

# Nationalism as a Deterrent to Peace and Interethnic Democracy: The Failure of Nationalist Leadership from the Hague Talks to the Cyprus Referendum

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Supported by the EU and the international community, the extraordinary effort of the UN to mediate a settlement of the Cyprus problem before the integration of Cyprus into the EU ended in failure. The two historical highlights that marked the failure of the peace process were the top level talks at The Hague in March 2003 and the Cyprus referendum in April 2004. The purpose of this paper is to explore the role that the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leadership played in derailing the peace effort during these two defining moments in the evolution of the Cyprus problem. The analysis focuses on the polarizing ethno-centric nationalism of the then Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot leaders. But it does so by contrasting the respective nationalism of the leaders to the Europeanizing and peace-enhancing trends that were emerging in Cypriot civil society and Greco-Turkish relations during the crucial period leading to the Hague talks and the Cyprus referendum. From this perspective, the role of the Cypriot leaders during the negotiation process is assessed against the backdrop of Turkey's changed policy on Cyprus and the deepening interethnic rapprochement between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities, especially following the lifting of restriction to free movement across the green line in April 2003. The investigation attempts to explore how the stubborn sustenance and strategic reactivation of the legacy of adversarial nationalism, as well as the perpetuation of the mono-ethnic concept of statehood by the Cypriot leaders rendered them practically unwilling and ideologically incapable of recognizing and seizing the greatest historical opportunity for peace in Cyprus in half a century.

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For nearly half a century, the Cyprus problem has been on the agenda of the international community, with UN troops stationed on the Island since 1964. As an ethno-national conflict implicating the Greek Cypriots (GCs) the Turkish Cypriots (TCs) and the their respective "motherlands" Greece and Turkey, the Cyprus problem had gone through significant changes in its specific structure, as it moved from the British colonial era, to independence in 1960, to the Greek coup d'état and Turkish invasion of 1974, to the physical segregation of the GC and TC communities, to the secession of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) in 1983, to the integration Cyprus into the EU in 2004 while remaining ethnically divided. These historical landmarks entailed significant modification in the

structural parameters of the conflict. However, there is a dimension to the Cyprus problem that has remained constant and to a large degree invariable: the conditioning of the political life of Cyprus by ethno-centric nationalism. While nationalism underwent considerable erosion over the years, at the most critical historical junctures in the history of Cyprus, nationalist political leaders and their impact on politics and public culture, on both sides of the ethnic divide, managed to prevail. Sustaining episodic relapses of nationalist fervor, action, and reaction, the influence of adversarial ethno-centric nationalism continued to be strong enough to have undermined all efforts at resolving the Cyprus conflict. Even in the face of favorable conditions and historically opportune moments for a settlement, nationalism proved to be the central obstacle to success.

The apogee of this pattern was evident in the culmination of the greatest ever, concerted international political and diplomatic effort to resolve the Cyprus problem in 2003 at The Hague and its subsequent continuation in 2004 leading to the Cyprus referendum for a final settlement. In this process, the interlocutors that came to the historical forefront were Raulf Denktash, the life-long leader of the TCs and unilaterally self-declared president of the breakaway TRNC, and Tassos Papadopoulos, a long-standing politician who, while leading a party representing merely 14% of the electorate, became president of the GC-controlled Republic of Cyprus through a coalition government.

The UN-led Hague talks on Cyprus of March 2003 and the Cyprus referendum of April 2004 were viewed as two unprecedented historical opportunities for resolving the long-overdue Cyprus conflict. However, both efforts ended in failure. Two questions naturally arise. First, why were these historical landmarks considered to be the most opportune moments for bringing the Cyprus problem to closure? And second, what accounts for the failure to do so?

### **Opportune Historical Conditions**

During the years leading to both the Hague talks and the Cyprus referendum a series of historical and political factors converged to create favorable conditions for the final resolution of the Cyprus problem. In the late 1990s, the government of Greece under Costas Simitis took the decision to forgo Greece's traditional nationalist foreign policy of isolating Turkey, pursuing instead a policy of engaging Turkey both bilaterally and within the broader EU process. Subsequently, with Greece's consent, the EU heads of state at the Helsinki Summit of December 1999 unanimously accepted Turkey's application for candidate status for future EU membership. This marked an unprecedented development in that Greece, an EU member state, Cyprus, an EU acceding state, and Turkey an EU candidate state were brought within the EU framework and process (Anastasiou 2000; Gündüz 2001; Jenkins 2001; Kerides 2001).

The decade long, marginal but exemplary interethnic citizen peace building initiatives in Cyprus, the rising rapprochement between Greece and Turkey at both the interstate and the intersocietal levels since 1999, the EU accession process of Cyprus, and Turkey's EU candidacy and Europeanizing orientation gradually gave rise to an unprecedented historical dynamic of a likely convergence of the interests of TCs, GCs, Turkey and Greece, and the association of these interests with peace in Cyprus and the region (Anastasiou 2000; Kerides 2001). It was precisely in the context of these new interrelationships of Cypriot, Greek, and Turkish politics within the anticipated common EU framework that the UN launched its historic proposal on November 11, 2002, entitled *Basis for the Comprehensive Settlement of the Cyprus Problem*. The announcement of the Annan Plan, the most elaborate and sophisticated proposal ever presented, induced the TCs to successive and mounting peace rallies stretching from November 2002 to January 2004. Through the rallies, the majority of TCs declared their support for negotiations and reconciliation with

the GCs and for joining the EU in a reunited federal Cyprus. The phenomenon marked a historic novelty in that it was the first time ever that the TC community asserted its political voice above and beyond Denktash's secessionist agenda.

### Why Failure?

Given the convergence of all the above-mentioned factors and the increasing alignment of interests within the broader EU vision, how can one explain the abysmal failure of the Cyprus talks at The Hague as well as the abortive Cyprus referendum? Despite their long-standing rivalry, Denktash and Papadopoulos shared a profound similarity in that they both operated from an ethno-centric nationalist approach to politics, democracy, and statehood. What nationalism is and how it functions has been the study of innumerable analysts, giving rise to a considerable array of disparate theoretical definitions and perspectives (Orwell 1945/1971; Alter 1994; Gellner 1994a, 1994b; Hobsbawm 1994; Kedourie 1994; Anderson 1995; Ignatieff 1995). For the purpose of the present inquiry, an integrated understanding of ethno-centric nationalism proves more useful. It has been noted that irrespective of the particular ethnicity it propagates,

Nationalism carries a view of "the nation" that is absolute and sacred in value, mono-ethnic in nature, collectivist and narcissistic in mentality, conflictual in predisposition, and militant in its concept of defense and its means of freedom . . . . It conceptualizes society in terms of a single, homogeneous ethnic identity, thus rendering the existence of other ethnic groups in the body social a "national anomaly" and, in times of conflict, a "national blemish" that needs to be cleansed. This type of "imagined community" is couched in an ethno-centric construct of history, highlighted by wars and revolutions, in which national heroes, in their alleged supreme actions and sacrifice, assume national immortality as "the nation" exhibits through them its infallible record of glory and grandeur . . . . In all this, the value, history and identity of "the nation" are defined in conflictual juxtaposition to "an enemy" (Anastasiou 2002:582).

To the degree that the above offers a coherent and academically credible explanation, it follows that the particular politics, strategies and tactics that emanate from nationalism are indeed far reaching. From the nationalist perspective, democratic processes and institutions are conceptualized and pursued solely as a polity that is restricted to a singular ethno-national group, having a homogeneous ethnic identity. In the nationalist mind, democracy is essentially an intraethnic category, but never and interethnic one. For nationalists, the democratic process and institutions do not, in principle, traverse ethnic lines, neither within nor between societies. For nationalists there is no such thing as a full institutionalized democracy between ethnic groups or between nation states. Rather, democracy extends from and ends with one's own ethnic group. Anything beyond this is perceived and treated as essentially extraneous to democracy, as merely circumstantial and opportunistic. Moreover, in the eyes of nationalists, the particular principle of popular sovereignty that founds statehood is confined to an ethnically homogeneous notion of "the people." Democracy is thus viewed as merely a subsystem of nationalism whose polity is constituted through an exclusivist mono-ethnic order of governance, grounded in a presumed absolute and sacred notion of national ethno-centric statehood (Alter 1994; Ignatieff 1995; Anastasiou 2002).

The traditional approaches to the Cyprus problem by both the GCs and the TCs, and the very origins of the Cyprus conflict have been rooted in precisely this constricted nationalist concept of democracy. Leading to the crisis of 1974, the GC aim of *enosis* and the TC aim of *taksim* that exploded into cycles of interethnic violence were identically driven by the politics of mono-ethnic concepts of democracy and statehood. The struggle since 1974 between the TC aim of ethnically

based secession and the GC aim of a restored unitary Cyprus state conceived as essentially Hellenic, reflect the evolution of identical mono-ethnic concepts, democracy and statehood. As leading participants in the negotiations of 2003 and 2004, Denktash and Papadopoulos were ardent representatives of this legacy of ethno-centric nationalism and its derivative mono-ethnic concept of statehood. It is essentially in this perspective that one can comprehend and assess the motivation and strategies by which Denktash and Papadopoulos managed the Cyprus problem from The Hague talks to the referendum in their relentless determination to undermine any progress on the basis of the UN peace plan.

### The Hague Talks

When Kofi Annan announced his Cyprus plan, he did so not only in light of the preceding developments in Greek–Turkish rapprochement, GC–TC citizen peace building, and the overarching EU process. He did so also in view of upcoming, significant landmarks: April 16, 2003, the date that was set for the signing of the Treaty of Accession and May 1, 2004, the date set for the complete integration of Cyprus into the EU. The Secretary General thereupon summoned the two Cypriot leaders to The Hague for top-level negotiations.

Denktash outright objected to putting the UN plan to a referendum, and Papadopoulos later revealed that had Denktash consented to the plan and thus to a referendum, he would have rejected it (*Reuters* 2003; Birand 2003). The specific arguments given by the two leaders for rejecting the plan ought not to be viewed in reference to issues that stood on their own terms, which presumably could be discussed. Rather, the arguments and issues associated with them were the secondary and derivative result of the leaders' fundamental difficulty in accepting the principle of interethnic democracy on which the entire Annan Plan was based. By hindsight, Denktash's stated reason for rejecting the plan appeared more tactical than substantive by the fact that the TCs voted in favor of the final version of the Annan Plan that included new concessions in favor of the GCs on the question of territory and settlement (UN 2004b). As was disclosed in a later interview, Papadopoulos's objections were rooted in his nationalist belief that as the GC ethnic majority constitutes the sole basis of democracy, at the community level the TCs cannot have the same rights as the GCs (*Khaleej Times* 2004).

Known as the most intransigent of the parties concerned, Denktash staked his decision to outright reject the Annan Plan, and consequently his unwillingness to put it to a referendum, on the intensified strain on the internal politics of Turkey resulting mainly from the Iraq crisis. The Turkish press stated that "though the Gül government did want a solution in Cyprus, the fact that it lost control in general during the quarrel over the U.S. troop deployment motion, was the biggest factor" in enabling Denktash to evade the pressure that the Turkish government started to exert on him for a final Cyprus settlement. In this environment, Denktash "managed to stir into action the conservative circles that rule Turkey, creating, in the end, the climate he wanted." Prime Minister Gül and his government was up against the "No to a solution" front that has been 'orchestrated' in an excellent manner by Denktash" (*Reuters* 2003; *Turkish Daily News* 2003). Denktash's nationalist ethnocentrism colluded with the reargated nationalism among the opposition party and among the old guard in the military establishment in an all out attack on the Gul government accusing it of undermining traditional Turkish policy and national interest. The notable Turkish journalist Mehmet Ali Birand asserted, "The Turkish Armed Forces played the most effective role in bringing about the rejection of the Annan Plan" (Birand 2003).

Furthermore, the Republican People's Party, the sole opposition party in the Turkish Parliament since the sweeping victory of the Justice and Development Party in the elections of November 3, 2002, launched an anti-solution based attack

of the Gül government under the slogan “Not a pebble of it [Cyprus] be given away.” Again according to Birand, “considering its social democratic nature,” the Republican People’s Party “has staged an incredible show of conservatism and nationalism on Cyprus . . .” (Birand 2003). Prime Minister Gül became wary “thinking that on top of the loss of prestige he suffered over the Iraq issue he might now be accused of high treason. In the end Gül was left alone and Denktash won” (*Turkish Daily News* 2003). As a result, the EU warned Turkey that the negative outcome of the talks would have a direct bearing on EU–Turkish relations and a negative impact on Turkey’s desire to become a future member of the EU (*Phileleftheros* 2003; *Reuters* 2003).

### **Free Movement: The Unexpected and Unprecedented Event**

On April 23, 2003, shortly after the collapse of The Hague talks, an extraordinary event took place in Cyprus. With Turkey’s consent and prodding, the Denktash administration of the TRNC decided on a partial lifting of restrictions on citizen movement across the great divided of the “green line”—the ethnically segregating boundary that had become fossilized over 29 years along the 1974 cease-fire line. Three reasons may be given for this historic change in Turkish and TC policy concerning contact between the two ethnic communities of Cyprus. The enormous psychological energy that had been built-up among the TC community through the massive peace rallies needed to be diffused. Despite the failure of The Hague talks the GCs were moving forward with EU integration, with the TCs still marginalized. The EU’s condemnation of Denktash’s rejectionism and the EU’s warnings to Turkey required a gesture that could somehow restore Turkey’s credibility.

Freedom of movement inevitably released intense emotions among the TC and GC communities alike. In the psychological realm, it entailed a peculiar admixture of revisiting loss in the past and anticipating relieving hope in the future. But these emotions were by and large contained in and directed by an overarching vision and desire for peace and the mutual benefits that would ensue from it. People from each side had friends from the distant past knock at their door; GCs visited the long missed northern Kyrenia harbor for a cup of coffee; TCs visited the longed-for Paphos beach in the southwest; old inhabitants came to the doorstep of their former homes to be greeted by the current inhabitants with *Kopiaste* or *Hosgeldim*, the word for “welcome” in Greek and Turkish, respectively. The nationalist stereotypes of the moral “us” and demonic “them” had somehow undergone a process of dilution, as though, over the course of time, in some inner space of conscience, people have silently engaged in conflict-transcending reflections and visions. These events constituted a stark affirmation of what Lederach meant when he stressed, to the perplexment of the conflict-habituated mind, that connections across conflict lines always exist on the level of ordinary citizens, and that these connections are a vital resource for peace building (Lederach 2002). Ironically however, the Denktash and Papadopoulos administrations that were currently in power were traditionally known to have led those nationalist factions and to have represented that part of public opinion in the respective communities that had been most resistant to bi-communal contacts and rapprochement.

### **Denktash’s and Papadopoulos’s Unilateralism and Tactics of Delay**

The fact that the mass remixing of the TCs and GCs had not only been free from major regressive incidents, but also on the contrary contributed to the creation of a general climate conducive to peace, provided the strongest tangible demonstration that the two communities, in spite of the many reservations, had encountered each other in a spirit of readiness for a settlement and peaceful coexistence. Consequently, contrary to their traditional political posture, the GC and TC administrations, too,

felt compelled to resort to positive gestures of goodwill in facilitating the crossing of citizens to the other side.

However, the positive rapprochement gestures exhibited by the two administrations were motivated by a fundamentally unilateralist approach through which each side attempted to enhance its ethno-centric agenda on the Cyprus problem. On the GC side, the Papadopoulos administration started to interpret the incident-free contact between GCs and TCs not as a viable basis for negotiating a settlement, but as an entrenchment and even as an endorsement of the legitimacy of the GC-controlled Republic of Cyprus. The fundamental, yet unexpressed assumption underlying Papadopoulos's nationalism was that the TCs would in effect be gradually absorbed into the GC controlled Republic and that this would amount to the solution of the Cyprus problem, without the necessity to engage in substantive negotiations for a new federal polity. On the Turkish side, Denktash perceived and publicly presented the peaceful bi-communal contacts not as a secure foundation among the populace for the leaders to seriously proceed with the finalization of the UN-based negotiations, but as a phenomenon supporting the logic of secession. The political argument was that the calm and incident-free citizen contacts was indeed a positive phenomenon, which as such proves that the situation on the ground was ready for the full normalization of "interstate" relations between the TRNC and the GC state in the south.

Meanwhile, the UN and the EU saw the period between the failed Hague talks and the anticipated entry of Cyprus in the EU on May 1, 2004, as the next window of opportunity for a Cyprus settlement. But for nearly a year following The Hague talks, with the Annan Plan still on the negotiating table, neither Denktash nor Papadopoulos exhibited any persistent striving to politically move the situation beyond the status quo. The Papadopoulos government communicated the clear impression that it had resigned to simply waiting for Cyprus's full admission to the EU in May 2004. Nationalists in Papadopoulos circles, and those on the Greek side in general, were operating on the fundamentally misplaced judgment that if negotiations would somehow be delayed until after Cyprus joined the Union, then the GC side would entrench the status and perpetuity of the Republic, and thereby increase its formal power with respect to the TC side and Turkey. This position reflected a gross misunderstanding of EU principles and political culture. It also revealed a nationalist approach to European law, resulting in a sterile legalism quite foreign to European political culture and values.

It is astounding, yet fully understandable in light of the exclusivism of mono-ethnic nationalism, that the exact same logic of delay and postponement was also reflected in Denktash's approach, which was in fact no different from his long-standing strategy. Denktash's logic was that if diplomatic inaction could drag on until Cyprus's full entry into the Union in May 1, 2004, the likelihood of failure in negotiating a comprehensive settlement for reunifying Cyprus would be greater. Hence, by default, partition and thereby secession, hoped Denktash, would result. Such an outcome however would require of Turkey a heavy political toll, namely, jeopardizing its EU aspirations. Denktash's strategy could appeal solely to the anti-European forces in Turkey but not to the reformists. And this constituted Denktash's greatest political gamble and challenge. Both Denktash and Papadopoulos thus used identical tactics. The latter have proven to be historically regressive and politically barren, deviating from the UN directives and expectations as well as from the essence of EU political culture.

### **Resumption of Talks**

In view of the upcoming entry of Cyprus in the EU and the continuing Greek-Turkish rapprochement in numerous areas, including Cyprus, the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan invited, yet again, the GC and TC leaders to meet with him in

New York on February 10, 2004, for the purpose of recommencing negotiations on the basis of his plan. Unlike previous diplomatic efforts, Annan enlisted the help of both Greece and Turkey who agreed to send representatives to the New York talks. The objective of the negotiations was to put a complete text for a comprehensive settlement to separate referenda in April 2004, in the hope that, given a positive outcome, a reunited Cyprus would accede to the EU on May 1, 2004.

With Greece and Turkey accepting and backing the resumption of talks on the basis of the Annan Plan, Denktash was grudgingly dragged back to the negotiating table, and Papadopoulos inevitably had to follow suit. For the first time since the 1970s Denktash did not have free reign in the negotiations. As the *Turkish Daily News* reported, the accompanying presence of the newly elected "Prime Minister" of the TRNC Mehmet Ali Talat as a member of the negotiating delegation was a sign that "Denktash would not be doing as he pleases." Simultaneously, Turkey exerted enormous pressure on Denktash "who was widely blamed for the collapse of an earlier round of talks last March" (*Turkish Daily News* 2004). Denktash, who always took pride in his absolute nationalist loyalty to Turkey, faced the greatest challenge of his political career when Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan stated, "We have given a road map to Denktash. We will see how loyal he will be" (*Cyprus Mail* 2004a).

As a result, the negotiations at the UN headquarters in New York yielded a very interesting outcome that could be characterized as historically unprecedented. In the backdrop of more than 4 years of negotiations, the GC and TC leaders had agreed to Kofi Annan's proposals for rapid negotiations on the basis of the UN plan that would lead to a finalized version, to be put to simultaneous separate referenda in the GC and TC communities on April 21, 2004 (eventually changed to April 24), just 10 days before Cyprus was due to join the EU. What was novel about the approach of the Secretary General was that he secured the commitment of all sides to a negotiation process that had closure and to a referendum at a specified time. The talks, it was agreed, would continue between the Cypriot leaders and, if they cannot conclude a deal by May 22, the governments of Greece and Turkey would be brought into the process. If there was still no final text for an agreement by May 29, Annan would fill in the blanks and the referendum would go ahead. The European Commission welcomed the commitment made by the Cypriot leaders and stated, "The accession of a united Cyprus on May 1 remains the clear preference of the EU." Commission President Romano Prodi sounded a hopeful note in which he highlighted the historic meaning of the EU in relation to Cyprus. "The Commission," he stated, "considers that the chances for a comprehensive settlement have never been better. It would bring to an end a division that has been there already too long. There is no place for barbed wire, minefields and peacekeeping forces in the EU" (*EU Business* 2004).

### **The Historic Referendum of April 24, 2004**

Following a stalemate in Cyprus, the Secretary General moved the top-level talks at Bürgenstock, Switzerland. Denktash however, refused to attend, as he preferred to start campaigning among the TCs promoting the rejection of the Annan Plan. Still the interlocutors could not bring the UN plan to definitive closure, so Mr. Annan filled in the blanks as agreed. Thus the final and fifth version of the plan was ready for the referendum. Contrary to the perception and position of nationalist hard liners on both the TC and GC side, the final version of the Annan Plan entailed considerable improvements, incorporating in a number of creative ways the concerns of both sides, as these were put forward during the Bürgenstock talks (UN 2004b).

Unfortunately, the outcome of the referenda, at the eve of the Island's entry into the EU, was a great disappointment to all who have worked and hoped for a final political settlement of the Cyprus problem. The results were as follows: On the TC side 64.9% of the electorate voted in favor of the Annan Plan, while 35.1% voted

against it. On the GC side, on the other hand, 75.8% of the electorate voted against the Annan Plan, while 24.2% voted in favor. It was historically telling that the two Cypriots feeling utterly satisfied with this outcome were Papadopoulos and Denktash. Papadopoulos's rejection of the plan had become fully secured and covered by the GC vote. Denktash "thanked God" for the GC "no" vote as it fulfilled his aim of destroying the Annan Plan while simultaneously relieving the TC side of political blame (*The Economist* 2004). Again, the critical question was what had taken place that explains this most ambiguous outcome of the referendum?

A series of studies over the years (fall of 1998; May 2003; December 2003; February 2004; March 2004) using an Expected Utility Analysis methodology indicated that the positions of the Cyprus stakeholders started to show increasing convergence. Particularly in the study of March 2004, undertaken immediately prior the referendum, the outcome showed an unprecedented level of considerable convergence on all the issues with the exception of that of territory. On the issue of territory the study recommended direct contact between the Papadopoulos administration and the Turkish government, as the analysis pointed to the probability of arriving at consensus. Unfortunately, this recommendation was heeded neither by the Papadopoulos government nor by Turkey. But even with the issue of territory left open and ambiguous, there was considerable convergence on all other issues. More significant was the fact that this convergence coincided with the parameters of the Annan Plan (Yesilada et al. 2004). Interestingly, the methodology used in the study had a well-documented track record of success, including an internal assessment of over 2,000 issues around the world by policy development agencies, which found the approach to be accurate in excess of 90% of the time. By all indications, in its March 2004 application to Cyprus, the time-sensitive Expected Utility Analysis was predicting a high probability for agreement on the UN peace plan with Turkey and the GCs in considerable accord on the issue of property. However, the outcome of the April 24 referendum reflected a radical divergence between GC and TC opinion. And in a subsequent study conducted in May 2004, the Expected Utility Analysis yielded high divergence on the issues of territory, settlement, and property rights, all of which emerged as highly contested since the referendum!

More stunning was the fact that a survey conducted between September 2004 and January 2005 by local experts, 5 months after the referendum, concluded that 67% of each community converged in favor of a federal settlement on the basis of the Annan Plan. Even though the survey indicated that the first preference of the GCs was not federation, it also concluded that the majority of GCs viewed an Annan-type federation as an acceptable compromise. Interestingly, the survey also pointed out that while the majority of the TC youth were in favor of reunification, that of the GC youth were not (Lordos 2005). The overall trajectory of GC and TC opinion thus indicates that while there was convergence in March 2004, by April and May there was considerable divergence due to changes of opinion on the GC side, and by September 2004 and January 2005 there was again a shift showing a tolerant GC opinion for an Annan-based federal settlement. The natural question that thereby arises from these findings is: what changed between March and April 2004, the period of time immediately before the referendum? And further, what can explain the paradoxical fact that with the referendum experience and thereafter the GC youth, rather than their TC counterpart, were found to prefer ethnic separation to a reunified Cyprus?

### **How Denktash's and Papadopoulos's Tactics of Ethno-Centric Nationalism Affected the Referendum**

For the sake of comparison, before looking at how Papadopoulos led the GC electorate to rejecting the UN peace plan one ought to scrutinize Denktash's ethno-



centric tactics during the referendum campaign. Clearly, strong support by the Turkish government and the TCs in favor of the Annan Plan had marginalized the political influence of Denktash—a novelty in the history of TC politics that the GC side failed to appreciate and historically seize. This however, did not stop Denktash, still the “President” of the TRNC, from using all possible means in his attempt to defeat the Annan Plan and the interethnic polity it proposed for a Cyprus settlement. On the day before the referendum, the international human rights watchdog *Cyprus Action Network* (CAN) reported of Denktash-supported actions terrorizing TC citizens into rejecting the Annan Plan. It noted that “The well-known ultranationalist group, Grey Wolves, have been threatening citizens in the North, and are among those suspected of beating up motorcyclists carrying ‘vote yes’ banners.” It further asserted that “The government refuses to allow Turkish Cypriots living in the South the right to vote in the referendum, so that roughly one thousand Turkish Cypriots are ineligible to vote” (*Cyprus Action Network* 2004). However, being on the defensive, Denktash’s efforts failed to influence the TC electorate. As president of the Republic of Cyprus, Papadopoulos’s rejectionist politics proved far more influential and far more sophisticated.

Papadopoulos’s intention not to pursue a settlement was already evident during the talks before the finalization of the Annan Plan. As suggested by the Secretary General’s report, the deluge of documents presented by the GC side to the UN mediator was more indicative of objections aimed at stalling the Annan Plan rather than constructive suggestions for finalizing a comprehensive solution (UN 2004b). Clearly, exhibiting a spirit reminiscent of Denktash, Papadopoulos did not attend any of the talks purposefully, nor did he embody the necessary political will required to move the process forward to a successful outcome. Rather, he was simply drawn into the negotiations as a result of the historical momentum generated before his presidency by the increasing convergence of the efforts of the UN, the EU, the previous governments of Greece and of the Republic of Cyprus, the Turkish government and the TCs community, and also, though belated, the U.S. With the talks in Switzerland coming to closure, Papadopoulos found himself in the same predicament as Denktash did earlier. Just like Denktash had done among the TC community, Papadopoulos had no other options left in pursuing and sustaining his quasi-camouflaged anti-federalist and hence anti-solution position than to propagate a “no” vote among the GCs. A possible rejection of the Annan Plan by the GC electorate had in fact become the last place of refuge for Papadopoulos and his nationalist agenda.

The formal launching of Papadopoulos’s “no” campaign was marked by his national address of April 7, 2004, delivered in the middle of the Greek Orthodox Easter week. Like Denktash’s earlier appeal against the UN plan, Papadopoulos’s televised address was tearful and impassioned. In a delivery reminiscent of political speeches of the 1960s, the GC president explicitly called on his GC electorate to vote a “resounding no” to the Annan Plan—the very plan on the basis of which he had formally agreed to not only negotiate in good faith but also to accept the UN Secretary General’s final and completed version.

While contrary to regional socio-political trends and EU politics the call by Papadopoulos for a “resounding no” had a psychological affinity to the traditional habituation of GCs to past TC and Turkish intransigence. For years, GCs public opinion merely reacted morally and ideologically to the unacceptable position of the Turkish side without ever facing genuine political options carrying real consequence and attainable objectives. Never before did the GCs encounter the possibility of a Cyprus solution in concrete and practical terms, nor did the GC leadership ever sufficiently prepare them for one. If anything, GC politics had over the years settled and atrophied into a regurgitated political culture of ideal and untenable objectives, grounded on simply saying “no” to the other side’s nationalist position. Though practically fruitless, this GC approach was sustained through the ease by which GC

leaders could object to Denktash's secessionist extremism without incurring any political cost. The ingrained pattern of this residual psychology of inconsequential reaction and rejection was the mass psychological resource that Papadopoulos managed to tap in mobilizing support against the UN peace plan. In this vein, the GC president's anti-Annan Plan speech included no consideration whatsoever of the political consequences of a "no" vote by the GC side. The impression given was that, as always in the past, a GC "no" would not only change nothing on the ground but would in fact reinforce the political position of the GC side!

In his attempt to influence the outcome of the referendum, Papadopoulos used two interrelated schemes. First, he tapped into the dormant old nationalist memory and sentiments of the GC community, stirring, reactivating, and amplifying nationalism to the point of saturating the public domain and thus asphyxiating the pro-solution voices. Second, he reawakened and reintegrated the GCs' sense of victimization back into the nationalist framework, thus reassociating the GCs' sense of injustice to the typical reactionary culture of adversarial nationalism. Triggering this mental connection enabled him to capitalize on the historical fears of GCs rather than build on their current strengths and hopes for a new future at the most critical moment of their history since independence. This two-pronged approach entailed a reconstitution of nationalism in public culture at a moment in history when nationalism could have easily been relinquished to the past in a most definitive manner. By so doing, Papadopoulos had actually reactivated nationalism, bringing it once more to the forefront of historical developments, and sadly, explicitly identifying it with the formal position and approach of the government. In this context, Papadopoulos painted the Annan Plan in absolutely dark colors, circumventing any acknowledgment of the fact that he had been the authorized negotiator for the GC side and that he had agreed to the UN process that led to the final version of the plan.

One of the most populist arguments against the Annan Plan that hinged on the reawakened past fears and the nationalism stirred up by the "no" campaigners was that the UN plan was nothing but a conspiracy of "the foreigners" to serve the interests of Turkey. By implication, then, the Annan Plan was nothing more than the embodiment of an underhanded act of betrayal "against Cypriot Hellenism" by "outsiders." This grossly simplistic interpretation did not only come from GC nationalist factions that zealously fought against the peace plan but was also a key argument propagated in a variety of ways by President Papadopoulos among both the GC community domestically and the GC and Greek communities living abroad.

The artificiality of the nationalist position that the Annan Plan was a "foreign conspiracy" comes to full disclosure when one takes cognizance of the fact that both the Greek government and PASOK, the main opposition party, had in fact supported the Annan Plan. Yet Papadopoulos and the "no" supporters among both the GC community and the Hellenic Diaspora have never taken issue with Greece, preferring instead to engage in collective denial. Once again, the internal inconsistencies of the nationalist mind were revealed at the juncture where objective reality clashed with nationalism's unique ability to create an unreal mental world and reside in it as though it were the real world.

### **Security Issue**

The GC leadership used its contrived view of the UN peace plan as a filter through which it presented to the GC electorate an erroneous interpretation of the plan. Papadopoulos's incessant and exaggerated negativity reached its high point of effectiveness when he directly linked the alleged anti-Greek conspiratorial Annan Plan to the security concerns of the GCs. Having fed and fueled the fears of the GCs, Papadopoulos propagated his nationalist agenda and rejectionist strategy by generating among the GC community intense emotions of uncertainty and anxiety

over the viability of the settlement. Contrary to the impressionistic interpretations of the rejectionist camp, the final version of the Annan Plan provided for the commencement of Turkish troop reduction from the current 40,000 to 6,000, and the introduction of an equal number of Greek troops, to be finally reduced to 650 and 950, respectively, symbolizing the presence of the motherlands as the guarantors of the United Cyprus Republic. In the words of the Annan Plan, the chronological milestones of this arrangement that was to come into effect upon agreement was as follows:

- (i) each contingent (Greek and Turkish) not to exceed 6,000 all ranks, until 2011;
- (ii) each contingent not to exceed 3,000 all ranks thereafter until 2018 or the EU accession of Turkey, whichever is sooner; and
- (iii) the Greek contingent not to exceed 950 all ranks and the Turkish contingent not to exceed 650 all ranks thereafter, subject to 3-yearly review with the objective of total withdrawal.

Moreover, the Annan Plan added that “Cyprus shall be demilitarized, and all Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot forces, including reserve units, shall be dissolved, and their arms removed from the island, in phases synchronized with the redeployment of and adjustment of Greek and Turkish forces.” And further, “The supply of arms to Cyprus shall be prohibited in a manner that is legally binding on both importers and exporters,” a process to be jointly monitored by a Committee chaired by the UN, comprised of representatives of Greece and Turkey as guarantor powers, the federal government and constituent states of Cyprus. In spite of the above fundamental security provisions of the Annan Plan, the rejectionist camp led by Papadopoulos chose to excessively stress that the Anna plan allowed for the continuing presence of Turkish troops, suggesting thereby that the Annan Plan was essentially legitimizing the partition and military occupation of Cyprus. The anti-Annan nationalists could only sustain this argument by completely neglecting to publicly acknowledge the plan’s provision for the progressive withdrawal of more than 30,000 Turkish troops that was to commence with the signing of the agreement. Equally important was the complete lack of reference to the added security implications that European integration would introduce for all Cypriots—presumably the major reason why the GCs chose to join Europe. This distorted impression was strongly communicated and spread among the GC community not through direct references to the actual text of the Annan Plan itself, but rather through the heightened emotionalism by which the anti-solution nationalists attempted to associate the Annan Plan with national treason.

One of the security concerns raised by the GCs was the lack of sufficient institutional guarantees for the safe implementation of the Annan Plan. A UN draft resolution aimed at granting the GCs such guarantees was launched jointly by the United States and the United Kingdom. While the draft circulated for finalization among the members of the Security Council, Papadopoulos unexpectedly dispatched foreign minister George Iacovou to Moscow. When the final version of the resolution was put to the vote at the UN, 14 of the 15 Security Council members voted in favor. Surprisingly, Russia vetoed it, and the Papadopoulos government expressed satisfaction with the outcome.

A survey conducted by Drs. Christophorou and Webster, released in Spring 2004 following the referendum, revealed that while 51% of GCs preferred a unitary state solution, only 11% preferred a federal one. Simultaneously however, the survey also indicated that 62% of GCs were willing to support a solution based on the Annan Plan if guarantees were given for its safe implementation (Christophorou and Webster 2004). In other words, GCs were willing to opt for the UN federal solution pending implementation guarantees—the very guarantees that, to the expressed contentment of Papadopoulos, were blocked by the Russian veto.

In mobilizing mass support against the Annan Plan, the Papadopoulos-led rejectionists among the GCs took full advantage of the revived nationalism. Old nationalist-laden slogans were thus pulled out of the historical closet and used in the battle against the Annan Plan. Most notable was the saturation of the public environment with images of the Greek word “OXI” meaning “No.” The slogan has its origins in 1940, when the mainland Greeks said “no” to the advancing Italian army, an event that has since been commemorated through a national holiday observed annually on October 28. The more than half-century-old “OXI” slogan was exhumed by the GC nationalists and transposed into a populist psychological motivator for engendering a “no” vote to the Annan Plan. It was precisely on this anachronistic “OXI” idea that Papadopoulos grounded his appeal to GCs to voice a “resounding ‘No’” on the day of the referendum! The historical irony that completely bypassed all those GCs who thanks to Papadopoulos had become reinfected, yet again, with the old nationalist fever was that whereas in 1945 the mainland Greeks said “OXI” to foreign troops entering their country, in 2004 the GCs were saying “OXI” to foreign troops leaving their country!

Just as the Denktash regime had practiced for years in northern Cyprus, Papadopoulos resorted to the usurpation of the state apparatus as a means of propagating his rejectionist agenda in the south. Just as the residue of the lingering influence of Denktash in the north, the new relapse of populist nationalism ignited by Papadopoulos in the south was also reflected in the report by CAN. On April 23, 2004, drawing from the current local and international media, CAN summarized the range of human rights abuses and violations committed by the rejectionist factions in the respective communities during the period leading up to the referendum (*Cyprus Action Network* 2004).

Even GC party leaders warned about human rights abuses and threatened to report the Papadopoulos government to the EU (*Cyprus Mail* 2004c). EU and the UN officials expressed dismay and concern at the fact that both private and public broadcasting stations had prevented European and UN representatives from giving interviews for the GC public. The officials had accused private GC channels for refusing to interview the Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen, the person “who had steered Cyprus over the past 5 years through difficult accession negotiations to be ready to join the Union on May 1.” Moreover, officials also stated regretfully that GC media also prevented Alvaro de Soto, the UN’s special envoy to Cyprus, from giving interviews. His planned appearance on CyBC, the state-broadcasting channel, was cancelled. A week following the referendum, the *Cyprus Mail* published a study conducted by AGB indicating that in the public debates regarding the Annan Plan, the mass media had allocated nearly twice as much airtime to the “No” advocated as compared to the “Yes” advocates (*Cyprus Mail* 2004d).

The Greek Orthodox Church also joined the rejectionist campaign launched by Papadopoulos, adding to the fierce populist attacks against the UN peace plan. Bishop Chrysostomos of Paphos—the then acting Church leader—warned against the “Yes” advocates, characterizing them as instruments of the foreigner conspirators (*Cyprus Mail* 2004b). In an unrestrained, wholesale identification of the Annan Plan with an ultimate form of injustice, punishable with eternal damnation, the Bishop of Kyrenia declared, “Those who say ‘yes’ will be party to this injustice, will lose their homeland and the kingdom of heaven” (*Cyprus Mail* 2004b).

### **Failed Nationalist Leadership**

The synergy between Papadopoulos’s speech, the use of airtime, the mobilization of his party’s political leaders and constituency, the utilization of the infrastructure of the civil service, the role of the media and the Church finally created an emotionally charged nationalist tidal wave inducing extreme anxiety and dissonance in public opinion at the very time when the GC community was called upon to make a

historic decision of tantamount importance for the future of Cyprus—a decision that presumable ought to have been made with utmost seriousness and clarity of mind. The greater the nationalist-induced emotionalism became, the more abominable the Annan Plan appeared quite irrespective of its real content and the historic opportunities it presented. In reality, the GC “no” vote was directed less against the objective content of the plan and more against a nationalistically fabricated mental image of the plan. An image that abstractly and artificially associated the Annan Plan with a perceived anti-Hellenic “foreign conspiracy” that served absolutely and exclusively Turkish interests, that allegedly put at huge risk the security of the GCs, undermined democracy and violated “the will of God.”

It was thereby no surprise when the UN Secretary General issued a scathing critique against Papadopoulos in his report to the Security Council immediately following the referendum (UN 2004a). Neither was it a surprise when EU Enlargement Commissioner Verheugen stated before the EU Parliament that he felt misled and personally cheated by Papadopoulos (*Europarl* 2004; *The Age Company* 2004). The failure of the Cyprus referendum marked the sad perpetuation of the Cyprus problem, the continuing presence of foreign troops in the Island and the ushering of an interethnic conflict into the EU. But it also marked the converging failed paths of two identical, ethno-centric, and reactionary nationalism embodied in the leadership of Denktash and Papadopoulos. From the perspective of the EU and the UN, Papadopoulos had in effect taken on a role and a status that was now fully aligned with that of Denktash. Addressing the Security Council, Kieran Prendergast, Under Secretary General for Political Affairs, asserted that,

The reasons given by Mr. Papadopoulos [for rejecting the Annan Plan] were wide-ranging and far-reaching. His rejection of the plan meant that he had joined company with Rauf Denktash—the leader of the Turkish Cypriots—who had also given wide-ranging and far-reaching reasons to reject the plan. Paradoxically, each leader had claimed that the plan, as finalized, threatened the security and safety of his people and gave in to all the key demands of the other side (UN 2004a).

It was thus no surprise that in less than a week after the referendum, *The Economist* was profiling Papadopoulos as “a new Mr. No” (*The Economist* 2004).

### **Conclusion**

In understanding the particular historical phase at which Cyprus had evolved by April 2004, it is of utmost significance to stress that all incidents of tension that were noted during the entire year that spanned from the free mixing of the two Cypriot communities to the referendum were astonishingly not interethnic but rather, intraethnic. This was a stunning sign of the fact that since the free mixing of the GC and TC communities that commenced in April 2003, interethnic relations at the citizens’ level had withstood the test of intercommunal contact better than intra-Greek or intra-Turkish relations within the respective Cypriot communities. In the effort to arrive at a final settlement, the critical issue was thereby one of leadership. From this perspective, the incident-free interethnic relations stood as a great historical condemnation of the rejectionist portion of the TC leadership as well of the Papadopoulos coalition government. This fact is confirmed in a postreferendum survey of GC and TC opinion on a possible Cyprus settlement within the parameters of the Annan Plan. Conducted between September 2004 and January 2005, after the nationalist fervor of the referendum campaign had subsided, the survey concluded that 67% of each community converged in favored a federal settlement. (Lordos 2005). Evidently, GC opinion offered the GC leadership an opportune range of possibilities for finalizing a supportable settlement. The GC leadership chose to push and drive GC opinion in the direction of reaction, confusion, and

rejection. Both Denktash and Papadopoulos have failed to build their political agendas on the readiness of the TCs, the flexibility of GC opinion and the positive outcomes of intercommunal relations. Rather, they chose to opt for ethno-centric agendas and approaches that perpetuated the captivity of their people to the divisive and belligerent remnant of their nationalist past. Perhaps the saddest impact of the reawakened nationalism on the GC side was the lasting effect it had on the more suggestible portion of the community, namely, the GC youth, the majority of which ended up sustaining a stance of opposition to the interethnic reunification of Cyprus—contrary to the very goal that perennially constituted the primary aim of the GCs for decades!

For all parties concerned, the policy implications emanating from the failed referendum have been far reaching, as the Cyprus problem has entered a new phase of entanglements. Prevalent since the 2004 referendum has been the instatement of a range of new political impasses on multiple levels. While the TC side voted in favor of the Annan Plan, it has since found itself compelled to continue operating within the framework of the unrecognized TRNC, the very entity it was ready to forgo in favor of a settlement. The international political credibility the Turkish side secured for supporting the UN peace plan has been annulled by the fact that TCs continue to function outside of a recognized state entity. The range of policy options has thus narrowed considerably for the TCs, as they are caught between turning back to the old secessionist agenda and become further marginalized or abandoning secession and remain in a state of political and legal limbo. On the other hand, while the GCs have rejected the UN peace plan, to the expressed dismay of the UN, the EU, and the international community, they have continued to monopolize state power and recognition, particularly as the Republic of Cyprus joined the EU. However, securing the advantage of formal recognition has been diluted by the fact that the GC side has lost the high moral ground in the eyes of the international community. The gaining of EU-based legal leverage by the GCs has been countered by the loss of political credibility due to their handling of the Annan peace plan. While utilizing the EU legal card in an adversarial mode, GC policy options have been limited by the EU political process of consensus and peace building.

The dilemmas and contradictions in policy options have also extended to Greece and Turkey. The GC government has been caught between its desire to paralyze Turkey through the EU legal process and the EU's desire to successfully support Turkey's political reforms and EU aspirations. In turn, Turkey has been facing the dilemma of either clashing with the GC Republic of Cyprus and jeopardizing its EU process or complying and abandoning its support of the TCs, despite the fact that it was the Turkish side that supported the UN settlement for Cyprus. Greece, on the other hand, has been facing the ambiguity of continuing its policy of support and rapprochement toward Turkey and clash with the Papadopoulos government, or aligning itself with the Papadopoulos government and undermine, and even reverse, the recent years of marked progress in improving Greek–Turkish relations.

Failure to resolve the Cyprus problem in 2004 has also introduced policy dilemmas for the EU itself. The entry of an ethnically divided Cyprus into the EU has ushered an unprecedented anomaly into the EU system, as the status quo of Cyprus stands in direct contradiction to the very values and institutional basis of the EU—interethnic and international reconciliation, peace, democracy, and consensus building. Furthermore, the principle of solidarity demands that the EU supports all member states, which now includes the GC-controlled Republic of Cyprus. But this contradicts the prevalent EU opinion that the GC leadership has been mainly responsible for derailing the Cyprus peace process and for pursuing a political agenda that was, and continues to be, contrary to the EU's long established Cyprus policy and recommendations. The missed opportunity for a final settlement in 2004 has also thwarted the EU's conciliatory effectiveness on Cyprus. In the absence of substantive negotiations that will address both the legal and political aspects of the

problem, the recourse to EU law by either sides, but especially by the Papadopoulos administration, will tend to simply transpose the legal instruments of the EU into a new means for conducting the Island's ethnic conflict. This fact has complicated the EU's policy options. EU law can only go so far in addressing specific facets of the Cyprus conflict, as the law can only tackle problems that are essentially symptoms of the continuing unresolved conflict. But EU law cannot be a substitute for directly addressing the political dimension of a comprehensive settlement, as the latter can only come about through negotiations.

In the last analysis, all of the above-mentioned policy dilemmas point to the fact that policy options for all stakeholders will continue to be highly constricted. Nothing short of a genuine reengagement of the Cypriot parties, and their motherlands, in substantive negotiations for a final settlement can defuse the political impasse and open up freer and more constructive options.

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