

The Fifth EU Enlargement: Revisiting the Triangle of Cyprus, Greece and Turkey

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On April 16, 2003, the European Union took a great stride forward in both enlargement and unification. Under the Greek presidency, the Treaty of Accession was signed in Athens by the fifteen old and the ten new member-states.

A strong political message resonated in the solemnity of this ceremony and choice of venue, the *Stoa of Attalos*, in the ancient *Agora*, under the shadow of the Acropolis. The ten new members of the enlarged family were reconnecting with their roots, those of ancient Greek civilization, and ‘returning to Europe’ while also joining the European integration process begun more than 50 years ago. As the President of the European Council, Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis, pointed out, the *agora* is a place where “people with different convictions, came into contact” and where “we can realize that there is no end to history.”¹ Romano Prodi, speaking at the same ceremony and in the same spirit, indicated that history “confirmed its farsightedness” and that the European leaders came to “the cradle of democracy” to call upon their peoples to approve “the Treaty sanctioning the peaceful and democratic unification of our continent.”²

This is the fifth enlargement of the EU and certainly the most ambitious and likely most significant as it confirms the reunification of the European continent. The four previous enlargements (1973: Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom; 1981: Greece; 1986: Portugal and Spain; 1995: Austria, Finland and Sweden), appeared more limited in scope and took place within a divided Europe. Now,

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with the eastward expansion of the Union, countries of Central and Eastern Europe may consider their accession as the fulfillment of a vision and an irreversible re-entry into the world of Western democracy and free market economy.

With regard to Cyprus and the Eastern Mediterranean, the EU, UN and USA have been looking to this enlargement as both an opportunity and a tool capable of facilitating a settlement on the island and improving Greek-Turkish relations. That has not happened yet; hence, a special protocol on Cyprus was attached to the Accession Treaty providing that “the application of the *acquis communautaire* shall be suspended in those areas of the Republic of Cyprus in which the Government of the Republic of Cyprus does not exercise effective control.”³ Some see this as a failure and lost opportunity. It could also be seen as a new starting point for more active EU engagement since more than ever before, the *de facto* divided island is a European problem requiring attention.

Not surprisingly, the EU's role in tackling the Cyprus issue has become a prominent feature in public debate, diplomatic initiatives and scholarly analysis. The EU has repeatedly expressed concern over the lack of a settlement but only now is it in a unique position to play a role in bringing about permanent peace and stability in Cyprus and the entire region. An obvious and logical deadline for a comprehensive solution would be May 1, 2004, when Cyprus will officially become a full EU member.

Another development took place in April 2003. Turkish Cypriot leader, Rauf Denktash, under Ankara's guidance suddenly eased restrictions on the circulation of Greek- and Turkish-Cypriots. In the meantime the Government of the Republic of Cyprus introduced a set of measures aimed at making it possible for Turkish-Cypriots to enjoy, as much as possible, the benefits that other citizens enjoy. As a result, hundreds of thousands of Cypriots crossed the UN-guarded 'green line' to visit the other side. These massive and peaceful crossings brought together people who had been separated for 29 years. The intermingling of the two communities not only reinforced a spirit of

conciliation, but also reconfirmed the need for a settlement. As Pat Cox, President of the European Parliament put it, these “extraordinary events are tantamount to a people’s revolution... The people have spoken loud enough to be heard in Brussels, and I hope in other centers of authority. The people want a settlement and the people want a settlement now. I hope that the political class can find the wisdom and serenity to meet the people’s aspirations.”⁴

Similarly, it can be argued that the centre of authority that can make a difference on Cyprus is Ankara because Turkey will soon face the dilemma of either strengthening its European prospects or maintaining the occupation of northern Cyprus. Turkey applied for admission to EU in 1987 and has officially been a candidate since December 1999. The European Council in Copenhagen (December 12-13) went one step further by stating that “if the European Council in December 2004, on the basis of a report and a recommendation from the Commission, decides that Turkey fulfils the Copenhagen political criteria, the European Union, will open accession negotiations with Turkey without delay.”⁵ It is reasonable to expect that Turkey will take the problems it faces on the Cypriot and European fronts seriously. There is no doubt also that Turkey is behind the recent relaxation of restrictions on Cyprus.

Following the failure of the latest and most intensive effort to find a settlement, which culminated in the ‘Annan Plan’, it is expected that the UN, EU and the USA will step up efforts for a settlement by May 2004. Now that Cyprus is a member of the EU, the institutions, legal order, principles and policies of the EU — the *aquis communautaire* — can provide a useful framework and guidelines that the Annan plan didn’t offer for the settlement. After all, the entire population will be better off if the island ceases to be a place of arms and confrontation, and the current status quo is replaced by a meaningful political order that will bring together the two communities in a unified island under conditions of peace and stability.

In this special thematic issue, we address some issues arising from the accession of the Republic of Cyprus to the EU and the impact the

dynamics of enlargement may have on the triangle of Greece, Turkey and Cyprus.

In the first article, Van Coufoudakis provides a historical overview and review of recent developments on and around Cyprus and Turkey. He explains how the Anglo-Americans have tried to promote a solution on the basis of the “acknowledgement of the laws and political procedures of the so-called ‘TRNC’ by the government of Cyprus”, with the objective to create “a new state on a confederation of two sovereign and largely independent states”. Alvaro de Soto, according to the author, “succeeded (with the Annan plan) in implementing a page from Holbrooke’s May 1998 plan, that is the acknowledgement... by the acceptance by the government of Cyprus of the formation of two technical committees to examine which laws and treaties of each side would remain in effect under the new state of affairs...”. Coufoudakis emphasizes the advancement and failure of the Annan plan, explaining how and why the plan was rejected by the Turkish side though it met nearly all of Turkey’s and Denktash’s goals, because of “the ambiguity of provisions on statehood, the settlers, and other similar issues”. He also treats major developments such as the election of the Islamic Justice and Development Party (AKP) of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Iraq war, the huge demonstrations of Turkish-Cypriots against Denktash, and a new political climate on Cyprus after the massive crossings of the green line. His conclusion and suggestion is that “more than ever before, those concerned with the rule of law will need to reevaluate their approach and adapt their thinking to the realities of a new, expanded and united Europe of which Cyprus will be a vital part”.

In his article, Dan Lindley addresses several issues surrounding the accession of the Republic of Cyprus to the European Union and the search for a settlement on the island. His starting point is that failure to find a solution by the time the Treaty of Accession was signed in April 2003 was unfortunate as accession was “the best opportunity to resolve the Cyprus problem [and it] has apparently been lost.” As he put it, “Cyprus’s accession is only one-third of the problem faced by the EU, the UN, and those concerned with Aegean affairs.” The other

two-thirds are the status of the northern part of Cyprus and the European future of Turkey. In Lindley's view, Turkish accession plus a settlement on Cyprus that takes into account the logic and spirit of the Annan plan may bring stability in the region and relief to the EU. He concludes that there is increasing pressure on the EU to stabilize its southeastern borders by shaping the European future of both Cyprus and Turkey.

Andrea Riemer examines EU-Turkish relations from the viewpoint of Turkish objectives and European expectations. In a brief overview, Riemer analyzes the internal and external contexts and dynamics which have shaped Turkey's Western orientation and European goals then she assesses the current status of EU-Turkish relations and identifies problems, prospects and options. Her analysis of recent developments, including the decision of the Copenhagen European Council (December 2002), indicates a rough road ahead for Turkey, which will be a key issue for the EU as well as a major item on the Euro-Atlantic agenda.

Mehmet Ugur applies an innovative approach to resolving the Cyprus problem. He looks at the EU role by conceptualizing the solution of the Cyprus problem as an 'international public good'. His analysis revolves around the fundamental issue of setting rules and creating conducive circumstances in the search for a settlement. He argues that throughout the 1970s and 1980s the EU failed to play that role, but in the 1990s that began to change. He points out that, given Turkey's European orientation and desire for accession to the EU, the time has come for a trade-off which will facilitate a settlement on Cypriot and Turkish membership. Ugur concludes that such a trade-off will "depend on the Turkish military's reactions to the new government in Turkey and increased societal dissent in Northern Cyprus".

Phedon Nicolaides uses Cyprus as a reference point to explain how the ten newly signed members can become effective EU partners and benefit from their participation in the European integration process. He explains how acceding countries can benefit by strengthening their

institutional and administrative capacities, and exploiting EU rules, policies and practices. Building capacities and abilities however, requires innovative reforms that can lead to the “Europeanization” of public policy making and implementation. Nicolaidis provides a ten-point list of issues as a guide for new member states as they prepare for more effective membership in the EU. Of course, another way to prepare is to learn from the successes and failures of other countries. In conclusion, preparing for EU membership requires not only political orientation and legal harmonization, but also “risk analysis and market research” that will identify leads, prospects and “things that can go wrong”.

In Jean Catsiapis’s view, one could have believed that the victory of the Islamists in Turkey, the Annan plan, the European Council’s decision, plus the presidential elections in Cyprus would have helped to settle the Cyprus issue. But at the end of the day Cyprus remains a divided island. Catsiapis presents a detailed analysis and harsh critique of the Annan plan whose proposals simply “freeze the situation which came up with the Turkish invasion of 1974”. He reviews the divergent reactions which Cyprus’ accession created and highlights the democratic reforms Turkey has enacted to ensure its accession. However, many Europeans believe there is room for much more reform and, not surprisingly, there were severe reactions against Turkey’s being invited to accede to the EU. Despite Turkish efforts and American support of its case, Turkey’s candidacy has not yet advanced. The author points out that the Copenhagen conclusion (December 2002) on Turkey’s accession certainly reopened debate on Europe’s borders and the European identity.

Burcu Gültekin examines the Turkish attitude both of the political class and the civilian society toward the European Council of Copenhagen. The author notes that Erdogan, leader of the Justice and Development Party, declared his party warmly in favour of accession only upon election. Consequently, the Copenhagen Summit created a sentiment of deception. Yet, the Turkish conclusion is that opening up the negotiations for accession does not depend upon Turkey’s

performance. Ankara's major fear had been losing its status as a candidate. Now, Turkey considers its principal gain is that its status as an accession candidate has been reaffirmed. And, if there were a fear that its candidacy would be vetoed by Cyprus, assurance has been given by the European leaders, especially the Foreign Affairs Minister of Greece, that "the 25 members of EU will decide together". Nevertheless, the EU has been enlarged and Turkey is missing from the family portrait — an absence that the Turkish Press has considered a failure of Turkish diplomacy.

Michel Bozdemir considers the political behaviour of the Turkish military institution from a vantage point that diverges from that of the media and the critics of the Turkish army. The author seeks to demonstrate that the army's behaviour is not militaristic. He considers the army not only as a very serious and professional institution attached to the military tradition and principles of the Republic, but also as the institution the most committed to the Westernization of Turkey. Bozdemir criticizes analyses which stigmatize the omnipresence of the army in political life because they fail to either consider any progress made or to mention that it was the *coup-d'état* of 1960 which brought forth the first fundamental instruments of democracy. Should a crisis in the military-civil relations in Turkey ever occur, it would not involve Europe or Cyprus but rather two principles: secularization and the unitary State. In other words, the Turkish military will never accept to abandon these two principles. It remains to be seen whether or not Europe will accept a country with a military having a veto in matters of such importance and a *preponderance* over its politicians.

This special issue of *Hellenic Studies/Études helléniques* addresses a variety of issues within the broader theme of Cyprus-EU relations with emphasis on the role that accession may play in shaping and reaching a settlement. We hope that the fresh and diverse perspectives expressed herein contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics of the European integration process and its possible effects on the triangle of Greece, Turkey and Cyprus.

NOTES

1. Speech by Costas Simitis, President of the European Council and Prime Minister of Greece, at the ceremony of the signing of the Treaty of Accession, Athens, 16 April, 2003.
2. Speech by Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission, at the ceremony of the signing of the Treaty of Accession, Athens, 16 April, 2003.
3. Protocol 10, paragraph 1, Treaty of Accession 2003 of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia, signed in Athens on April 16, 2003.
4. Statement by Pat Cox, President of the European Parliament, at the meeting of the Presidents of Parliaments of the Accession and Candidate States, Brussels, April 29, 2003.
5. *Presidency Conclusions*, Copenhagen European Council, 10-11 December 2002, paragraph 19.