

Euro-Atlantic Relations and the Eastern Mediterranean

Joseph Joseph*

Stephanos Constantinides**

During the first half of 2004, the triangle of Greece, Cyprus, and Turkey, once again, attracted considerable international attention as politicians and diplomats on both sides of the Atlantic made another effort to solve the Cyprus problem before May 1, when Cyprus became a full member of the European Union. The Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots along with Greece and Turkey were among the protagonists in this effort, but the real movers and shakers were the big and powerful on the international political scene. The United Nations working together with the European Union and in close cooperation with the United States and Britain drafted the fifth and final version of the Kofi Annan Plan for “The Comprehensive Settlement of the Cyprus Problem.”¹ The Plan was finalized by the UN Secretary General, in Bürgenstock, Switzerland, and presented to the leaders of Greece, Turkey, the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots on March 31. In finalizing his plan, Annan used his discretion “to fill in the blanks” and complete the text on issues that the two sides failed to reach an agreement. In other words, the Plan was not exactly and fully the result of negotiation, but rather a compromise on major issues reflecting an urgency on the part of the US and Britain to settle the problem before Cyprus’ accession to the EU. In reality the Plan was the product not of negotiation but rather of London and Washington’s will to solve the Cyprus problem in order to suit Turkey’s European ambitions.

On April 24, the two Cypriot communities held separate, simultaneous referenda on the Annan Plan. The people of Cyprus were asked to answer *yes* or *no* to the following question:

*Do you approve the Foundation Agreement with all its Annexes, as well as the constitution of the Greek Cypriot/Turkish Cypriot State and the provisions as to the laws to be in force, to bring into being a new state of affairs in which Cyprus joins the European Union united?*²

* University of Cyprus (Jean Monnet Chair in European Foreign and Security Policy)

** Université du Québec à Montréal

The majority of the Greek Cypriots voted *no* and the majority of the Turkish Cypriots voted *yes*.³ The Greek-Cypriot rejection of the Annan Plan disappointed the international community, especially the UN, the EU and the US which had tried to convince everyone that this was the last and best opportunity for a settlement that would allow Cyprus to join the European Union reunited. Apparently the majority of the Greek Cypriots disagreed with this assessment as they believed that the Plan was neither fair nor functional. Especially the provisions for the Turkish settlers, Turkish occupation army, and refugees made the Greek Cypriot voters particularly unhappy. In fact, the Greek Cypriots considered Annan's plan an effort on the part of Britain and the US to facilitate Turkey's European aspirations rather than a viable and just solution of the Cyprus problem. There were also serious questions about the implementation and viability of the Plan which created feelings of uncertainty and insecurity among the Greek Cypriots.

The results of the referenda and accession of a *de facto* divided island-state to the EU may change some attitudes and policies in the region. The UN, EU, and US may temporarily adjust their policies toward Cyprus before they take another initiative for its settlement. The Greek Cypriots may lose some of the international support enjoyed for decades; while, in the short run, Turkey and Turkish Cypriots will benefit politically from the Greek Cypriot *no*. The Turkish Cypriots may also receive economic support from Brussels. Greece and Turkey seem determined to continue their policy of cooperation and *rapprochement* which will serve Turkish European aspirations. Cyprus, as an EU member, will face the challenges and opportunities that EU membership entails. Handling the Cyprus problem and coping with the *de facto* division will be an interesting challenge not only for the Cypriot government, but also for the EU itself, which will have to cope with the consequences of the continuing division of the island before addressing once again the Cyprus problem.⁴ The prospect of Turkey's accession will be a major EU concern for years to come. The United States will continue looking at the Eastern Mediterranean as a region of vital geopolitical importance. Naturally, its policy in the region will be affected by realities, perceptions, and goals that serve its regional and global interests. Policymaking in Washington will continue to take into account the fact that Greece is a "good old friend"; Turkey, an "important strategic partner," and Cyprus, the only island of any strategic importance in the eastern corner of Mediterranean.

As this special issue of *Hellenic Studies/Études helléniques* was being prepared, we had to face the broader context and political parameters within which Euro-Atlantic concerns and policies are being shaped in the Eastern Mediterranean. We would like to clarify, that the articles included in this volume were written and submitted before the referenda in Cyprus took place. All the articles were completed by early March, so they are based on the situation of that time. However, a short article on the referenda by Jean Catsiapis is also included. In a sense, some of the articles present the major developments that led to the Annan Plan 5 and the Cyprus referenda of April 24. We hope that the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of issues and policies can be helpful in understanding what happened in the past, but also how future developments may unfold.

Kostas Ifantis writes about the dominant position of the United States in world politics and its objective of shaping and maintaining the “new world order.” He explains that superpower status is not confined to military strength and superiority, but also refers to economic vitality and prominence. He argues that the US is trying to prevent the emergence of a rival global power and in the near future no country or block of countries is likely to challenge American supremacy. On the other hand, the 9/11 attacks have shown that even a seemingly invulnerable superpower may have “innate weaknesses” and be “structurally vulnerable” because terrorist groups “can take advantage of the infrastructure that open societies, open economies, and open technologies can afford.”

Neophytos Loizides looks at crisis-making and crisis behaviour in the Eastern Mediterranean. He examines crises in Greek-Turkish relations and in relations with neighbouring countries during the last two decades. The subsequent discussion reflects a broad categorization of crises involving ethnically related minorities across borders, “alien” minorities within borders, and third countries over territories and resources. The analysis revolves around questions about the causes, dynamics and consequences of confrontational behavior, crisis management and policy-making. One of the author’s conclusions is that a complex mosaic of domestic, external and ideational factors shape developments and attitudes and prevent the settlement of major issues in the region. Yet Loizides suggests in this policy-oriented article that “the uncertainty created by these highly fluid and

unpredictable variables should alert policymakers in making better use of time and opportunities for settlement and de-escalation in the region.”

Charalambos Konstantinides writes about transatlantic relations and their ups-and-downs since the collapse of the Soviet Union and end of the Cold War. Special attention is paid to the developments, attitudes and policies that followed the 9/11 terrorist attacks which led to the 2003 Iraq war. During the first half of 2003, Greece held the presidency of the European Union and was caught in the middle of tensions, bitter rhetoric and world-shaking events. From that position, Greece managed to play a constructive role and offer an immense service to the transatlantic alliance. The author argues that the transatlantic partnership, despite occasional rifts, has solid foundations which are based on interdependence and converging interests.

Dimitris Triantaphyllou explores Greek-Turkish relations and some of the problems and prospects they present to Europe. He looks at recent changes in attitudes and policies on both sides of the Aegean. Since 1999, Greece has launched a “peace offensive” and followed a policy of *rapprochement* with Turkey aiming at reducing tensions and improving relations between the two countries. On the Turkish side, the commitment to the goal of EU accession has become the driving force behind Ankara’s domestic and external policies, especially since Erdogan came to power. The author concludes that Greece, as an EU member, is in a fine position to play a leading role in bringing its neighbouring countries closer to Europe and shaping developments in the region.

James Ker-Lindsay examines Turkish-American relations during and after the 2003 Iraq war. Ankara’s failure to support US military operations against the Saddam regime raised serious questions about the reliability of Turkey and its relations with the Atlantic superpower. At the same time, the EU was putting pressure on Turkey to introduce domestic reforms and also help solve the Cyprus problem in order to facilitate its European aspirations. These transatlantic pressures led to speculations about the future relationship of Turkey with the West and neighboring countries like Russia and Iran. Ker-Lindsay suggests that the US decided, on the basis of geopolitical considerations, to remain “firmly engaged with Ankara despite the low points of 2003.”

Natalie Tocci discusses EU-Turkish relations, especially the challenges and options that Turkey is facing as a candidate country. A major issue is whether there is a consensus, either in Turkey or in the EU, on the desirability, suitability and ability of Turkey to become a full member of the EU. Although Turkish foreign policy is driven by a strong European orientation, the transformations that the country is going through certainly create difficulties and raise questions about the level and success of integration with the EU that can be achieved. Some of the controversial areas are democracy, human rights, economic development, the Kurdish issue and Cyprus. Tocci suggests that “developments in Turkey, in Europe, and in the wider international system will determine the evolution of EU-Turkey relations.”

Vassilis Fouskas looks at Cyprus and the Eastern Mediterranean within the context of broader regional and international geopolitical considerations. His analysis of the Cyprus problem goes back to the declaration of independence. It is carried out against the background of confrontational superpower politics and Cold War setting which dominated the region and the world after World War II. The European aspirations of Turkey, Cyprus's accession to the EU, and Middle Eastern politics also form part of the equation shaping geopolitics in the region. In examining recent developments, Fouskas argues that a settlement of the Cyprus issue will take into consideration the role of Turkey in the region and will also reflect the interests of the United States.

Angelos Sepos examines some of the policymaking challenges that Cyprus will face as a member of the European Union. His hypothesis is that Cyprus — in case of a settlement based on a bizonal, bicomunal federation — will face interesting challenges in formulating and implementing its EU policy. He looks at some of those difficulties and proposes such measures as institutional and administrative reforms to counteract them. He also looks at the need to cultivate a consensual political culture and an environment of cooperation between the two communities. He concludes that there will be a need for reforms “in the institutions of the state at both the domestic and the EU level, and in some cases, there will be a need for the establishment of new mechanisms.”

Claude Nicolet looks at the British and American policy towards Cyprus in the 1960s and 1970s. He reconsiders events in light of new evidence made available with the declassification of documents, especially at the US National Archives and the Richard M. Nixon Library. His article focuses on the role of Britain and the US during the crises of November 1967 and the summer of 1974. In essence, Nicolet turns a critical eye on the embedded view in Cypriot history that Britain and the US (especially the latter) had endorsed the partition of the island ever since its independence in 1960. Regarding the 1974 events, he concludes they were “more a consequence of the complicated situations and opportunities in the area, rather than of US betrayal or conspiracy” especially “as the Soviet Union had obviously signaled to Ankara non-opposition to a Turkish intervention.”

In preparing this special issue of *Hellenic Studies/Études helléniques* our objective was to include articles addressing a variety of issues and aspects that fit into the broader theme of Euro-Atlantic relations and the Eastern Mediterranean. The emphasis has fallen on Cyprus, Greece and Turkey, and their relations with the European Union and the United States as we believe that the dynamics of these relations provide challenging topics for scholarly exploration. The expanding role of the EU on the world scene and its relations with the United States, the European course of Turkey, the role of Greece in Southeastern Europe, the accession of Cyprus to the EU, and the role of the United States in the Eastern Mediterranean are issues of great interest to scholars and policymakers.

We would like to thank the authors of the articles for their contribution in a much needed scholarly debate on the above issues. Their contribution of insight is enhanced by their diverse and innovative perspectives.

This special issue of *Hellenic Studies/Études helléniques*, as were the previous two, is the product of cooperation between the Centre of Hellenic Studies and Research Canada-KEEK and the Jean Monnet Chair in European Foreign and Security Policy at the University of Cyprus.

NOTES

1. The previous versions of the Annan Plan were presented on the following dates: first: 11 November 2002; second: 10 December 2002; third: 26 February 2003; fourth: 28 March 2004.

2. The question was included in the Annan Plan, *Annex IX: Coming into being of the New State of Affairs*, article 1.

3. The results of the two separate referenda were as follows:

Greek Cypriots: "Yes" 75.83; "No" 24.17.

Turkish Cypriots: "Yes" 64.91; "No" 34.09.

4. On April 29, 2004, following the rejection of the Annan Plan by the Greek Cypriots and the lack of a settlement, the Council of the EU adopted a Regulation (8208/04) reconfirming that "the application of the *acquis* upon accession has therefore been suspended pursuant to Article No 10 [of the Accession Treaty] in the areas of the Republic of Cyprus in which the Government of the Republic of Cyprus does not exercise effective control." With regard to the dividing line, the Regulation provides that "since the abovementioned line does not constitute an external border of the EU, special rules concerning the crossing of goods, services and persons need to be established, the prime responsibility for which belongs to the Republic of Cyprus."