.

There are three philosophical approaches in relation to the potential accession of Turkey to the EU. These are:

1. Accession of Turkey to the EU would contribute to a better understanding between the West and the Islamic world. This would also facilitate the integration of the Moslem immigrants in European societies. Furthermore, it would ease tensions between the West and the Islamic world. In addition, it would also contribute to the economic and demographic rejuvenation of the EU. Besides there have been promises and commitments to Turkey which cannot be reversed.
2. Turkey does not really belong to Europe politically and culturally. If Turkey accedes to the EU this will seriously challenge the identity of the EU and will compromise its ambitions as well as its political culture and, moreover, the prospects for its political integration. The EU cannot absorb Turkey. If the latter becomes a member of the Union, then the potential for political integration, even in the long run, will be frustrated.
3. It is more important to keep Turkey on the track of further modernisation and Europeanisation. The challenging question whether Turkey should become a member of the EU does not have to be addressed today. The possibility of the Turkish accession must be kept open. If Turkey fulfills all the necessary criteria it will be unfair to keep this country out. If it does not it will be unwise to adopt a shorter yardstick in order to make Turkey a member. Under these conditions a special relationship may be discussed.

Obviously, these challenges involving the future of Europe and Turkey preoccupy politicians, academics and policy analysts, mass media and the public opinion at large. And it will take some time before a particular pathway will become certain.

The EU finds itself in a very difficult situation. On the one hand, there are principles and norms that cannot be violated, and on the other hand, there are serious stakes with Turkey that have to be addressed effectively. The question is how to move forward: in relation to Cyprus. Ankara has to accept and address the Republic of Cyprus as a member of the UN and, moreover, of the EU — the Union that Turkey wishes to join.

Ankara has repeatedly put forward the position that it had worked toward the resolution of the Cyprus problem and that it was the Greek Cypriots who are responsible for the continuing stalemate. US and the European allies of Turkey took the position that it was unfair to penalise Turkey over the Cyprus issue. The position held was that

Ankara took substantive steps for the solution of the problem. Furthermore, much more attention should be given to what they described as “the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots”. The important point to stress is that if Ankara has no real cost for its actions in Cyprus it has no real incentive to change its policy. On the other hand, Cyprus must see how it fundamentally reestablishes its moral high ground and thereafter adopts a comprehensive strategy.

The solution of the Cyprus question and wider implications

The Cyprus problem does not concern only the Cypriots; it is also a European and an international problem. Whether and how it will be resolved will inevitably have repercussions beyond the territorial boundaries of this island–state. Inevitably, it affects the EU and Turkey, including their relations. Indeed, Cyprus will constitute a litmus test for both the EU and Turkey. The EU will be tested on whether it can live up to its own declarations as well as to whether it will be able to project itself as a global political power. If Turkey is serious about its own European orientation and democratisation it must let Cyprus go. Turkey cannot be free and democratic and at the same time sustain expansionist designs in Cyprus. Inevitably the overall issue is also of interest to the US as it directly or indirectly affects particular American strategic objectives.

The Cyprus question is a complex problem with several dimensions. Among others it entails a bicomunal dimension, while at the same time it has constituted historically one of the sources of friction between Greece and Turkey. Turkey still occupies part of Cyprus, a member of the EU, while at the same time Ankara aspires to become a member of the Union. Furthermore, Turkey does not recognise the Republic of Cyprus and refuses to fulfill even the minimal obligations it has undertaken toward Cyprus and the EU within the framework of the Ankara Protocol. Obviously there is a major European dimension to the problem as well as serious complications.

Another issue of great importance is whether different ethnic groups can legitimately demand their own state within a state — even though there is no territorial basis for such an outcome. In this case, philosophically the question raised is how minority and/or community rights can be addressed while at the same time the territorial integrity of nation-states is preserved.

Cyprus has also attracted US interest and involvement basically because of the interdependence and interrelationship of Cyprus with issues of vital American concern such as stability and security in the Eastern Mediterranean and the advancement of Turkey’s European ambitions. Furthermore, developments in Cyprus may be, directly or indirectly, interrelated with broader American objectives in the Middle East and beyond.

Philosophically, the objective from this point on would be to promote a plan which takes into consideration the fundamental concerns of all parties involved. It is also essential to comprehend that the framework of a solution should be based on three fundamental pillars:

1. the historical compromise of 1977 and 1979;
2. the relevant UN resolutions; and
3. the value system of the European political culture.

The Republic of Cyprus has to take the initiative toward this direction.

A solution based on such guidelines incorporates the historical compromise and at the same time it entails a dynamic toward integration. Furthermore, it provides a framework for a sustainable solution to the interests of all Cypriots while at the same time it has the potential to serve broader interests. More specifically, it will remove a thorny issue from the Greco-Turkish agenda and instead it may turn it into a bridge of cooperation. In addition, it will remove from the international agenda what has been described as an intractable problem. The peaceful and creative coexistence between Greek Cypriot Christians and Turkish Cypriot Moslems may also serve as a model beyond Cyprus. In an era of growing tensions in various sensitive areas such as the Balkans and the Middle East such a development should be strongly encouraged. Besides, Cyprus can in various ways make a contribution toward the implementation of some of the EU and US objectives in the broader Middle East, such as the creation of open societies and interlinkages with the EU and the international community.

Concluding remarks and suggestions for the future

Euro-Turkish relations in themselves constitute a vital challenge as well as an issue of international concern. The strengthening of the EU and its further integration are major objectives. At the same time the further modernisation and democratization of Turkey also remain a fundamental objective. The challenge is how to accommodate both.

Turkey's European path necessitates the fulfillment of serious obligations. There are major internal reforms that must be implemented. Adopting new legislation is essential but what is even more important is its implementation. And Turkey must effectively address in a conclusive manner relations with other countries; so far Turkey expected other countries to adjust to its demands. To a great extent it got its way. This cannot continue indefinitely.

The Cyprus question constitutes a major challenge for all Cypriots, for the guarantor powers Greece, Turkey and Britain, for the EU, the US and the international community. Despite repeated and consistent efforts no solution has been found. Cyprus' membership in the EU and Turkey's bid to join the Union may offer new opportunities. The promise is to achieve an arrangement which would not only safeguard and promote EU ideals and interests but would also utilise the peaceful coexistence and creativity between Greek Cypriot Christians and Turkish Cypriot Moslems as a model beyond Cyprus. In an age when the objective of promoting intercultural cooperation is very high on the international agenda such an outcome in Cyprus would be a worthwhile step in the right direction. It will also serve several objectives beyond

Cyprus. Nevertheless for such an outcome it is essential that Turkey chooses to leave behind its maximalist designs on Cyprus.

So far the high expectations for a quick solution of the Cyprus problem following Christofia's victory in the presidential elections of 2008 have not materialised. Ankara has excessive demands which to the present day have not allowed much progress to take place. The support and the tolerance that Turkey enjoyed for its perceived importance account to a great extent for this stance.

Whether and how the Cyprus issue will be resolved will inevitably have repercussions beyond the territorial boundaries of this island-state. And at the end of the day if Turkey is serious about its own democratization and European orientation it must let Cyprus go and begin to see it as an equal partner in the EU, the Union it is trying to join.

One of the issues that must be seriously examined is what would happen if the EU or Turkey or both choose to pursue a special relationship instead of full membership. At the same time the Republic of Cyprus must seriously examine its strategic options in relation to the solution of the problem as well as its defense and foreign policy objectives and priorities.

Postscript/epilogue — the latest developments

On 14 October 2009 the European Commission's Progress Report on Turkey described the poor record of the country in relation to several issues including Cyprus but did not make any recommendations for sanctions. It was therefore no surprise that two months later on 11 December 2009 the European Council noted the existence of the problem but did not proceed with sanctions.

Inevitably the perceived geostrategic importance of Turkey allows Ankara to pursue its own policies and to fulfil any requirements in *an a la carte* manner. Furthermore, the fact that since Turkey was declared a candidate country for membership in the EU in December 1999 it continues to pursue its European ambitions despite consistent turbulences and its serious shortcomings and deficits. Because Turkey has never been penalised the candidate country is encouraged to proceed under its own unique circumstances which are often distant if not outside the European context and its norms.

Thus it is no surprise that two days after the meeting of the European Council the Supreme Court of Turkey decided to close down the Democratic Society Party, the country's biggest Kurdish party, which led to days of unrest in the south-eastern provinces. And in relation to Cyprus the proposals of the Turkish Cypriot side regarding issues of Governance as formulated by Ankara confirmed the view that the Turkish policy remains unaltered: it aims at consolidating and legitimatising the strategic control of Cyprus by Turkey.

There are at least two serious issues that are raised:

1. it seems that the process of the bicomunal negotiations pursued so far to resolve the Cyprus problem is inadequate; and

2. there is little doubt that Turkey proceeds with policies irrespective of whether they are in line with its European obligations or the European value system.

On the first it should be acknowledged that the problem does not only consist of the bicomunal dimension. Indeed, the major issue is that Turkey, a candidate country, does not recognise the right of a member state, the Republic of Cyprus, to exist.

On the second, undoubtedly the EU cannot and should not discriminate against any country. By the same token it would be a serious mistake for the EU to consistently ignore violations by any candidate country and proceed with the accession negotiations as if nothing is happening. At the end such an approach will undermine the credibility of the EU itself and set a dangerous precedent.

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