

# The Republic of Cyprus at 50

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This paper examines how Cyprus, the “reluctant republic” of 1960, became a successful liberal democracy and member of the EU, despite externally instigated political discord, foreign interference, foreign invasion and occupation, economic dislocation and continuing plots to dismantle it as an independent state. I can think of no other precedent in post-WWII Western Europe where this has happened. This is one of the reasons why we ought to be celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Republic of Cyprus.

The conference celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Republic of Cyprus is taking place under the specter of the on-going inter-communal talks for the resolution of the Cyprus problem. This may explain why the celebration of this important milestone in the history of the Republic was generally low key. I was disappointed, but not surprised, by the absence of any major Turkish Cypriot leaders from these celebrations. Their absence is proof of their continuing contempt of the Republic of Cyprus. Political reasons had also kept the 1960 independence celebrations to a minimum. History appears to have repeated itself fifty years later. The Cypriot public ought to study and analyze the lessons of the past fifty years and plan for the future of this European republic. Gaining independence in 1960 was an important first step. Maintaining and consolidating that independence has been and remains the constant challenge for the Greek Cypriots.

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In 1959, independence was not the goal of either Cypriot community or their patron states. Independence was an externally instigated choice because of the threat of partition under Britain's "Macmillan Plan" and of Cold War priorities that subordinated democratic principles to Western strategic needs in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The 1959 London and Zurich agreements that brought Cyprus to independence are a classic example of unequal treaties. Cypriots never had a chance to negotiate or approve their terms or the dysfunctional constitution that was based on them. Under Ottoman and British control, Cyprus only indirectly experienced the economic, social and political forces that shaped modern Western Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. At independence, Cyprus lacked an elite trained in national and international affairs. Local affairs and the quest for *enosis* (union to Greece) and self-determination had dominated the Greek Cypriot political discourse. It was this leadership that had the responsibility to make externally imposed dysfunctional institutions work, under negative conditions created by suspicion of communal motives, external interference and communal attachment to the two motherlands. From day one, the new Republic faced the challenge of creating and earning domestic legitimacy which was vital for its survival as an independent state.

Critics have often blamed the Greek Cypriots for lack of vision and flexibility in addressing the early problems that led to the 1963 constitutional crisis. The historical record calls for a more lenient assessment of events that can only be explained in the context of the broader political environment of the period. Stanley Kyriakides, in his classic 1965 study, minutely documented the steps that led to the 1963 crisis. Constitutional experts like Stanley de Smith have described the Cyprus constitution as "unique and unprecedented" because of its dysfunctional provisions. However, the most objective evidence on the problematic founding agreements came from the long forgotten 1959 analysis by the Bureau of Intelligence and Research of the US Department of State. This prophetic document predicted what would happen a year before the actual independence of Cyprus.

Following the 1963 constitutional crisis and the Turkish Cypriot withdrawal from the institutions of the Republic, the internal challenges in the new state took on new dimensions that included: dealing with externally instigated, financed and directed inter- and intra-communal violence; threats of external intervention and the need to reaffirm the international legitimacy of the Republic. The latter was achieved by Security Council resolution 186 of 4 March 1964. This resolution was an important addition to the panoply of legal

arguments on which the Republic has relied since then in order to address externally instigated subversion schemes and other actions by the governments of the US, Great Britain, Greece and Turkey, and organizations like NATO. The ultimate objective of these schemes was the dissolution of the Republic of Cyprus in the interest of restoring alliance cohesion.

The unanimous adoption of UN resolution 186 marked the internationalization of the Cyprus dispute, a process that has framed both the international agenda and the political discourse of the Republic since then. This is neither unusual nor unexpected given that the survival of the state was and is at stake, and all Cypriot presidents have the constitutional obligation to protect and defend the sovereignty, territorial integrity and survival of the Republic. Successive Cypriot governments have acted as all governments would have under similar circumstances in order to ensure the survival of their country.

At the same time, Cyprus worked to develop institutions and procedures appropriate to a Western European democracy and to create a national elite willing and able to define and advance the national and international interests of a country under siege. This was a difficult balancing act. Into the early 1970's, this emerging national elite operated under the shadow of the charismatic first president of the Republic. It also found itself caught in the cross pressures of independence and the need to promote a Cypriot identity without appearing to betray the Hellenic identity of the vast majority of the Republic's population. These were not imaginary forces, but a mental and political state with roots in the long history of the Greek Cypriot community. The combination of internal and external challenges facing Cyprus had one positive result. That was the emergence of a domestic consensus over socio-economic issues, despite radical differences in political party platforms. This helped the nation's economic development and recovery despite the dislocation caused by the 1974 Turkish invasion.

The effects of the externally instigated inter-communal conflict affected not only the political stability of Cyprus but, also, created tensions in Greco-Turkish relations and NATO. At the height of the Cold War and in the aftermath of the crises in Cuba and Berlin, the United States sought to limit the damage to the alliance and the risk of a Soviet involvement by relying on Athens as the "ethnikon kentron" (the national center) to control the Greek Cypriots and to use NATO as a means of restoring political stability on the island. The American and NATO actions in the spring of 1964 set in motion two specific forces that have shaped the evolution of the Republic of Cyprus since then. One was the use of Athens to control, and subvert when necessary, the government of Cyprus. The

catastrophic consequences of these actions led to the 1974 Turkish invasion. The other involved attempts to limit the independence and sovereignty of the Republic of Cyprus and even terminate its independence, if this improved reconciliation on Cyprus and Greco-Turkish cooperation.

The spring 1964 NATO plan called for the subordination of the Government of Cyprus to a NATO political committee and peacekeeping force. Because of the opposition of the Government of Cyprus, George Ball, acting on behalf of the United States tried to replace the Government of Cyprus by alternate Cypriot leaders willing to implement this scheme. Even though the 1964 NATO plan failed, the risk of a Turkish invasion that summer led to the genesis of the "Acheson Plan." Under the guise of promoting the Greek Cypriot quest for union to Greece and protecting Turkey's security interests, the Republic of Cyprus was to be dissolved and divided. The execution of the plan subverted democratic procedures in Greece, and called for Greek territorial concessions to Turkey. Variations of this plan reappeared through 1967 after the military takeover in Greece. Guided by Washington, the Greek junta and Ankara worked largely behind the back of the Government of Cyprus to resolve the problem, even at the cost of subverting the Government of Cyprus. Despite these adverse conditions, starting in 1968, the Government of Cyprus engaged in UN sponsored inter-communal talks to amend the dysfunctional 1960 constitution. During the course of these inter-communal talks the Cypriot leadership confronted assassination attempts, domestic terrorism funded and organized largely from outside Cyprus, the creation of Turkish Cypriot enclaves setting the foundation for the partition of Cyprus, ultimata by the Greek junta, and the 1971 "Lisbon consensus" reached between Greece and Turkey on the sidelines of the Lisbon NATO meeting that included the partition of the Republic as a means of last resort. The Cypriot inter-communal talks had resolved most outstanding internal constitutional issues by 13 July 1974. However, the coup sponsored by the Greek junta on July 15 against the Government of Cyprus and the ensuing Turkish invasion radically changed the nature of the Cyprus problem. The perennial fear of partition and the need to restore the sovereignty and protect the independence and unity of Cyprus has framed the priorities of all Cypriot governments since then.

Following the Turkish invasion, the ethnic cleansing of occupied Cyprus and the creation by the occupation army of an unrecognized political entity in occupied Cyprus, there have been various Western initiatives for the resolution of the Cyprus problem. Their aim has been to accommodate Turkish demands through the creation of a bi-zonal, bi-communal state which, in reality, is a confederation of two largely autonomous states. This new entity would replace

the internationally recognized Republic of Cyprus under the guise of “reunification.” It would essentially legitimize the outcome of the Turkish invasion. These schemes originated in the ideas of Henry Kissinger (1975) and Clark Clifford (1977), culminating in the proposal for the “virgin birth” of a truncated Cypriot republic under a new denomination and constitutional structure proposed by Richard Holbrooke, Sir David Hannay and UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan between 1998 and 2004.

Constitutional schemes proposing a “bi-zonal, bi-communal federation” have been presented to a southern European public largely unfamiliar with such constitutional constructs. The deprivation of rights enjoyed by other European citizens and the incorporation of new dysfunctional constitutional provisions to replace those of 1960 has not bothered past or present foreign interlocutors. They are seeking the short term fame of resolving a perpetuated international problem, while placing the blame for the inevitable failure of their folly on the victims of these schemes.

The great irony has been that successive Cypriot governments, under pressure to show negotiating flexibility, have made concessions on issues that violate international and European law. These concessions would be unacceptable to any self-respecting 21<sup>st</sup> century democratic European country. This irony is even greater considering the legal successes the Republic of Cyprus and its citizens have had in major international organizations and in international and national courts. The 1 May 2004 accession of Cyprus to the EU was the best manifestation of the international legitimacy of the Republic and its success as a liberal European democracy. Other than the 1974 Turkish invasion, the accession of Cyprus to the EU was the biggest event in the 50 year history of the Republic.

So that all blame is not placed on foreign shoulders, all Cypriot governments must share some of the blame for the present situation. Since 1974, successive Cypriot governments:

- Have allowed the President to be chief negotiator lowering his stature to that of a communal leader, equal to his Turkish Cypriot counterpart, negotiating an inter-communal problem and not a problem of invasion, continuing occupation and continuing violations of internationally recognized human rights.
- Have made continuous concessions, without reciprocity from Turkey, and have not demanded zero based negotiations when Turkey repeatedly changed the bases of the talks.

- Have abandoned the legal panoply of arguments supporting the Republic and the rights of its citizens in an elusive search for a fictional federation that deprives Cypriot citizens of their rights under European law. The proposals submitted by the Government of Cyprus (9/2010) on property, territory and the settlers is on such example.
- Have relied on a lot of rhetoric, little public participation and limited public information on the substance of the inter-communal talks. The moment of truth arrived when the extent and details of the Greek Cypriot concessions emerged without any evidence of reciprocity on the part of Turkey as it happened in 2004 with the publication of the so-called Annan Plan and now with the proposals on property.
- Have remained passive waiting for third parties to propose ideas and to bridge differences, instead of putting forward a democratic European oriented plan for the resolution of the problem, and
- Have allowed Turkey to advance claims of Turkish Cypriot “isolation” and “victimization,” even though this “isolation” was largely created by acts of the occupation army.

Since 1974, the troubled negotiations have not hindered the positive domestic changes that have taken place in the Republic. Cyprus has matured as a state as a result of a changing socio-economic environment, new demographic and employment patterns, economic growth and the required harmonization for EU accession. There are many manifestation of the democratic consolidation in Cyprus, including:

- The consolidation of the domestic and international legitimacy of the Republic in the aftermath of the coup, the Turkish invasion and continuing occupation, and Turkey’s secessionist actions in occupied Cyprus.
- The end of charismatic politics following the death of President Makarios.
- The strengthening of Greek Cypriot identity without diminishing its Hellenic heritage.
- The acknowledgement of equality in the relations of Cyprus with Greece.
- The development of fully functioning political parties.
- The effective functioning of the Cypriot Parliament following various reforms implemented after 1981.

- The implementation of competitive electoral politics at all levels of government.
- The rise of civil society, despite its tainted image because of external funding and involvement in externally instigated schemes for the resolution of the Cyprus problem, and
- The development of a professional Foreign Service Corps.

The Republic of Cyprus at 50 is an evolving, successful, vibrant, liberal democracy. This is evidenced not only by its EU accession but, also, by the presidential elections of 2008 that elected Dimitris Christofias from the oldest Cypriot political party (AKEL) whose Communist philosophy had marginalized it at critical times in modern Cypriot history.

Given the adverse conditions that the Republic of Cyprus has faced since 1960, Cypriots ought to celebrate the successes, learn from past errors, and never sacrifice the hard won integrity of their Republic in order to obtain the approval of foreign countries. No other self-respecting EU member would do so, Why should Cyprus?

In 2004, the Greek Cypriot public freely, decisively and wisely rejected the so-called "Annan Plan." In many respects, the Greek Cypriot public led its public officials to reject that destructive plan. It may have to do so again if the inter-communal talks continue on their present path. Today the choices facing the Greek Cypriots are no different than those of 2004. Only the tactics of the UN mediator have changed. The same forces that failed to impose the "Annan Plan" are reintroducing the ideas rejected in 2004, this time under the guise of a "Cypriot solution." They are also attempting to de-legitimize any critics as advocates of "nationalist" positions or as advocates of "partition." If protecting the integrity and the sovereignty of a fifty year old Republic is a "nationalist" act, then so be it! The advocates of a revised "Annan Plan" should focus their attention on reversing Turkey's partitionist policies, rather than blaming the victims of the Turkish invasion for Turkey's effective partition of Cyprus for the last thirty-six years. Manipulating the content of a new resolution plan in order to obtain a bare minimum Greek Cypriot approval will not assure either the viability or the legitimacy of any new resolution plan.

After thirty-six years the Cyprus problem was and remains one of invasion, continuing occupation and continuing violations of human rights. Any plan not reversing the consequences of 1974 will meet the fate of the 2004 "Annan Plan."

Let me close by saying that today's conference is a historic event. It celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Republic of Cyprus. It brought together Greek-American organizations that for years have extended their support to the struggle for the unity, sovereignty and independence of the Republic of Cyprus; to the struggle to free Cyprus from foreign occupation, and to end Turkey's violations of human rights and international law. Unfortunately, this struggle is not over yet. The current UN sponsored negotiations are at a critical point. If there is comprehensive solution, the choice will be made by the people of Cyprus. Until then, we, as concerned members of the Greek-American community, must remain resolute in our stand that appeasement has only encouraged aggression. It has not corrected its consequences. We must stand together to make sure that the rule of law is applied to the case of Cyprus. If we do not do that, no one else will!



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