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Potential Outcomes of the Cyprus-EU Accession Process: Analyzing Scenarios for the Future Political Setup in Cyprus

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Abstract

This paper analyses the various scenarios for the future political setup in Cyprus in the light of possible outcomes of EU’s accession process with the island. It aims to suggest a workable way out of the current impasse over Cyprus. By granting EU candidacy status to Turkey and de-linking the question of Cyprus accession to EU from the island’s political settlement, the December 1999 European Council Summit at Helsinki has added new dimensions to the Cyprus issue. Consequently, the EU membership of Cyprus and Turkey, and political resolution of the Cyprus dispute are no longer separable matters. Therefore, the viability of any future political structure in Cyprus now significantly rests upon how the EU’s accession process with the island evolves and what direction it takes. There could be six possible scenarios for the future political setup in Cyprus in relation to its membership in the EU: continuity of the stalemate; only the Greek side joins the EU; Greek Cypriots and Turkey join the EU, while Northern Cyprus is left out; Northern and Southern Cyprus join the EU separately; Cyprus joins the EU as a federation, as the EU itself desires; or, the island enters the EU as a confederation, as the Turkish Cypriots want. Unlike the last two scenarios, the first four presuppose entry of Cyprus in the EU as a divided island, and, therefore, have major drawbacks for the parties concerned. The last two scenarios, although being perceived respectively by each side to have drawbacks, have the capacity to materialize if sufficient re-assurances are built into the solution. We believe that stalemate over Cyprus can end with the establishment of a confederation that not only fits well into the EU structure, but also provides for credible incentives for both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, as well as Turkey and Greece, to reach a mutually acceptable settlement. We also believe that a confederal experience in Cyprus, founded on effective safeguards for the two sides, as well as the island’s membership in the EU as a single entity will help create the spirit of trust and cooperation required to create a long-lasting federal political structure.
in Cyprus.

Introduction

Innumerable proposals have been made, countless initiatives undertaken and seemingly endless energy expended on various attempts to resolve the long-standing Cyprus dispute, yet the status quo often appears to be unchangeable. As a closer look at the history of Cyprus shows us, however, one should never rule out the prospect of being amazed. The evolution of the relationship between Cyprus and the European Union has taken on a life of its own, the dynamics of which are difficult to comprehend, and whose course is difficult to predict. We hope, however, that, over time, coupled with the development of Turkey’s own relationship with the EU, the situation in Cyprus may experience a process of progressive change, thus paving the way for the gradual disappearance of bitter memories, entrenched prejudices, and prevalent fears between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots and their respective motherlands.

The contemporary history of Cyprus is not devoid of instances when the two sides’ leaderships and publics have shown due flexibility to make sometimes even radical departures from their entrenched stances. It is with this optimistic note that, after evaluating divergent positions towards the EU of the parties involved in the Cyprus dispute and the potential outcomes of the protracted relationship of Cyprus with the EU, we wish to suggest possible means for breaking the impasse over Cyprus.

1. Cyprus after the Helsinki Summit

We believe that the outcome of the December 1999 European Council Summit at Helsinki may have profound consequences for the future of Cyprus. The decisions reached at the summit contained two main points of significance for the Cyprus issue: First, there was for the first time a clear pronouncement by the EU that, “If no settlement has been reached by the completion of accession negotiations, the Council’s decision on accession will be made without the above being a precondition;” and, secondly, the acceptance by the EU that, “Turkey is a candidate state destined to join the Union on the basis of the same criteria as applied to
the other candidate states.”\(^1\) It is in the relationship between these two points that what has been described as a ‘historical compromise’\(^2\) lies. In return for supporting the candidature of Turkey, Greece and the Greek Cypriots demanded, and got, an assurance from the EU that the island’s EU membership would not be blocked by the failure of the parties concerned to reach an agreement on Cyprus.\(^3\) As regards the additional statement on Cyprus included in the summit conclusions that, at the time of accession for Cyprus, “the Council will take account of all relevant factors,” this was, compared to previous statements emanating from the EU and some of its key member-states, an exceptionally weak cautionary phrase.

Prior to the Helsinki Summit, the European Union had always linked the question of Cyprus accession to the EU with the political settlement of the Cyprus issue, even while making important forward moves on the accession question. In addition, key EU member-states also continued to resist the idea of importing the Cyprus conflict into the EU due partly to the consequent damage this could cause to a relationship with a much more crucial and valuable strategic ally, Turkey. The EU was believed to be following a policy of “constructive ambiguity”, whereby Brussels put pressure on the Turkish side to compromise, with the threat of accepting the Greek Cypriots as EU members if they refused; and, at the same time, threatened the Greek Cypriots with a rejection of their application if they too failed to show the goodwill and flexibility necessary for a political settlement. The constructive side of the EU’s ambiguous position on Cyprus’ membership application was thus purported to be the simultaneous pressure which it exerted on both Greek and Turkish Cypriots to find the middle ground. However, with the decision taken at Helsinki, the EU appears to have upset the delicate ‘balance of pressure’ that existed on the two sides. The summit removed much of the EU threat of rejection of the Greek Cypriot membership application by stating that a settlement is not a precondition. The Greek Cypriot incentive to compromise with the Turkish Cypriots has thereby been severely curtailed. Despite this, however, the Turkish Cypriot side has not boycotted the UN negotiation process. What appears to have kept the Turkish Cypriots at the negotiating table is the Helsinki Summit’s concurrent decision to grant EU candidacy to Turkey.\(^4\)

Turkish Cypriot leaders have repeatedly argued against the linkage
between a settlement in Cyprus and the process of EU membership for the island. Again and again, they have stated that a settlement must come first. The reality after Helsinki, however, is that the linkage has occurred, and actually been fortified by the acceptance of Turkey’s candidature. Turkey itself appears to have at least implicitly recognized the EU’s linkage of the Cyprus issue with its membership bid. But all this does not mean that in return for opening the door to Turkey at Helsinki, the Greek side has guaranteed a settlement of Cyprus on its own terms. First, Turkey does not take kindly to political blackmail on the nationally sensitive Cyprus issue. Secondly, despite the apparent strengthening of their negotiating position in Helsinki, the Greek Cypriots have still, by no means, guaranteed membership. It has been reported that the position taken at Helsinki regarding the lack of a precondition on “Cyprus” membership was itself actually strongly opposed by France and the Netherlands. In fact, before the dust of the Helsinki Summit could even settle, the Dutch Parliament was to pass a resolution opposing the EU acceptance of new members who had peacekeeping forces stationed on their soil (i.e. Cyprus).

2. Scenarios for the outcome of the Cyprus-EU relationship

Although it is difficult to predict the future course of the relationship between Cyprus and the EU in the post-Helsinki period, we believe that some six possible outcomes of this relationship exist. The first four are based on the presumption that no mutually agreeable solution is found to overcome the division of Cyprus. The last two outcomes are premised on the establishment of a political system in Cyprus reflecting, respectively, the principles of federation and confederation, along with the island’s entry in the EU as a single entity.

2. 1. Stalemate over Cyprus’ accession to the EU continues

Under this scenario, the two sides fail to reach a settlement, and the EU
rejects, or indefinitely postpones, Cyprus application until such time as the political settlement of the Cyprus issue is reached. It may well be that, “the complications that would ensue if the Turkish part [of Cyprus] were excluded are so great that it is unimaginable that Cyprus would join the club without a deal.” Yet, even if the EU rejects the Greek Cypriot application, it could well intensify, rather than conclude the conflict. To expect Greece, which has used its veto as a political weapon on more than one occasion, to placidly accept this outcome would be naïve. Athens is liable to retaliate in such an eventuality.

Even if Greece were ultimately to refrain from using its veto to sabotage EU enlargement eastwards, it is virtually inconceivable that it would do likewise regarding Turkey’s application. This is despite the fact that Greek Foreign Minister George Papandreou is on record as stating that, “Greece not only wants to see Turkey in the EU, it wants to be pulling the cart of a European Turkey. Contrary to popular belief, it is in Greece’s interest to see Turkey at some point in the EU, rather than having it in continual conflict and tension with the bloc and European standards.” Whether as a security ally, as a market, as a model of ‘moderate Islam’ or as a conduit for developing profitable relations with Central Asia and the Caucuses, Turkey’s significance for the EU cannot be underestimated. Occasional Greek Cypriot attempts to convince the EU of the strategic benefits to the EU of their membership pale in comparison to the value of Turkey. A crisis in relations with Turkey is therefore unlikely to be in the overall interests of the EU either.

2.2. Greek Cypriots alone join the EU

Another scenario is that Cyprus is accepted as a member, with the Greek Cypriot authorities continuing to be regarded as the sovereign authorities for the whole island. In such a situation, the consequences are again likely to be very similar to those suggested in the first scenario. Turkey and Northern Cyprus have threatened that under such circumstances they would be left with little choice but to further their own integration, (parallel to the integration of the south of Cyprus with the EU). The Greeks argue that were they to join prior to a settlement, this would still leave the door open for the North to join later, in a manner similar
to the process employed when East Germany was incorporated into the Federal Republic of Germany and included in the EU.\textsuperscript{12} Greek Cypriots even hope that as a member of the EU the South of the island will become a center of attraction for the Turkish Cypriots who will start to flock there, and thereby create a serious erosion of the authority and legitimacy of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.\textsuperscript{13} The fact, however, is that there exists strong resistance among the Turks, both in Cyprus and in Turkey to the North once again becoming a part of the “Republic of Cyprus.” Joining the EU on Greek Cypriot terms, which for Greek Cypriots would probably be in the form of a unitary state (with at most a few symbolic federal characteristics, in a manner similar to the 1960 agreements) would be unacceptable for the Turks.\textsuperscript{14}

In addition, it is difficult to envisage any Turkish leader silently accepting this development without taking any actions that would have serious repercussions for relations between Turkey and the EU. Again if, as Mr Papandreou has suggested, Greece is serious about developing a new positive era in its relations with Turkey, this would also be a blow to its own interests. Furthermore, even if Greece and Greek Cypriots were to view this outcome as favorable to their interests, it is unlikely that many EU member states would evaluate such developments in a similar way.\textsuperscript{15} Once more, then, the consequences of this outcome are likely to be grave.

2.3. Only Turkish Cypriots are left out of the EU

A third possible scenario is that South Cyprus joins the EU and so does Turkey, probably later, with Northern Cyprus left out in the lurch. The EU acceptance of Greek Cypriot membership would not only be an injustice to Turkish Cypriots, it would also damage the EU’s relations with Turkey. Any Turkish government would have difficulties domestically in ignoring such a development and progressing with its own application as if nothing had happened. Could a Turkish government progressing towards the EU maintain its current military, political and economic links with Northern Cyprus, on which the latter relies for its survival? Even were a government to be found that would be prepared to overlook EU acceptance of the South while trying to sustain relations
with the North, the question must be raised as to whether any motivation would be left for the Greek Cypriots and Greece to avoid the use of their now double veto within the EU against Turkish membership.

An interesting, yet even more improbable, variant of this scenario can be anticipated if we consider the full integration of Northern Cyprus with Turkey. If Northern Cyprus were to be incorporated into Turkey, and then Turkey were to become a member of the EU, this would in theory bring both sides in Cyprus, plus Greece and Turkey within the framework of the EU. In reality, however, it is practically impossible to conceive of most EU members, let alone Greece and Greek Cypriots, willing to accept Turkish membership after such an occurrence.

2.4. Two states of Cyprus join the EU separately

The possibility of Greek and Turkish Cyprus separately joining the EU could occur in a manner similar to that by which it is expected that the Czech Republic and the Republic of Slovak, or the three Baltic states of Lithuanian, Latvia and Estonia would become separate EU member-states—even though the former two and the latter three were until recently integral components of the same sovereign state.

Although from the Turkish perspective, the two states option may be the most desirable outcome in the island’s relationship with the EU, we do not believe that it is easily attainable. The EU, already overwhelmed by structural consequences of the size of its membership on its institutional decision-making, would not look favorably on accepting two instead of one new member from a relatively small island. More importantly, its members have shown no inclination to recognize an independent Turkish Cypriot state. The EU has even come down firmly against any notion of any form of separate accession negotiations with the Turkish Cypriots. Only recently, in response to a question whether the EU might open separate accession talks with the Turkish Cypriots, the EU’s Commissioner for Enlargement, Guenter Verheugen stated, “We would never and can never accept a policy that would lead to separate negotiations with two communities. We could not do that and we would not do that.”16
2.5. Cyprus enters the EU as a federation

Federal concepts are not new to Cyprus. Not only did the two sides negotiate from 1977 to 1998 on the basis of achieving a federal solution, but even the 1960 Republic of Cyprus itself incorporated many federal features and has for this reason frequently been described as a 'functional federation.' \(^{17}\) Functional federation refers to a political system where, though there is no territorial delineation in terms of governmental powers, there are separate functions of government assigned and performed on the basis of communal autonomy, with each community sharing in the sovereignty of the state. However, what is now envisaged in Cyprus is 'integrative' federalism, which "strives at unity in previously independent or confederally related component entities." A federation in Cyprus, where such a division in powers and sovereignty would be fortified also by separate geographical zones for the two sides, is proposed as a mechanism by which both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots could together join the EU, and by which the resulting solution to the Cyprus question could facilitate Turkey's membership too. For years, the UN resolutions have been referring to the need for a settlement based on the framework for of a "bi-communal and bi-zonal federation." \(^{18}\)

Decades of negotiations on Cyprus have shown that agreement on a federation in principle is not a guarantee of achieving a comprehensive settlement nor, as the disastrous experience of the 1960 Republic has shown, is a comprehensive agreement, a guarantee of durable 'success.' "The real question in Cyprus is not whether a constitution based on federal ideas can be constructed but whether it will work." \(^{19}\) Over the years, the two sides of Cyprus failed to agree on whether they want a strong federation, where most powers are located at the center, or a weak federation, where most powers are held by its constituent units. While the Turkish side consistently pushed for the minimum amount of concentration of powers at the center, so as to maximize its own autonomy, the Greek side did the opposite, in an attempt to integrate the smaller Turkish Cypriot population under powerful central authorities which they would dominate. \(^{20}\)

Though a federation is still a solution that is officially sanctioned by the international community, Turkish Cypriots and Turkey have made
their reservations clear, and since August 1998 have openly moved away from the position of supporting federation to the espousal of confederation. On the Greek side as well, there does not appear to exist strong public support for a federation. Recent opinion polls show that more than half of the Greek Cypriot population opposes federation and many prominent and politically powerful voices also continue to declare their opposition to a federal settlement. Greek Cypriot President Glafcos Clerides has himself said he would prefer a unitary state to a federation.21

2.6. Cyprus joins EU as a confederation

Ever since the Turkish side announced its confederation proposal in August 1998, the debate over Cyprus settlement in relation to the EU accession process has also centered around the desirability and feasibility of a confederal solution for Cyprus.22 Confederation is a term associated with historical experiences of limited union between sovereign states, the most often referred to example being the US Confederacy. The EU itself is referred to as a confederation. The European Union, it is argued, became a full-blown confederation on November 1, 1993, with the coming into force of the Maastricht Treaty.23 Confederation has been proposed as a solution for problematic situations as distinct as those of Korea, the former Yugoslavia and Taiwan. “In the postmodern epoch with globalization and its companion, regionalization, upon us and moving at a fast pace, confederal arrangements have reemerged—indeed, it may be said, are coming into their own.”24

Perhaps one of the most critical distinctions that can be drawn between federations and confederations lies in the issue of sovereignty. In a confederation, unlike a federation, the component units are legally fully sovereign, and decisions taken at the center are implemented only by the authorities of the constituent states. It is also common to have an explicit or implicit right of unilateral secession for constituent members of the confederation, though in practice the costs of secession are often so high that the parties to the confederal arrangements will have a major disincentive to use this right. However, the fact remains that the Turkish Cypriot confederation proposal has failed to garner the positive response
from the international community, which, led by the UN, continues to insist on a ‘bi-communal, bi-zonal federation.’ For the Greek side, the very idea of a confederation remains an anathema.25

3. A confederal path to federation: A proposal for bridging the gap

The first four of the six outcomes of EU’s relationship with Cyprus in relation to the island’s future political structure seem to have major drawbacks for at least one of the parties involved in the Cyprus dispute, if not all. Therefore, they are neither feasible nor advisable. The last two scenarios could have optimal value had Turkish Cypriots not said goodbye to the idea of federation or had Greek Cypriots welcomed the Turkish Cypriot confederation proposal. In such circumstances, what is required is a solution which equally satisfies the political, economic and security concerns of the two sides and which takes Cyprus into the EU as a single entity.

For the purpose, we suggest the establishment of a confederation between the two sovereign republics in Cyprus, which is different from the one proposed by the Turkish Cypriots and includes some peculiar pre-conditions commensurate with the respective political, economic and security concerns of the Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Such a confederation will allow for a great deal of joint decision-making, social, economic and political interaction and implementation of common policies within. The two states would thus have separate sovereignty, but would by no means have to be independent of each other. We would foresee the goal of membership of this confederation (as a single member) in the EU as an integral part of the settlement, rather than, as foreseen by the 1998 confederation proposal, conditional on the results of referendums to be held separately among the island’s two peoples, after a settlement has already been reached. This will guarantee for the Greek Cypriots that EU membership would continue to be a joint goal of the two sides in Cyprus.

To prevent Turkish Cypriot fears of domination by a more numerous and economically powerful Greek Cypriot population, Turkey can be given the same rights pertaining to Cyprus as those that accrue to
Greece. Additionally, within the EU framework certain derogations can be sought for a Cyprus confederation, including restrictions on the ‘three freedoms’ of movement, settlement and the right own property. We agree with Nathalie Tocci’s suggestion, made in a recent paper published by the Brussels-based Center for European Policy Studies, that “an initial settlement could envisage the full liberalization of the freedom of movement for all citizens subject to normal police functions, but continued restrictions on freedoms of settlement and property in the medium term.”

We believe that so long as it is not on a permanent basis, such a formula could be made acceptable to the EU within which similar practices already exist. Permanent derogations on the issue of property already exist within the EU for the island of Jersey and for the Åland Islands, as well as for the acquisition of second homes by foreigners in Denmark. Thus, there is no reason why the EU should reject such derogations in the case of Cyprus. In addition to such derogations, the provision of separate sovereignty and the right to secede (though with strict conditions, such as two-thirds support in the constituent state’s parliament and reconfirmation through a referendum) will help allay feelings of insecurity among Turkish Cypriots regarding their future position after a settlement.

An initial confederation arrangement, with its additional security features, and provision for voluntary association and cooperation based on mutual interest, would limit the danger of each side trying to abuse the rights of the other, and, instead, help to foster a political culture more amenable for establishing a Cyprus federation in the future. The question is, what incentive would the Greek side have to accept such a proposal, aside from the membership of the EU (which would probably not be in itself sufficient)? To address this question, we propose a linkage between Turkey’s membership of the EU or some advanced stage in its accession process with the EU, on the one hand, and a simultaneous shift in Cyprus from confederation to federation, an end to the Turkish Cypriot’s explicit right to secede and the lifting of derogations, on the other. Turkey’s EU membership will greatly facilitate Turkish Cypriot willingness to move from confederation to federation, and, more importantly, to abandon their unilateral right to secede.

In addition, though confederations are typically described as, and formed, as loose associations with only limited powers under the control
of the central authorities, we believe there is no obstacle to having a relatively strong confederation on the island. In a confederation, "delegated powers in a confederation pass from its constituent parts to the center and may be withdrawn." In this respect, the Turkish side can show greater flexibility, instead of immediately ruling out the possibility of significant governmental functions being under the authority of the central government. It could still maintain its security, though admittedly less independence, through its sovereign right to withdraw its delegated powers and, ultimately, in a crisis, to secede. None of the above conditions, however, preclude the voluntary tightening of the confederation, or even a move to federation at an earlier date if the two sides give their consent.

No political system in the world is static. Confederations can evolve into federations, and federations into unitary states as is illustrated by examples such as those of the Netherlands, the United States, Switzerland, and Germany. Switzerland is a pertinent example of how diverse ethnic interests can be successfully accommodated in a federal system carved out of a confederal mode of governance. The long confederal experience helped consolidate the spirit of trust and cooperation in a linguistically and religiously diverse Swiss population, and thus enabled it to institutionalize a workable federal framework over time. In the case of Cyprus as well, as Tocci argues, "An initial confederal arrangement therefore should not represent the final solution to the problem, but only the first step towards the elimination of inter-communal barriers." The reason we insist on the Turkish Cypriot right to secede is that EU membership will not alleviate their security concerns without Turkey's concurrent membership or at least the assurance of Turkey's membership in near future. As for Greek Cypriot fears that Turkish Cypriots might attempt to use their right to secede even though they were fulfilling their own part of the bargain, these can be relieved by maintaining strict conditions on the employment of the Turkish Cypriot right to secede and due to the motivation Turkish Cypriots would have to safeguard the chances for Turkey's own accession to the EU. As explained earlier, these would most probably be jeopardized in the event of the breakdown of the confederation (particularly if the Turkish Cypriot side or Turkey were seen as the responsible party). Thus, the Turkish Cypriots would have an in-built motivation to make the confederation work.
The same would also be true for the Greek Cypriots, who would face the danger of recognition of a separate Turkish Cypriot state if they were to blame for breakdown of confederation. They would also have the added assurance of achieving federation later if they kept their side of the bargain.

The EU membership of Cyprus as a confederation could help foster trust and cooperation between Turkish and Greek Cypriots. As Tocci notes, “Working together to support the national Cypriot interest within a wider context of European cooperation would increase the scope or common goals between inter-communal elites and accelerate the formation of shared norms and values.” We agree that such a potential does exist to an extent, but also believe that possible benefits of this effect should not be exaggerated. Differences of opinion on EU-related issues, or attempts to develop policies parallel to those of their respective motherlands, could actually create further friction between rival elites. However, we accept Tocci’s argument that, “By effectively determining economic and monetary policy and by shaping foreign, defense and home and justice affairs, the EU would take the pressure off an initial confederal arrangement.”

“We want to be in a Union which will probably one day develop first of all into a confederation and then into a federation. We want to be one of the elements of this federation. We have no illusions: we are a small country but there are already small countries and there will be others. And it is much better for us to be in such a group than isolated from it.” So said Glafkos Clerides in April 1995. Could not all parties find the will to pursue this aspiration in the context of Cyprus, as well as of the European Union?

Conclusion

There is no inevitable outcome to the development of the relationship between Cyprus and the EU, or for the effort to construct a workable political structure for the island. The potential still exists for crisis and doom, and, at the very least, for the wasting of precious opportunities. On the other hand, there is also the prospect of all-round success. But time is of essence. There may well be temporary breakdowns and partial
breakthroughs in the process of negotiation, but if a comprehensive solution is not found within the next few years, irreparable harm is likely to befall the interests of the parties involved in the Cyprus dispute.

Though the parties directly involved in the Cyprus dispute appear to have entrenched positions, a closer look at historical developments shows that they have the capacity to change their positions, sometimes even dramatically. While in 1958 Greeks were still demanding 'Enosis and only Enosis' and Turks desired to see the island, or at least part of it, united with Turkey, they were able only one year later to agree on the compromise of an independent Cyprus, ruling out both union and partition. Given that, we believe that flexibility, so long as it is targeted towards achieving compromise based on the recognition of the valid needs of the parties, will be necessary in the future too. Sometimes maintaining the status quo may seem an easy option. Changes to the status quo are bound to involve feelings of insecurity and risk, but maintaining the status quo can itself often involve even greater risks and, in the process, destroy the opportunity to create a more secure and prosperous environment for all.

By accepting the Greek Cypriot application for membership in 1993, the EU entangled itself in what has aptly been described as the 'Cyprus imbroglio.' It created in the words of The Economist, "The Cyprus Timebomb."35 Voices from the Greek side have often claimed that "the prospect of Cyprus entry in the EU may well act as a catalyst toward the resolution of this conflict."36 It may well be true that membership of the EU is an aspiration for most Greeks and Turks in Cyprus and may, therefore, provide certain incentives for compromise. However, by allowing and even encouraging the Greek Cypriots to pursue the dream of fortifying their international legitimacy within the EU, Brussels has also created a powerful incentive for them to make unrealistic demands in UN negotiations on Cyprus.

As increasing numbers of international observers, including such experienced names as former US special envoy for Cyprus Richard Holbrooke, have recognized, the prospect of unconditional membership for the Greek Cypriots actually has the potential to cement existing divisions. The Helsinki summit has in this respect exacerbated an already precarious situation.

Rather than naively approaching the issue of EU membership for
Cyprus as being an indisputable incentive for peace, a more realistic and accurate approach would probably be that the prospect of EU membership has brought matters in Cyprus to a head. As the moment of truth on whether or not the EU will ultimately be willing to accept a divided Cyprus creeps closer, “The Cyprus Timebomb” continues to tick away. The timely decision of the EU at Helsinki to provide the prospect of membership for Turkey may have saved the day. It is this decision which we believe could provide the balance in position necessary for settlement, and thus genuinely serve as a catalyst for reaching a political settlement of the Cyprus issue.

If a new era of peace and cooperation is to be opened, then it must be realized by all concerned—particularly by those who bear the illusion that intransigence from a perceived position of strength will allow them to achieve a solution on their own terms—that a settlement based on compromise has the potential to bear fruit for all. The Greek Cypriots in particular must realize that EU governments “remain skeptical about admitting a divided country. They may not let Turkey in without a settlement, but they are unlikely to let the Greek Cypriots in on their own.”

In Cyprus, we are not looking for the ideal, which for both sides may be of a significantly different nature, but for the feasible, which both sides could be prepared to accept as a compromise solution. Confederation, albeit tempered by sufficient conditions to satisfy the needs of both Greeks and Turks, and adopted under a less controversial title, is, at least in the short-term, a viable means for overcoming the impasse over Cyprus. It would be emphasized, however, that it is only the first step in a two-step process anticipated for Cyprus. We strongly believe that all parties to the Cyprus conflict have an interest in reaching a compromise settlement that would allow for Greece, Turkey, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots to begin a journey along the road to overcoming entrenched prejudices and historical injustices. Developing such relations within the EU framework can offer new room for optimism.
Notes

3. See (Olgun, 1999 a), p.93.
8. For instance, Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis stated that if any EU member-state tried to prevent Cyprus from joining the EU because it was still divided, then “Greece will use all measures offered in the framework of the European Union to achieve what it considers to be right.” See The Financial Times, 23 July 1997.
10. See, for example, Greek Cypriot Defence Minister Socrates Hasikos’s statement to Cyprus Mail, 23 March 2000.
11. On 20 January 1997, Turkish President Suleyman Demirel and Turkish Cypriot President Rauf Denktash jointly declared that, “Each and every unilateral step to be taken by the Greek Cypriot Administration towards the EU membership will accelerate the integration process between Turkey and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.” For details, see “Turkey-TRNC Joint Declaration,” 20 January 1997, at http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/ad/add/rusmis9.htm, 11 June 2000.
12. See (Axt, 1999), p.188.
15. Former German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel is on record as saying that it will be “unrealistic” to expect the EU to admit Cyprus before a settlement, since “all that would be achieved would be to strengthen the existing division.” Irish Foreign Affairs Minister David Andrews argued that a divided Cyprus within the EU would be unacceptable because it would mean that the EU’s external frontier
would run through the middle of the island. See “EU Balks at Prospect of Divided Cyprus Joining,” Irish Times, 16 March 1998.

17. See (Kabaalioglu, 1999), pp. 11-138; and Milliyet, 18 December 1999.
25. Confederation, Mr Clerides continues to exclaim, is “excluded and cannot be accepted.” See Cyprus Mail, 3 February 2000.
26. The Turkish Cypriot side is reported to have made similar proposals in the UN proximity talks held in July 2000 in Geneva. See Hürriyet, 9 July 2000.
27. See (Tocci, 2000), p. 27.
28. See (Brewin, 1999), p.171.
29. See (Mango, 2000). Mango argues, “Most inhabitants of Cyprus, whether Greek or Turkish, would like to become citizens of the EU. But Turkish Cypriots desire also security and equality. They can achieve both within the EU only if Turkey became a full member.” According to Tocci, “An initial confederal arrangement would encourage cooperation and the development of shared norms and values between governing elites by institutionalising inter-communal dialogue and consultation at the central authority level especially on matters which are envisaged to be ultimately devolved to the central level. Such mechanisms would gradually develop experience of joint governance, crucial to a long lasting settlement in the conflict.” See (Tocci, 2000), p. 8.
30. See (Khashman, 1997), p.358.
31. The Turkish side is reported to have proposed to the UN Secretary
General's Special Representative for Cyprus, Alvaro de Soto, that the less is the work left to the joint confederal structures following a settlement, the more chance the confederation will have for survival. See Hurriyet, 9 August 2000.

32. See (Olgun, 1999 b), p.346.
34. See “President Clerides Explains to Europe the Reasons for Cyprus European Commitment and the Prospects that Accession Would Bring, Notably for Solving the Cyprus Problem,” 29 April 1995, reproduced at http://www.kypros.org/Cyprus_Problem/foreign.html, 3 September 2000.
35. The Economist, 1 November, 1997.
36. See (Theophanous, 1995), p.75.
37. The Economist, 10 June 2000.

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