



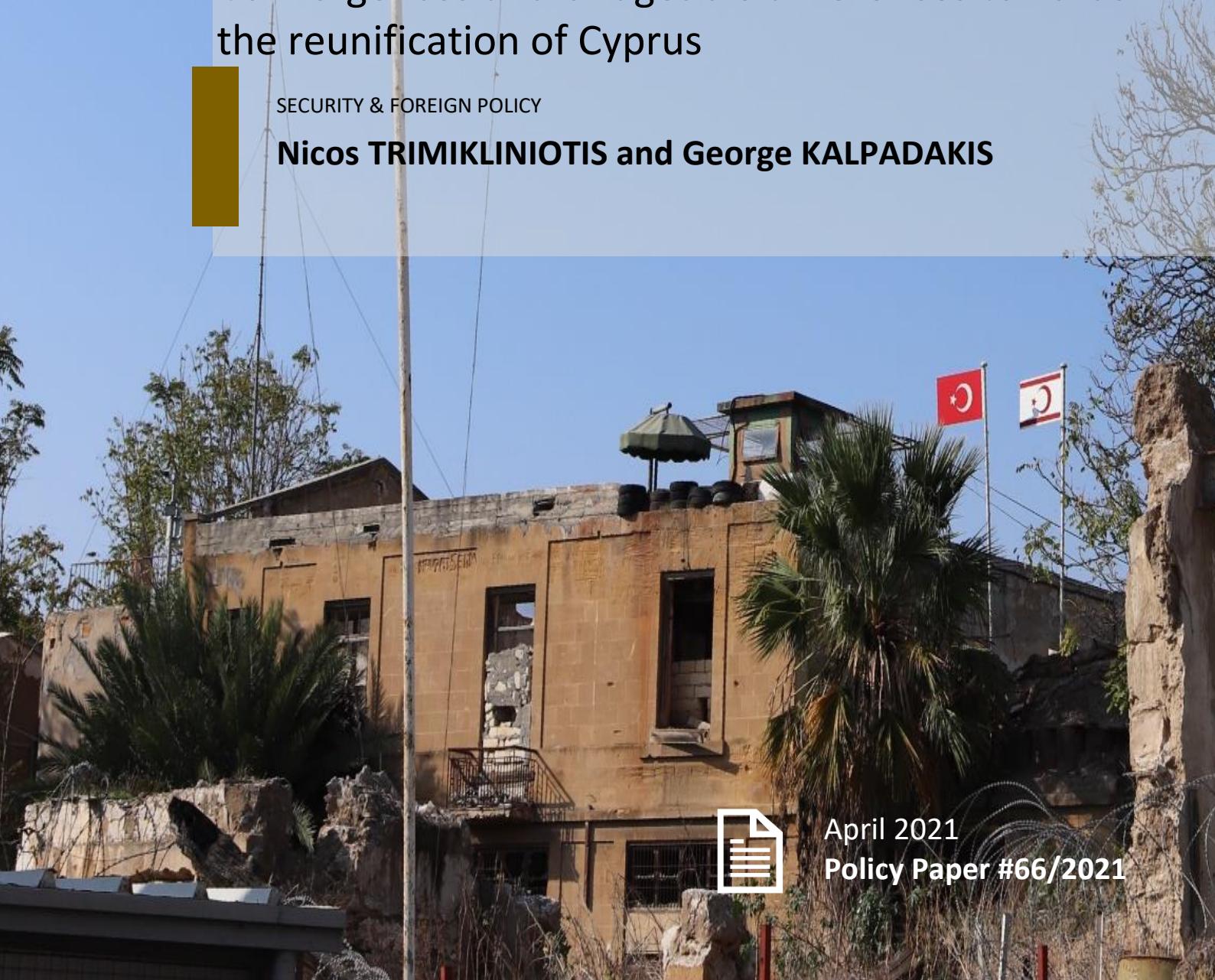
Ahead of the five-party meeting: Convergences and bridgeable differences towards the reunification of Cyprus

SECURITY & FOREIGN POLICY

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April 2021
Policy Paper #66/2021



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Summary

- With an informal five-party meeting currently being planned for late April 2021 under the auspices of the UNSG between the two parties and the three guarantor countries of Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom, a litmus test for success will be the retrieval and agreement over the convergences that had been reached until the Crans-Montana Conference in 2017.
- The Cyprus negotiations form no exception to the principle that “nothing is agreed until everything is agreed” and, as such, both sides have variously eschewed admission that any “convergences” have in fact been reached. However, there have been documents indicating both points of convergence as well as points of bridgeable divergences, most prominently in a 2013 document drafted by then Special Adviser to the UNSG.
- Negotiations have since reaffirmed the existence of significant convergences in three of the six chapters of the Cyprus problem, namely Governance and Power Sharing (the most voluminous and complex chapter, with a multitude of sub-chapters), Economy and European Union (EU) Issues.
- Regarding the particularly contentious issue of security guarantees, what is noteworthy is the recognition iterated by the UNSG that “the current system of guarantees, in particular article IV of the Treaty of Guarantee, containing the unilateral right of intervention, was ‘unsustainable’”.
- While difficulties since 2017 have been exacerbated by a number of developments, most notably by the electoral victory of separationist hardliner Ersin Tatar in October 2020, there are certain noteworthy initiatives at the level of civil society in support for peace which can play a positive role in the process of reaching a settlement.
- However, a crucial issue that may ultimately determine the success of the upcoming talks concerns the reaffirmation of the validity of the convergences that had been achieved by the end of the Crans Montana conference.

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"The deterioration of the climate since then and the concomitant danger of undermining the UN framework amid Turkey's and the T/C side's apparent insistence on a two-state solution, underscores the necessity to sketch out the convergences that have reportedly been achieved as well as the most significant issues on which the divergences appear to be bridgeable."

Introduction

With an informal five-party meeting currently being planned for late April 2021 under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary General (UNSG) between the two parties and the three guarantor countries of Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom, a litmus test for success will be the retrieval and agreement over the convergences that had been reached until the Crans-Montana Conference in 2017. It is therefore necessary to gain a clearer picture of this crucial issue on the basis of sources that have been recently made public, as it may help to indicate possible solutions for a way out of the current political impasse.

The prospect of achieving a bizonal, bicommunal federal solution (BBF) to the Cyprus problem was dealt a blow in the summer of 2017, when the unification talks between the leaders of the two communities were suspended. Subsequent efforts by Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to resume the negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations have centered on an ambitious mission spearheaded by Jane Holl Lute, who is mandated to hold consultations with the President of the Republic of Cyprus and leader of the Greek Cypriot community (G/C) Nicos Anastasiades, the leader of the Turkish-Cypriot community Ersin Tatar (T/C) and the three guarantor parties (Greece, Turkey, United Kingdom) with a view of gauging their intentions on the steps forward. Its goal has been to produce a terms of reference document that will include a roadmap for the next steps of the negotiations, the six-point framework introduced by the UNSG on June 30th 2017 and crucially, the convergences which had been agreed on, over a wide variety of fields.

Although little progress has been achieved towards this direction, on 25 November 2019, following a meeting with the two Cypriot leaders in Berlin, the UNSG committed to exploring *"with the Turkish Cypriot leader and the Greek Cypriot leader and with the Guarantor powers the possibility to convene an informal five-plus-UN meeting at an appropriate stage."*¹ The deterioration of the climate since then and the concomitant danger of undermining the UN framework amid Turkey's and the T/C side's apparent insistence on a two-state solution, underscores the necessity to sketch out the convergences that have reportedly been achieved as well as the most significant issues on which the divergences appear to be bridgeable.

Convergences

The Cyprus negotiations form no exception to the principle that "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed" and, as such, both sides have variously eschewed admission that any "convergences" have in fact been reached. In April 2010, however, the two sides had agreed in principle on a range of issues as codified in thirty-one "joint documents" which included an understanding on a division between the portfolios of foreign relations and the EU, the establishment of a federal supreme court, equal representation in the Senate and judicial courts as well as proportional representation in the House.

In 2013 the points of mutual agreement between the two sides were expanded on in detail, in a document prepared by then Special Adviser to the UNSG, Alexander Downer.² Both sides had agreed that the solution shall lead to a reunified BBF with a single sovereignty, international personality and citizenship. Since then, negotiations have

¹ UN Secretary-General's Statement on Cyprus, 25.11.2019.

² See *Convergences 2008-2012* [https://libguides.cydialogue.org/l.php?content_id=32130390].

"In 2013 the points of mutual agreement between the two sides were expanded on in detail, in a document prepared by then Special Adviser to the UNSG, Alexander Downer."

"...an effective mechanism would be agreed upon in relation to the judiciary and the legislature."

reaffirmed significant convergences in three of the six chapters of the Cyprus problem, namely Governance and Power Sharing (the most voluminous and complex chapter, with a multitude of sub-chapters), Economy and European Union (EU) Issues. In late 2014, these convergences were apparently inscribed in the joint statement between the two sides, and in April 2018 the negotiator for the G/C side, Andreas Mavroyiannis confirmed that many of them had indeed been reached.³

In the field of **Governance and Power Sharing**, both sides opted for a presidential regime elected on the basis of cross-voting. The rotating President and Vice President (in a term of office of 2: 1) would be elected by universal suffrage and not separately by Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots, by weighting, i.e. by exercising equal influence (20%) of each community in the election of the President by the other community. The decisions would not be taken by the President but by the Council of Ministers and a positive vote by at least one Turkish Cypriot Minister would ultimately be required for reaching decisions.

For issues of major importance in case of deadlocks, an effective mechanism would be agreed upon in relation to the judiciary and the legislature. There would be no restrictions on the exercise of the three basic freedoms (movement, settlement, acquisition of property), thus refuting the anti-BBF accusations that bizonality would establish a 'racist solution' or 'an apartheid regime'. Simultaneously, each component state would be governed by the respective community. There would be a ceiling on the exercise of civil and political rights, such as electoral rights, to be exercised at the level of the constituent state: if a reasonable percentage as a ceiling is exceeded, then such rights would be exercised on a community basis rather than constituent state they reside.

Under the rubric of "**internal citizenship**", Downer's document summarizes the convergence as follows: "Those who have 'internal citizenship' will have all political rights but they will vote for the Senate with the community to which they belong." Furthermore, it is clarified that "voting for the Senate will be on a communal basis, while voting for the House of Representatives will be on the basis of internal citizenship, subject to agreement on the parameters for obtaining internal citizenship."⁴ This is already practiced in Cyprus, as persons residing in one regional district may retain their electoral rights in another for electoral purposes at the local, parliamentary, presidential and EU-levels.

Regarding the future flow of Greek and Turkish citizens a 4:1 ratio would be in place for **residence and work permits**, so as not to violate the demographic ratio through migration from Greece or Turkey. Maritime zones, including the exclusive economic zone (EEZ), would become a federal competence along with natural resources and federal revenue-sharing. The only issue that would remain open concerned the delimitation of the EEZ with Turkey, an issue that many countries face and could therefore be dealt with at a later period. The issue of how to manage the funds in the fields of the Economy and the EU were quite advanced and moving within a trajectory of convergence.

Potentially bridgeable divergences

Further progress on the remaining three chapters was stalled as the T/C side insisted

³ Report of the UNSC to the UN Security Council on the mission of his good offices in Cyprus, 28.9.2017.

⁴ Convergences 2008-2012, p. 69 [https://libguides.cydialogue.org/lb.php?content_id=32130390].

“..the T/C side insisted that the territorial issue be negotiated along with the triptych of security, guarantees and troops, before reaching agreement on the remaining chapters.”

“What is noteworthy regarding this particularly contentious chapter was the recognition, iterated by the UNSG, that “the current system of guarantees, in particular article IV of the Treaty of Guarantee, containing the unilateral right of intervention, was ‘unsustainable’.”

that the territorial issue be negotiated along with the triptych of security, guarantees and troops, before reaching agreement on the remaining chapters. Further convergences were made on these issues during the Anastasiades-Akinci talks that culminated with the conference meetings in Mont Pelérin, Geneva and Crans-Montana, that were convened by all accounts in order to address this triptych of issues.

During the conference of Mont Pelérin the two sides approached convergence on the most important criterion of the territorial issue concerning the percentage of land that would be placed under the administrative responsibility of each community. The G/C side made proposals that were ultimately unsuccessful for the return of 100,000 refugees (60%) under its administration as well as for a coastline analogous to the size of each component state. At the Geneva Conference in early 2017 the two sides submitted maps with the territorial adjustments they were willing to support, an issue on which they returned at Crans Montana with proposals centering on Morphou.⁵

In terms of **the legally complex issue of property**, the disputes do not seem to have been resolved but there appears to have been a mutual understanding that those who resided on their property and had an emotional attachment to their former homes, including members of their immediate family, would be able to return. On this point, however, the T/C side put forth the argument that some of the current users have a stronger case than the owners themselves, a contention based on differences over the definition of the user and the significant improvement of assets. The three remedial options for resolving property questions i.e. compensation, exchange and reinstatement, provide for solutions to disputed property questions. The UNSG reported further progress during the Crans Montana talks,⁶ but the framework set by the UN led experts to conclude that the parameters for resolving this issue are “quite simple”: “In areas which will be returned to under Greek Cypriot administration the Greek Cypriot owners will have a qualified priority as to the choice of their preferred remedy and in all other areas the current users (presumably Turkish Cypriot users of Greek Cypriot properties in the north and Greek Cypriot users of the Turkish Cypriot properties in the south), will similarly have a priority.”⁷

Regarding the chapter on **security guarantees**, the UNSG reported that the guarantor powers had arrived at the Conference at Crans-Montana prepared to discuss mutually acceptable solutions and he referred to the six-point framework that was tabled on 30 June 2017. Over the course of the conference, the UNSG clarified that this provided, firstly, for the replacement of the Treaty of Guarantees with a new treaty that will essentially abolish any rights of intervention and secondly, for an immediate drastic reduction and withdrawal of the occupying troops. The only open issue, he stated, would have remained the sunset or review clause in the mandate of both the Hellenic Forces in Cyprus (ELDYK) and the T/C Security Forces Command (SFC), a prospect which would have been discussed at the level of prime ministers.

What is noteworthy regarding this particularly contentious chapter was the recognition,

⁵ “Cyprus: Reunification Proving Elusive,” Congressional Research Service, 15.4.2019, pp. 30-31. The Turkish Cypriot map initially included the return of Varosha and parts of the enclosed port city of Famagusta, based on the standards of the Annan scheme, while the town of Morphou remained under its own jurisdiction along with Kokkina. It was later reported that at Crans Montana Akinci indicated a willingness to return part of Morphou whilst laying claims on additional territory. On the territorial adjustments during the different stages proposed in the Annan plan, see the maps provided by the trilingual resource guide at https://libguides.cydialogue.org/l.php?content_id=31734363

⁶ Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus, Para. 22, Report-S-2017-814, 28.9.2017, <http://www.uncyprustalks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/2017-09-28-SG-GO-Report-S-2017-814.pdf>

⁷ Symeou, A. (2018) *The Property Issue in the Cyprus Problem, A technocratic approach*, Paphos, Cyprus, p. 99.

“...the fact that the Cyprus problem is considered ‘intractable’ for so long, as well as the disappointments in recent efforts to resolve it during the last years, has generated pessimism amongst many political scientists and commentators regarding the potential to resolve it.”

iterated by the UNSG, that “the current system of guarantees, in particular article IV of the Treaty of Guarantee, containing the unilateral right of intervention, was ‘unsustainable’.”⁸ Whilst the basis for retaining the system of guarantees had been questioned in 2009,⁹ the scene was set at the experts’ meeting in Mont Pellerin where pressure was exerted on the Turkish side to replace the anachronistic system by an effective enforcement mechanism:¹⁰ this idea, further developed in Crans Montana and taken up by the UNSG¹¹, would later be described by President Anastasiades as a substantial “innovation” in the negotiations.¹²

Negotiating tactics or revisionist trends?

As bilateral diplomatic relations have been deteriorating, with the two sides drifting further apart on numerous issues, there is an understandable fear that a tectonic shift may currently be evolving regarding both sides’ longstanding declaratory commitment to achieve a BBF. A process of backtracking may therefore also be unfolding on the hard-fought front of the convergences that have been achieved over the years, which are in danger of being submerged under the fog of an unspoken revisionism. Of course, it remains to be seen whether these developments indicate the appearance of deeper revisionist trends or whether they are part and parcel of broader negotiating strategies with an eye on the upcoming informal discussions in Geneva. At any rate, the fact that the Cyprus problem is considered ‘intractable’ for so long, as well as the disappointments in recent efforts to resolve it during the last years, has generated pessimism amongst many political scientists and commentators regarding the potential to resolve it.

The prospect of a comprehensive settlement has lost its luster, according to some scholars who voice the view that the problem has become a “comfortable and routine conflict”¹³ or that a bizonal bicommunal federation is no longer viable¹⁴, while others opt for a “piecemeal approach”,¹⁵ an “evolutionary approach”¹⁶ or else “a loose federation.”¹⁷ At the same time, support for the BBF solution seems to have been growing in public opinion, despite these concerns as well as the negative climate created by abrupt closures of the checkpoints due to the pandemic. A survey conducted in August 2020, six months after the checkpoints were closed, indicates that support for a BBF not only remains undiminished on both sides but amongst the G/Cs it has actually increased.¹⁸ In spite of low expectations for an immediate breakthrough in the upcoming negotiations, the overwhelming majority in both communities remains in favor of such a solution. Thus 85.5% of G/Cs and 67% of T/Cs “wish for ending the Cyprus problem in a

⁸ UNSG Report on his mission of good offices in Cyprus - S/2017/814, 28.9.2017.

⁹ See then-President Demetris Christofias, *Ta Nea*, 23.4.2009.

¹⁰ Deputies and experts met in Mont Pellerin, Switzerland on 18-19 January. Elias Hazou, “UN says working group successfully completed its mandate a day early”, *Cyprus Mail*, 19.1.2017.

¹¹ Kotzias, N., *Cyprus 2015-2018. A three-year period that changed the Cyprus issue. The struggle for normality without intervention rights and “guarantees”* (Hellenic Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018), esp. pp. 195-238.

¹² Interview of President Anastasiades, *Phileleftheros*, 28.5.2018.

¹³ Adamides, C. (2015) “A Comfortable and Routine Conflict”, Ker-Lyndsay, J. (ed.) *Resolving the Cyprus Problem, New approaches to Conflict Resolution*, I B. Tauris, London, 5-15

¹⁴ Bachceli, T. and Noel, S. (2015) “A bizonal bicommunal federation is not viable”, Ker-Lyndsay, J. (ed.) *Resolving the Cyprus Problem, New approaches to Conflict Resolution*, I B. Tauris, London, 39-47

¹⁵ Kaymak, E . (2015) “Adopting a Piecemeal approach”, Ker-Lyndsay, J. (ed.) *Resolving the Cyprus Problem, New approaches to Conflict Resolution*, I B. Tauris, London, pp.134-142.

¹⁶ Polyviou, P. (2018) *To κυπριακό πρόβλημα- Μια άλλη προσέγγιση*, Chrysafinis & Polyviou, Nicosia.

¹⁷ Ker-Lyndsay, J. (2015) “The case for a loose federation”, Ker-Lyndsay, J. (ed.) *Resolving the Cyprus Problem, New approaches to Conflict Resolution*, I B. Tauris, London, pp. 143-150.

¹⁸ <https://dialogos.com.cy/yper-tis-lysis-ddo-i-pleiopsifia-e-k-kai-t-k/>

“...the UNSG issued a report which reflected the deteriorating climate in the negotiations, in which he indicated that, while convergences had been achieved, only the economic chapter was on the verge of closure.”

way that assures political equality for Turkish Cypriots and assures security for Greek Cypriots from any Turkish influence”, while 66.5% of G/Cs and 63.6% of T/Cs “wish for a mutually agreed upon accord that will result in a [BBF].”¹⁹ Relations between the two communities have not deteriorated, as popular movements in favor of reunification are adapting to the conditions imposed by the pandemic by employing novel organizational forms based chiefly on virtual meetings.

The climate became aggravated when it was alleged that President Anastasiades had proposed partition of Cyprus to the Turkish Foreign Secretary, a charge that he has denied while reaffirming his commitment to a BBF solution. On the part of the main opposition party, the Progressive Party of the Working People (AKEL), fears have been expressed that an unspoken consensus is growing in favor of a solution that combines common representation of the two communities internationally, while functioning internally as two separate entities - a confederate formation which they perceive as unviable and associate with the unsustainable political union between Syria and Egypt between 1958 and 1971.²⁰

On 28 September 2017, the UNSG issued a report which reflected the deteriorating climate in the negotiations, in which he indicated that, while convergences had been achieved, only the economic chapter was on the verge of closure.²¹ Reports began to surface in the G/C press which cited comments by the MFA of Turkey Mevlut Cavusoglu to the effect that Ankara was intent on abandoning the four decades-long UN-sponsored framework (stipulating reunification under a BBF) in order to prepare the groundwork for a “Plan B.”²²

“A particularly contentious issue was the G/C retraction of the convergence on political equality which required a positive T/C vote in the decisions of the Federal Ministerial Council and in most of the various lower decision-making bodies.”

Ultimately the UN’s subsequent efforts to resuscitate the talks reached an impasse, as it failed to achieve a minimum agreement between the two parts on the terms of resuming the negotiations. A particularly contentious issue was the G/C retraction of the convergence on political equality which required a positive T/C vote in the decisions of the Federal Ministerial Council and in most of the various lower decision-making bodies. The retraction was met with the strong reaction by Mustafa Akinci, who proposed that a positive vote in all decision-making bodies before any issue at the federal level could be decided. In turn, President Anastasiades contended that this would grant the T/Cs the right to veto any policy decision and he thus reverted to an older proposal which promotes the adoption of a hybrid political system, by which the Office of the President would be reserved exclusively for a G/C and that of the Prime Minister would alternate between the two communities, under parliamentary rule. This was categorically rejected by Akinci, who suggested that it reinforced his own misgivings regarding the motives of the G/Cs.

The growing difficulties have been exacerbated by a number of developments, triggered by the electoral victory of separationist hardliner Ersin Tatar in October 2020²³, who declared the abandoned town of Varosha as “open” and has been leading an effort

¹⁹ Psaltis, C et al. (2021, *Youth and Politics in Protracted Conflicts: a comparative approach on hope for a settlement and return of IDPs*, Research team: Charis Psaltis (Project Coordinator and Principal Researcher) Eran Halperin, Neophytos Loizides, Djordje Stefanovic, Oded Adomi Leshem, Huseyin Cakal, LSE Hellenic Observatory, p. 10, [<https://www.lse.ac.uk/Hellenic-Observatory/Research/Cyprus-Projects-2019/Youth-and-Politics-in-Protracted-Conflicts-a-comparative-approach-on-hope-for-a-settlement-and-return-of-IDPs>]).

²⁰ Statements by AKEL General Secretary Andros Kyrianiou, Astra radio, 5.12.2018.

²¹ Report of the UNSG on His Mission of Good Offices in Cyprus, 28.9.2017.

²² Polites, 7.7.2017.

²³ Nektaria Stamouli, “Hardliner candidate wins Northern Cyprus election,” 18.10.2020, [politico.eu/article/pm-tatar-beats-incumbent-to-become-northern-cyprus-president]

"The growing difficulties have been exacerbated by a number of developments, triggered by the electoral victory of separationist hardliner Ersin Tatar in October 2020 , who declared the abandoned town of Varosha as "open" and has been leading an effort towards the unilateral alteration of its status."

"...bicultural initiatives in support for peace can play a positive role in the process of reaching a settlement by preparing the ground for achieving further convergences in the negotiations."

towards the unilateral alteration of its status²⁴: the sanctioning of this act by Ankara through the opening of a Consulate-General in the wider area and the visit of the Vice-President of Turkey Fuat Oktay, who held a “summit” there on the “legal, political and economic aspects of reopening the abandoned town of Varosha”; the public references of Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu to “two equal, sovereign states” as the real basis for any future agreement,²⁵ the statements of UNSG Guterres indicating the possibility for the guarantor powers to revise the idea of a federation as the basis for negotiation; and not least the revisionist actions of Ankara in the Eastern Mediterranean and in Cyprus, despite the mass T/C protests held in November 2020 against Ankara’s interference in its community’s political life.²⁶

Civil society initiatives

The UNSC Resolution 2561 strongly urges both sides to prepare the ground for the negotiations and warns that “restrictions, should they continue, could have a significant negative effect on levels of interaction and trust between the communities and on the peace process more broadly”. In light of this recognition, bicultural initiatives in support for peace can play a positive role in the process of reaching a settlement by preparing the ground for achieving further convergences in the negotiations.

In the current juncture there are various civil initiatives that could potentially help to propel negotiations forward and enhance the participation of political and social forces which are pushing for a solution on the basis of UN resolutions. After the rejection of the UN plan to resolve the Cyprus problem in 2004 numerous bicultural initiatives, many of them on a grassroots level, emerged which called for popular mobilization as well a more inclusive and participatory process for resolving the Cyprus conflict.²⁷ There are various fora aiming to engage in dialogue²⁸ including, for example, the Cyprus Dialogue Forum.²⁹ Whilst international best practices have been produced by civic assemblies which have established participatory frameworks for conflict resolution,³⁰ no similar traditions exist in Cyprus.³¹ The idea of a “constitutional convention,”³² employing best

²⁴ Concerned by Turkey’s Plan to Reopen Varosha Coast, Security Council Presidential Statement Calls for Reversal of Decision, Urging Adherence to Resolutions, 9.10.2020, [<https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/sc14322.doc.htm>].

²⁵ Associated Press, “Turkish FM says 2-state deal the only way for divided Cyprus,” 2.2.2021. [apnews.com/article/turkey-mevlut-cavusoglu-antonio-guterres-united-nations-greece-7cb7c5776ed4474b8601d9ae6c814d5f].

²⁶ Secretary-General’s press conference on his Priorities for 2021, 28.1.2021. [<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/press-encounter/2021-01-28/secretary-generals-press-conference-his-priorities-for-2021>].

²⁷ An important platform is the [Bi-communal Peace Initiative-United Cyprus](#) was established in 2009, which consists of 75 organisations promoting peace and reunification of the Island. See Founding Declaration, 8 January 2010.

²⁸ The Cypriots’ Voice, [Declaration](#), January 2008.

²⁹ Initially supported by the UNDP, the [Cyprus Dialogue Forum](#) comprises of organisations from Political Parties, Trade Unions, Business & Professional Associations and NGOs from both communities. It has four aims and objectives: to support the formal negotiations and all political efforts to reach a mutually agreed federal solution, by creating options and submitting suggestions for the negotiation process; to create public awareness, acknowledge and incorporate the inputs of the wider public and help to prepare both communities for a solution; to help reach a mutual understanding, multi-perspectivity, and a shared vision of the future and build a culture of co-existence; and to create space for citizens to also raise and address issues that are not included in the political process.

³⁰ Conciliation Resources (2019) [Accord](#), ISSUE 28, March 2019 /

³¹ The only historical precedent is the British initiative of the Consultative Assembly of 1948, a controversial historical episode which is either portrayed as a missed opportunity or alternatively as a colonial ploy aimed at inciting division within the liberation movement.

³² Andreas Auer (2009) “On the Way to a Constitutional Convention for Cyprus”, Andreas Auer and Vasiliki Triga (eds.) *A Constitutional Convention for Cyprus*, Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Berlin DOI: 10.13140/2.1.4477.0249, 13-25.

practices from other conflicts and their resolution,³³ has also been put forward but has not been taken up by political forces.

On the eve of the informal five-party meeting, a novel civil society initiative has also been introduced, the Bicommunal Civic Assembly, which aims at establishing a framework for public debate over constitutional, political, economic and social aspects, allowing the “demos” to participate in constitution-making processes.³⁴ This bicommunal initiative pledges to “defend what has been achieved to date in the negotiation process” – in other words, the convergences – and “to struggle to see the reunification and peace process through to its conclusion”.³⁵ It is therefore evident that, although the framework for the way forward has been outlined by the UN,³⁶ a number of initiatives have sprung out of civil society which are committed to creating the basis for peace and reunification.

“An integral part of this process and a crucial litmus test for its success concerns the reaffirmation of the validity of the convergences that had been achieved by the end of the Crans Montana conference.”

“Rebooting” Crans Montana? Signposts towards reunification

As the European Council underlined on 25 March 2021: “We recall the previous European Council conclusions and remain fully committed to a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem in accordance with the relevant UNSC resolutions (notably 550, 789, 1251). We look forward to the resumption of negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations in which the European Union will participate as an observer and will play an active role in supporting the negotiations, including by appointing a representative to the UN Good Offices Mission.”

The condemnation of Turkey by the EU for re-opening Varosha,³⁷ the subsequent resolution adopted by the European Parliament calling on the European Council to impose sanctions on Ankara over the seaport’s partial reopening,³⁸ the intention of the new US administration to be “fully engaged” on the Cyprus issue, as expressed by Secretary of State Anthony Blinken,³⁹ but also the ongoing and new bicommunal initiatives at the level of civil society all constitute factors which invite the possibility of an improvement of the climate surrounding the Cyprus negotiations.

Ahead of the informal five-party meeting convened by the UNSG, the prospect of achieving a sustainable resolution of the Cyprus conflict hinges on the willingness of all

³³ Fernando Mendez and Vasiliki Triga (2009), “Constitution-making, constitutional conventions and conflict resolution: lesson drawing for Cyprus”, *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, Volume 11, Number 4, December 2009, 363-380.

³⁴ See the Communiqué of the Bi-communal Peace Initiative-United Cyprus, 8.3.2021.

³⁵ The initiative may provide avenues for positive civil society involvement, capable of overcoming the past negative climate the media generated over the secrecy and non-transparency of the negotiation process. Communiqué No 39, 22/02/2021 [http://cypriots-voice.eu/en/2021/02/25/communiqué-39-22-02-2021/]. See also Lordos, A. (2009) “From Secret Diplomacy to Public Diplomacy: How the Annan Plan Referendum Failure Earned the Cypriot Public a Seat at the Negotiating Table”, Varnava, A. and Faustmann, H. (eds.) *Reunifying Cyprus, The Annan Plan and Beyond*, I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, London, pp. 160-176; Avraamidou, M. (2018) Exploring Greek-Cypriot media representations of national identities in ethnically divided Cyprus: the case of the 2002/2004 Annan Plan negotiations, *National Identities*, 20:5, 439-461.

³⁶ See UN Security Council Resolution 2561, 19 January 2021 and the UN Secretary General Report of his Mission in Cyprus, January 2021.

³⁷ EU Council, “Turkey’s illegal drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean: Council adopts framework for sanctions,” 11.11.2019.

³⁸ European Parliament resolution, “Escalating tensions in Varosha following the illegal actions by Turkey and the urgent need for the resumption of talks,” 2020/2844 (RSP), 26.11.2020.

³⁹ https://cyprus-mail.com/2021/03/11/blinken-says-us-will-be-fully-engaged-in-cyprus-issue/George Pagoulatos and Katerina Sokou, “US-Greece relations in the Biden era: Why the road to rebuilding the transatlantic alliance runs through Athens,” ELIAMEP Policy Paper no. 55, 19.2.2021.

sides to re-engage in the negotiations in a spirit of good will and to reach a comprehensive agreement in line with international law. An integral part of this process and a crucial litmus test for its success concerns the reaffirmation of the validity of the convergences that had been achieved by the end of the Crans Montana conference. A significant result yielded by the conference relates to the consensus that had been reached by the members of the international community – save Turkey, which appears to have modified its stance temporarily⁴⁰ – in favor of abolishing the guarantees and intervention rights, even though the issue of instituting a review or a sunset clause regarding the withdrawal of the Greek and Turkish contingent forces remained on the table.⁴¹

The prospect of breaking the deadlock during the upcoming meeting remains bleak and the fate of the talks will ultimately be determined by a number of factors, not least by the elusive signposts towards a final settlement which include the divergences last highlighted at the conference at Crans Montana.

⁴⁰ Ankara has always maintained that the Treaty of Guarantees is essential for the protection of the Turkish-Cypriots and after the collapse of the Crans Montana talks, the public rhetoric has reverted to this original position. During the Crans Montana negotiations, however, Cavusoglu indicated that Turkey would be willing to accept the UN proposal for replacing the Treaty.

⁴¹ Interview with Toumazos Tsielepis, *Polites*, 29.7.2018.