Overcoming the Cyprus Tragedy: Let Cypriots Be Cypriot

Thomas F. Farr

Cyprus is an island of many distinctions. It was the birthplace of Aphrodite, a gift of Mark Antony to Cleopatra, the site of visits by St. Paul and the Mother of Jesus, and the home of Othello and Desdemona. It is widely acknowledged as a repository of splendid relics, some dating to the dawn of civilization, left by overlords such as Mycenaean Greeks, medieval Venetians, the crusading Richard Coeur de Lion, and the Ottoman Suleiman the Magnificent. Even amidst its contemporary troubles it remains a favorite of European and Middle Eastern tourists, who seek its delightful seashore and Mediterranean breezes.

Unfortunately, it is today best known as an adjective, as in “the Cyprus problem.” As such, it has become a mainstay among the most troubling contemporary issues of ethnic conflict, bedeviling the best social scientists and policy makers of two generations. No respecter of the forces that would “manage” or marginalize the problem, the ancient island floats dangerously in the eastern Mediterranean like a modern sea mine. Its conflagration

Editor’s Note: Although the editor considers several arguments in this essay unsustainable by history, he nevertheless believes it merits publication for two reasons. First, the author introduces, albeit inadvertently, two notions that substantially explain the intractibility of the Cyprus problem: (1) that population numbers are irrelevant in the allocation of political power and (2) that the concept of sovereignty has no universal applicability but needs to be redefined in order to accommodate, on a selective basis, demands by ethnic groups. Second, the editor hopes that publication of this essay will precipitate a healthy debate about the current meaning of sovereignty, self-determination, and the rule of law.

Thomas F. Farr is a U.S. Foreign Service officer who has served as Cyprus desk officer in the Department of State. At the time he wrote this article he was posted to the U.S. Air Force Academy as assistant professor of political science. The views expressed herein are his own and do not necessarily reflect the policies of the Department of State or the U.S. Air Force Academy.
would affect not only Cypriots, the descendants of classical Greeks and medieval Ottomans, but their allies across the Mediterranean and the Atlantic as well. Unless the policies of Cypriots and their friends are substantially altered, the result by next century will be at best a deepened and perpetual instability, at worst a war in the eastern Mediterranean with far-reaching implications for Europe and the United States.

What is the Cyprus problem, and why does it remain despite almost four decades of effort to solve it by the Cypriots and the most powerful nations and international organizations? Cyprus became de jure a state in 1960 when Great Britain granted it independence. Political cooperation between majority Greek and minority Turkish Cypriots quickly broke down, leading to a decade of sporadic but intense ethnic violence. In July 1974, after an Athens-led coup against Cypriot president Makarios, forces from Turkey invaded, citing that country's treaty responsibility as a guarantor of the 1960 settlement. There ensued an internal movement of populations, which had for centuries lived throughout the island in mixed and contiguous villages. Greek Cypriots fled south from the advancing Turkish army, Turkish Cypriots fled north, and by August Cyprus was divided by the Green Line of UN forces. By the end of 1975, Turkish Cypriots—about 18 percent of the population—held some 37 percent of the island north of the line, supported by a garrison of Turkish troops (which eventually stabilized at about thirty thousand) and a steady stream of mainland Turkish settlers. South of the line, Greek Cypriots pleaded with the world to help forestall what they believed to be the impending destruction of their land by an occupying force.

Since 1974 the two sides—assisted and impelled by various international actors—have labored in vain to find a political solution that would reconcile Greek Cypriot demands for restoration and compensation with Turkish Cypriot insistence that the "sovereignty" and security of its community be guaranteed. The UN secretary-general, under a "good offices" mandate from the Security Council and supported by the international community, has sponsored intercommunal negotiations since 1968. These talks have waxed and waned in the expectations they have engendered, but they appear to have reached a climax in 1992 with the failure of Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's comprehensive and promising Set of Ideas and the rejection the following year of UN-backed confidence-building mea-
sures, which were thought to be risk free for both sides. Undaunted, new secretary-general Kofi Annan has taken up where his predecessors left off. In 1997 his special representative for the Cyprus dispute, Diego Cordovez, brokered a series of meetings between the two sides.

Although the outcome of the talks is uncertain at the time of this writing (summer 1997), there is little reason for optimism that these UN negotiations will succeed where the others have fallen short. Frustrated with the failure of the Boutros-Ghali initiatives, the Greek Cypriots have begun to realign their policies in two fundamental ways, each entailing risks for a stable solution to the Cyprus problem. First, they are pressing with apparent success for membership of Cyprus in the European Union, with or without the Turkish Cypriots. As we shall see, this approach carries some promise, but also holds substantial dangers.

Second, the Greek Cypriots have begun to develop a military capability that is unprecedented and dangerous. It includes a deepening of their defense relationship with Greece and the purchase of a Russian anti-aircraft system that could engage Turkish aircraft over the Turkish mainland. Turkey's response has been to threaten military intervention to prevent the deployment of such a system. In a post–Cold War world in which Greek-Turkish relations have been increasingly unstable,¹ and where violence on Cyprus is increasing, it is time to consider a new approach.

This essay makes three parallel arguments. The first is that Greek and Turkish Cypriots are just that—Cypriots. They are not Greeks, and they are not Turks. Neither group has ever been part of the "mother country" across the sea, and only the Greek Cypriots have seriously pursued union, an aspiration that, for all its historic intensity and significance in explaining the Cyprus problem, has been abandoned and is unthinkable today. Likewise, the Turkish Cypriots developed historically as a Muslim, Cypriot subculture separate from Ottoman Anatolia and harmoniously coexisting with Greek Cypriots. Turkish Cypriot political consciousness emerged slowly under British rule but did so without substantial reference to Turkey until after

¹. Greece and Turkey signed a "convergence of views" statement at the July 1997 NATO summit in Madrid, expressing their intent to respect each other's rights and avoid the use of force. This statement is certainly a step in the right direction, but whether it will contribute to a resolution of historical and emotional Greek-Turkish disagreements over such issues as Cyprus and rights in the Aegean remains very much in doubt.
World War II. Even then the Turkish Cypriots did not seek union with Turkey except as an antidote to union with Greece.

Today it is unquestionably true that Greek and Turkish Cypriots do not share a national consciousness; they are in fact more like two Cypruses than one. However, a case can be made that eliminating bilateral participation in Cyprus’s military affairs by the two “mother countries,” combined with a settlement acceptable to both Cypriot communities and guaranteed by NATO, could not only enable political coexistence but ultimately create a sense of joint ownership of Cyprus and a common national consciousness. Such a development is possible, not simply because the policies of Cypriots and foreign powers can be corrected, but also because the history of Cypriots has included a habit of tolerance rooted at least as deeply as the depredations that have evoked such hatred and distrust during the past half century. Cyprus is an island whose inhabitants lived in relative harmony for four centuries. Given the right set of circumstances, they can relearn the habits of the past.

Second, the status quo in Cyprus is unacceptable. It is leading to the permanent Turkification of the north—a gradual, if de facto, annexation by Turkey of the Turkish Cypriot zone and its political, economic, and demographic transformation from a Turkish Cypriot to a Turkish community. Without a political settlement that stops this process, the border between north and south Cyprus will be transformed from a transitional cease-fire zone and dividing line between two ethnic communities to a permanent, destabilized border between the Greek and Turkish worlds.

Third, the Turkification of the north is occurring not only because Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots seek it but also because of the success of the Greek side (Greece and Greek Cyprus), supported by the United States and the European Union, in isolating the Turkish Cypriots and denying, in fact if not in word, their legitimacy. This policy, although unavailing in producing a settlement, is now being intensified by the EU announcement that Cyprus’s accession negotiations will proceed with or without a settlement and whether or not the Turkish Cypriots take part. Unless the Turkish Cypriots can be persuaded to participate, which is unlikely, the EU negotiations could move Cyprus down the road to irrevocable division. International diplomacy must shift to accommodate this reality: A settlement that allows
Turkish Cypriots to exist as Cypriots and as partners in their homeland can preserve a stable Cyprus for both sides, but a continuation of current policies is likely to ensure that northern Cyprus becomes a province of Turkey, transforming the island more fundamentally than did the events of 1974.

Greek Cypriot policy will not easily be reversed. Its seedbed is a peculiarly Cypriot form of Greek nationalism, but its current manifestations were born of the trauma of 1974, which has produced a deep-seated and searing conviction of justice denied. For that policy to change, the Greek side and its international supporters must recast their view of the Cyprus problem. They, and we, must relearn that the inhabitants of the north are Cypriots, not Turks.

**Cyprus and the Failure of Diplomacy**

Few cases of ethnic conflict in history have evoked a more sustained and intensive involvement by the international community than the one on Cyprus. In one form or another, the Cyprus dispute has been addressed by most governments of Europe, NATO, the Council of Europe, the European Union, the Non-Aligned Movement, every UN secretary-general since Dag Hammerskjold, numerous UN Security Councils meetings since 1964, and not a few UN General Assembly sessions.

Among the international efforts to solve the Cyprus problem since World War II have been the British plans by Lord Winster, Lord Radcliffe, Harold Macmillan, and Sir Hugh Foot; NATO Secretary-General Spaak's plan; the U.S. Acheson plan; the UN Galo Plaza plan; the U.S.-Anglo-Canadian Nimetz plan; the Perez de Cuellar proposal; and the Set of Ideas offered by recently departed UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali.

UN Peacekeeping Forces, manned at one time or another by nine nations, have served in Cyprus continuously since 1964, the third longest of any such mission. UN secretaries-general and their personal representatives have worked persistently to achieve breakthroughs in the negotiations, including the representative of Boutros-Ghali, former Canadian prime minister Joe Clark, and Diego Cordovez, the special representative of the new secretary-general, Kofi Annan.

In the United States, every administration since Dwight Eisenhower's and
every U.S. Congress since 1974 have focused on the Cyprus problem. U.S. missions to the region have included those of such eminent diplomats as George Ball, Cyrus Vance, and Clark Clifford. Since the mid-1960s the United States has provided more than $300 million in aid to the island as a financial inducement to settlement, and since 1981 ambassadorial-rank special Cyprus coordinators have been appointed to assist the secretary of state in supporting UN mediation efforts. In 1985 the Reagan administration promised $1.5 billion toward the solution of the territorial issue in the context of a broader settlement.  

Congressional interest is sufficiently high to require a bimonthly report on administration efforts to resolve the problem.

President Clinton has been even more active than his predecessors. Not only has the State Department had a special coordinator but Clinton has appointed two personal emissaries (Richard Beattie and, recently, Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, broker of the Dayton Accords) to focus on the Cyprus dispute. In addition, he is the first president to name a special ambassador to determine the fate of U.S. citizens missing on the island since the Turkish invasion of 1974. Clinton has often signaled his personal interest in resolving the dispute, telling reporters at least twice in 1996 that he hoped to launch a U.S. initiative on Cyprus in the near future. As U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Madeleine Albright visited the eastern Mediterranean during the summer of 1996 to take advantage of a window of opportunity opened by the EU decision to begin consideration of the Cypriot application for EU membership and to express concern over increases in military forces on the island.

Why has such sustained diplomacy failed to induce a settlement? Negotiators and brokers have considered, at one time or another, virtually every constitutional nuance devised by man. They have proposed immediate financial inducements; structures for long-term economic growth; bottom-up and top-down plans for building trust; maps and “nonmaps” with alternative, precisely measured divisions of territory (protecting aquifers here, ceding citrus groves there); and stages of every duration to phase in whatever settlement is contemplated. Intercommunal negotiations, which began in

Beirut in 1968, have been held all over the Western world in locations as various as the homes of the Cypriot negotiators and grand international hotels. Refereed by secretaries-general and foreign ministers or simply held one-on-one, some talks were meticulously prepared, some not; some were held in secret, others amid public expectations of victory. All to nought.

One school of explanation, remarkably, is that Western powers haven’t been serious about inducing a settlement. It is true that Cyprus has been seen by Western nations largely as a “management problem” subordinate to the larger Cold War aims of preventing conflict between NATO allies Greece and Turkey and of maintaining the U.S. military bases in both countries, which were critical to NATO strategy. Supporting UN-led negotiations on Cyprus has been a low-risk strategy—endorsed by both the Greek and Turkish sides—that has not in general been seen as hostage to the interests of any one group. So long as the negotiation process remained alive, the larger aims of Greek-Turkish stability could be pursued irrespective of a Cyprus settlement. However, this is not a sufficient explanation for the failure of the negotiations. That the negotiating process has been seen as an end in itself has not precluded a settlement. Should the Cypriot communities agree on a settlement, other nations will go along.

A variation of the lack-of-seriousness argument is that the United States in particular has failed to put sufficient pressure on Ankara to withdraw its troops or to force its ethnic “clients” to accept a settlement. There is truth to this view as well; despite prodding by Congress, no president has believed U.S. interests well served by the kinds of actions against Turkey that could conceivably force its hand on Cyprus. As the 1975–78 congressionally imposed embargo against military sales to Ankara proved, the Turkish hand is not easily forced by unfriendly action. Moreover, a Turkish withdrawal, compelled by U.S. policy or not, could be a Pyrrhic victory should it lead to further instability on the island.

Diplomacy has failed on Cyprus not because it has been insufficiently energetic or enjoyed too little high-level attention, nor because the Turks have had their way. It has failed because Western policy has not properly addressed two fundamental problems—the need of the Turkish Cypriots to establish their legitimacy as a Cypriot people (as opposed to their economic or physical security alone) and the clear necessity to detach Cyprus from its
“mother countries” in a way acceptable to both. Western policy has rhetori-
cally posited the political equality of Turkish Cypriots in the sense of sup-
port for a bicomunal, bizonal solution, but it has in practice belied that
equality. Partly in an effort to compensate its powerful Greek lobby, the
United States in particular has vitiated its verbal commitment to equality by
isolating the Turkish Cypriot regime and creating the expectation by Greek
Cypriots that U.S. policy will not change.

But even if U.S. and Greek Cypriot policies do change, what reason is
there to suppose that Greek and Turkish Cypriots can reach agreement? Is it
in fact realistic to speak of the development of a Cypriot national conscious-
ness or even ethnic tolerance? The history of Cyprus suggests that the
prospect is not as empty as many have supposed. It has been characterized
by the development of two parallel Cypriot cultures that were compatible
and in large part tolerant of each other.

The Emergence of Two Cypruses

The location of Cyprus in the eastern Mediterranean has made geopolitics
and Hellenism the central facts of its history. Its ancient and medieval con-
querrors have included Phoenicians, Egyptians, Persians, Romans, the Eng-
lish King Richard Coeur de Lion, Lusignans, and Venetians. Each of these
affected Cyprus in some fashion, but none diverted the development of a
fundamentally Hellenic culture, which began with Mycenaean settlers in the
second millennium B.C. and was consolidated by Alexander the Great, who
conquered Cyprus in the fourth century B.C. Christianity arrived in the first
century A.D. but flowered as Greek Orthodoxy during the Byzantine Empire,
under whose emperors Cyprus was given a special status within the Eastern
Orthodox Church. As an ecclesiastical province, the Cypriot church became
autocephalous, that is, it was exempted from the jurisdiction of the patriarch
of Constantinople and authorized to elect its own head, the archbishop of
Cyprus. Later, under Ottoman rule, the archbishop would adopt a secular,
political role as the representative of Greek Cypriot peasants to the Ottoman
government. Even before then, however, Greek Orthodoxy became synony-
mos with being Cypriot.

It is one of the revealing ironies of Cypriot history that the most serious
effort to alter Cypriot "Greekness" came from Catholic Europe and that the saviors of Greek Orthodoxy were the Ottoman Turks. Franks and Venetians ruled Cyprus from 1191 to 1571 and suppressed Orthodoxy, attempting to implant the Latin rites and customs of Roman Catholicism in its place. In 1571 the Ottoman Turks drove the Venetians from the island and began three centuries of overlordship in which the Orthodox Church was returned to the center of Greek Cypriot life and Greek peasants were freed from serfdom. This role of savior is not ordinarily attributed to the Ottomans, but is significant in understanding why the Ottoman overlords and ethnic Turkish immigrants were not resisted in any systematic fashion by the indigenous Greek population of the island.  

Over the next three centuries of Ottoman rule, Cyprus developed two autonomous but relatively harmonious ethnic cultures—one Orthodox and one Muslim. The two intermingled without assimilation and, most importantly, accepted each other as elements of a dual Cypriot culture. Gradually, ethnic Turks became Turkish Cypriots rather than Cypriot Turks; while never losing their association with Ottoman Anatolia, their Islamic culture rooted itself in the island, not the mainland. In addition to the Ottoman role in restoring Orthodoxy, several factors help explain the emergence of a Turkish Cypriot culture and its relative compatibility with the Greek Cypriot. First, the Ottoman policy of ethnic Turkish settlement on the island never had as its goal the Turkification or religious conversion of Cyprus. Rather, Turkish settlers were intended to buttress Ottoman administration and improve the economic performance of the province. The millet system of imperial administration permitted Orthodox inhabitants to retain and nourish their own culture, including language, education, and religion. Indeed, Ottoman records suggest a remarkable absence of proselytizing—by either coercion or persuasion—on the part of Islamic overlords in Cyprus. Only some two hundred Cypriot Christians are documented in Ottoman records as


5. An example of this phenomenon is the language of the Turkish Cypriots, which developed as a purer form of Turkish than that spoken on the mainland. See Nancy Crawshaw, *The Cyprus Revolt* (London: George Allen, 1978), 21.
having converted to Islam during the three centuries of Ottoman rule.6 This helps to explain why perceptions of religious apostasy are today less a source of enmity between Greek and Turkish Cypriots than they are in other ethnic conflicts, such as the one in Bosnia. There the savagery exhibited by Bosnian Serbs against Bosnian Muslims is in part traceable to the fact that many Muslims are descended from Orthodox Christians.

Second, minority ethnic Turks on Cyprus were forty-four miles from their Ottoman overlords in Anatolia, while majority ethnic Greeks were more than five hundred miles from the Ottoman province of mainland Greece. Sheer physical proximity provided a sense of security as Turkish settlers developed their own ethnic identity as Cypriots. Third, both Islamic and Greek Orthodox tradition discouraged that most human of ethnic levelers and potential source of conflict, intermarriage.7 The absence of intermarriage helps to explain both the lack of a common national consciousness among the two groups and the development of an autonomous but compatible Turkish Cypriot culture.

Whether through direct settlement or conversion, Muslim minorities were scattered throughout the Ottoman Empire—most notably in the Balkans and certain islands of the eastern Mediterranean. By the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the Hapsburg and Russian empires were whittling away at Ottoman holdings in the Balkans, beginning a competition for hegemony. Ottoman Muslim minorities in Thrace and the Mediterranean islands were relatively secure until the flowering of Greek nationalism in the 1820s led to the expulsion of Turks from Greece and the birth of the megali idea, the “grand idea” of reestablishing the Byzantine Empire by reclaiming for the new Greek nation territories lost to the Turks over the centuries.

6. Vanik D. Volkan, Cyprus—War and Adaptation: A Psychoanalytic History of Two Ethnic Groups in Conflict (Charlottesville, Va.: University Press of Virginia, 1979), 52–3. Sir George Hill relates several cases of forced conversions to Islam, which, he says, unaccountably came to the fore in the 1840s and which appear to reflect records of complaints by Greeks to Western consuls on the island. These cases would appear to be unusual. See Sir George Hill, A History of Cyprus (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1952), 4:217–21. Some Greek sources assert that “a substantial number of conversions from Christianity to Islam occurred,” but that they served to harmonize rather than demonize the two cultures. See Michael A. Attalides, Cyprus: Nationalism and International Politics (New York: St. Martin’s, 1979), 80.

The experience of Islamic Cypriots has generally been different from that of their ethnic and religious brethren in the Balkans and elsewhere in the Mediterranean. At the outset of the nineteenth century, Turkish Cypriots were a reasonably stable minority within a shrinking Ottoman dominion. Although the coming decades would witness significant changes on the island—including brutal Ottoman reprisals against an Orthodox hierarchy that pressed its autonomy too far—\(^8\) the Turkish Cypriots did not prove vulnerable to the irredentist Greek movement stirring in the northwest. Unlike many of their Islamic brethren, Turkish Cypriots were to retain their protected status, and their identity as Cypriots was to mature amidst the quasi-democratic institutions of colonial Britain.

Other Muslim minorities were not as fortunate. As the Ottoman Empire—the Sick Man of Europe—declined, Turkish populations in the eastern Mediterranean were affected by Greek nationalism. The new Greek nation began actively to seek union (*enosis*) with or to show support for lands historically associated with Greece, including Mediterranean islands holding ethnic Greek populations. In the 120 years after Greek independence, most of the latter were united with Greece, including the Aegean, Ionian, and Dodecanese Islands, as well as Crete. The fate of Turkish inhabitants varied with the circumstances of their island’s union with Greece. Turkish Cypriots paid particular attention to Crete, where the Turkish minority was expelled. The brutality of the expulsion may stem in part from the belief that many Muslim Cretans were apostate Christians.*\(^9\)

But Cyprus did not go the way of Crete, both because of its proximity to Ottoman Anatolia and because of its strategic value to Great Britain, which took over administration of the island in 1878. Still Europe’s greatest power, with an empire consolidating and expanding into East Africa, the Middle East, and India via the newly acquired Suez Canal, Britain coveted Cyprus for its strategic value. As long as this remained so, the union of Cyprus with Greece, although earnestly desired by many Greek Cypriots, was unlikely, and the position of the Turkish Cypriot minority was secure.

---

When the new Republic of Turkey arose from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, the effect on Turkish Cypriots was minimal. Greece’s attack on Anatolia in 1921 led to a Turkish victory and a massive, forced resettlement of populations that, despite the enormous human suffering involved, laid the groundwork for a generation of entente between Greece and Turkey. In the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, Turkey acknowledged British rule in Cyprus as permanent and turned its attentions to the domestic reforms of Kemal Ataturk. Although some Turkish Cypriots moved to Turkey during the 1920s and would become a factor in Ankara’s Cyprus policy later in the century, Turkish attitudes toward Cyprus in the interwar years were unconcerned. Not only were Turks preoccupied with internal reforms, but they generally believed that Britain could be relied on to resist the encroachments of Greek nationalism.

As the twentieth century progressed, however, increasing numbers of Greek Cypriots saw British rule as an anachronism. Unlike many of their colonial counterparts in India and Africa, their goal was not simply independence. Instead, deeply influenced by the expulsions of Greeks from Turkey during the 1920s, and led by the autocephalous Cypriot Orthodox Church, they returned to the powerful idea of enosis as a remedy for the inauspicious location of their island near Turkey and as a means of “self-realization” as an ethnic Greek people.

But British governments resisted the loss of empire until after World War II and did not decide to relinquish Cyprus until the late 1950s. Britain thus became the obstacle to enosis and the target of those who sought it. During the 1930s Greek Cypriot agitators waged a violent campaign against British colonial administration, leading to a resolute and effective British crackdown that lasted into the 1950s.

**Cyprus Conquered: The State Created, the Nation Stillborn, 1945–1963**

The election in 1945 of the first majority Labour government in British history created hope among Greek Cypriots that Cyprus would be given the freedom to decide its fate. But neither the Labour government nor its Tory successor were willing to consider self-determination for Cyprus, which
could place at risk the British military presence in the eastern Mediterranean and endanger the Turkish Cypriot minority. British proposals for some degree of Cypriot self-government were discussed in 1948 but were rejected by the Greek Cypriots on the grounds that they excluded enosis. Two years later, a plebiscite conducted by and for Greek Cypriots revealed 96 percent in favor of union.

By 1955, the prospect of Greek Cypriot violence aimed against the colonial presence was again mounting. A Greek-financed organization called the National Organization of Cypriot Fighters (EOKA in the original) had been smuggling arms into Cyprus for guerrilla action against the British. EOKA's leader, Cypriot-born Greek nationalist General George Grivas, headed a campaign of terror directed initially against the British, who responded firmly by exiling the key political supporter of enosis—the head of the Greek Cypriot Church, Archbishop Makarios III.

The government of Turkey, now attentive to the prospect of a Greek province off its southern coast, asserted ominously that the only change in Cypriot sovereignty it would accept would be a ceding of the island to Turkey. Meanwhile, the Turkish Cypriots developed their own underground guerrilla organization—in English, the Turkish Resistance Organization, but known by the Turkish acronym TMT—funded, trained, and armed by the Turkish military. Alarmed by the EOKA campaign and overwhelming Greek Cypriot support for enosis, many Turkish Cypriots during this period came to favor taksim, or partition of the island in preparation for its ultimate division between Greece and Turkey.10

By the late 1950s, however, Britain's strategic calculus in the eastern Mediterranean was changing. Now in full-scale retreat from its empire, Britain's postwar efforts to deal with Cyprus were beginning to show troubling similarities to its unhappy experiences in Palestine, India, and Kenya. The British decision to leave Cyprus was precipitated by the loss of the Suez Canal, which led to a reassessment of strategic needs in the eastern Mediterranean.

---

10. Crawshaw, 256. For a Greek perspective on responsibility for the violence during the late 1950s, see Attalides, 46–50. According to this Greek view, EOKA turned against Turkish Cypriots only when TMT began to kill Greek Cypriots. The question of which organization struck the first interethnic blow is less important than the fact that the Greek Cypriot desire for enosis was the fundamental cause of the violence, not Turkish Cypriot "nationalism."
ranean. Concluding that the retention of sovereign military bases would meet British security requirements, a decision was made to cede sovereignty to the Cypriots. In order to avoid conflict between Greece and Turkey, both enosis and taksim would be prohibited and a constitution devised to protect the rights of the Turkish Cypriot minority.

In 1959 representatives from Greece and Turkey, with British approval, drafted agreements to give Cyprus independence, constitutional protections for minority Turks, and tripartite guarantees of Cypriot sovereignty. The new Republic of Cyprus undertook “not to participate, in whole or in part, in any political or economic union with any state whatsoever” (from article 1, Treaty of Guarantee). Small numbers of Turkish and Greek soldiers were permitted to be garrisoned on the island as symbols of the commitment of the guarantor powers. Britain kept two sovereign base areas.

Greek and Turkish Cypriot representatives signed these agreements, along with Greece, Turkey, and Great Britain. Archbishop Makarios, sobered by his exile and apparently willing to outlaw enosis to achieve independence, felt he had no choice but to sign for the Greek Cypriots, despite his concerns that protective provisions in the constitution for the minority Turkish community would make the government unworkable. Fazil Kuchuk signed for the Turkish Cypriots, and Makarios and he were elected president and vice president, respectively. In August 1960, the new Republic of Cyprus began its perilous experiment in self-rule and interethnic harmony. The world watched nervously, hopeful that political structure and security guarantees provided from without, combined with the habits of interethnic coexistence developed over four centuries, would overcome the forces who continued to long for enosis or taksim.

The Cypriot constitution of 1960 included elaborate and formulistic checks on the powers of the Greek Cypriot majority. These provisions included, most notably, a veto by the vice president (who by law must be Turkish Cypriot) and, in effect, an additional veto by the Turkish Cypriot minority in the House of Representatives, on any significant government decision. Within three years of independence, the constitution proved unworkable and broke down. In 1963, President Makarios unilaterally imposed constitutional revisions designed to remove political gridlock, but the Turkish Cypriots saw this as a threat to their existence. In fact, his revi-
sions were accompanied by a campaign of violence, which contributed to the departure of Turkish Cypriots from the government altogether.

**Cyprus Destroyed: The Birth of Ethnic Hatred, 1963–1974**

At the time of independence, Turkish Cypriots made up about 18 percent of the population and had for centuries been scattered throughout the island, both in areas that were exclusively Turkish Cypriot and in a considerable number of mixed villages. Beginning in late 1963, there ensued a series of brutal interethnic clashes uncharacteristic of the island’s history under Ottoman and British rule. Provoked by Greek Cypriots attempting to implement the so-called Akritas plan (paramilitary action designed to lay the groundwork for enosis), the violence resulted in some twenty thousand Turkish Cypriots leaving their homes in mixed and vulnerable villages for enclaves protected by Turkish or UN soldiers. (The constitutional settlement permitted 650 Turkish and 950 Greek soldiers to remain on the island; the UN force first arrived in early 1964).  

11 Vice President Kuchuk and other Turkish Cypriot members of the new government soon withdrew from their positions, and by early 1964 the experiment in Cypriot self-rule had manifestly failed.

During this period, Turkey had adopted an aggressive military posture. On several occasions during and after 1963, Turkish invasions of the island were forestalled only by the presence of British troops and the direct diplomatic intervention of the United States, including a blunt letter from President Lyndon Johnson to Turkey’s Prime Minister Ismet Inonu. After the Turkish Cypriots’ withdrawal from the government and the movement into enclaves, proposals to alter the constitution and deal with Turkish Cypriot fears were presented by UN representative Galo Plaza and former U.S. secretary of state Dean Acheson. The first was rejected by the Turkish side, the second by the Greek.

From the vantage point of almost three decades, the situation on the island by the early 1970s is reminiscent of a parched forest in a hot summer,

---

vulnerable to a conflagration either by accident or design. Among the Turkish Cypriots, the failure of the 1960 constitution and the turning of Greek Cypriot violence against them created a keen sense of vulnerability, intensified by Turkey's failure to intervene on their behalf. In a few short years, Turkish Cypriots had developed the security concerns, and the geographic isolation, of a besieged ethnic minority.\textsuperscript{12} The fact that Turkey was a nation wavering between military rule and democracy, and that Greece's military dictatorship was in the throes of a desperate attempt to maintain power, produced what Henry Kissinger has called "a lethal cocktail."\textsuperscript{13}

As if ancient Greek tragedians had scripted the text, the conflagration on Cyprus was triggered in Athens. In July 1974, the Greek junta played a last desperate card. Determined to overthrow President Makarios—who had refused to cooperate in uniting Cyprus with a nondemocratic Greece and who had long courted the communist Left in Cyprus—the junta engineered a coup on the island designed to kill Makarios and achieve enosis in one bold stroke. Makarios escaped and fled, but the coup succeeded in bringing to power an anti-Turkish EOKA terrorist named Nicos Sampson. Given a clear rationale to invade Cyprus under its responsibility as guarantor of the 1960 arrangements, Turkey attacked on the morning of 20 July. The Turkish army quickly established a beachhead and a line of communication from the north coast to the capital at Nicosia. Shortly thereafter the junta in Athens fell, and Sampson was replaced by the Greek Cypriot leader of the House of Representatives, Glafkos Clerides, who became acting president.\textsuperscript{14} By mid-August, after mediation efforts by the UN, the United States, and Britain had failed, Turkey proceeded to take the northern 37 percent of Cyprus, stopping when it had reached a line dividing the island at Nicosia.

There ensued in late 1974 and into 1975 a movement of ethnic populations that altered forever the demographic and cultural landscape of Cyprus. Many on both sides had fled during the fighting of July and August 1974;

\textsuperscript{12} Volkan, 81. The Greek Cypriots argued that Turkish Cypriots were forced into the enclaves by the TMT in preparation for taksim. See Theodore A. Couloumbis, The United States, Greece, and Turkey: The Troubled Triangle (New York: Praeger, 1983), 62.

\textsuperscript{13} Henry Kissinger, Years of Upheaval (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1982), 1189.

\textsuperscript{14} Makarios returned to the island and the presidency in December 1974. Clerides was elected president of Cyprus in his own right in 1993.
hundreds were killed and hundreds of others are still listed as missing by both sides. Five U.S. citizens are included in that total, a factor that helps to shape domestic pressures on U.S. Cyprus policy to this day. Others were forced to leave their homes and villages during the following year after negotiations between the two communities failed.

By the end of 1975, some 160,000 Greek Cypriots had moved to the southern part of the island. Likewise, some 40,000 Turkish Cypriots who had lived in the south moved to the north or to the British sovereign base at Akrotiri. The latter were sent by the British to mainland Turkey and subsequently repatriated to northern Cyprus. Those who fled in small groups to the north by land risked, and sometimes suffered, retribution from Greek Cypriots along the way. By 1975, a de facto partition existed between Cypriot zones.

International condemnation of the Turkish action came too late to alter its outcome. Some observers believe that a swift, public U.S. condemnation of the coup and the Sampson regime would have forestalled the invasion, causing the Turks to grant an interval before taking action—an interval during which Sampson would have been toppled, the junta would have abdicated, and the rationale for an invasion undermined. Alternatively, a stronger reaction to the initial invasion in July, and U.S. insistence that the Turks not expand their initial positions, might have prevented the second phase in August, in which the Turks broadened a thin presence into a large and disproportionate northern sector from which Greek Cypriots fled. It is, of course, impossible to know what outcome might have resulted from these actions. As it happened, either because of Western acquiescence, Turkish determination, or both, Turkey consolidated its hold on northern Cyprus.

The Greek-American lobby, split for the previous seven years over U.S. policy vis-à-vis the junta, now united in pressing Congress to act against Turkey. Despite resistance from the new Ford administration, Congress imposed an arms embargo on Turkey, demanding that it remove its troops

15. See Pierre Oberling, The Road to Bellapais: The Turkish Cypriot Exodus to Northern Cyprus (Boulder, Colo.: Social Science Monographs, 1982).
from the island. Other nations joined in this remonstrance, but to no avail. The Turkish troop level on Cyprus gradually stabilized at about thirty-thousand. Turkish Cypriots were resettled in Greek Cypriot houses in the north, as were mainland Turkish settlers who began to move into Cyprus by the thousands. Within months of the invasion, Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots had drastically altered the dimensions of the Cyprus problem.


Intercommunal negotiations had begun in 1968 in Beirut, where the north’s Rauf Denktash and the south’s Glafkos Clerides first met as representatives of their ethnic communities (almost thirty years later the two are serving in the same capacities). Since 1974 four UN secretaries-general (Kurt Waldheim, Javier Perez de Cuellar, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and, more recently, Kofi Annan) have tried their hands at brokering a settlement, each with the support of the Security Council. Their efforts have produced agreements in principle, but none has led to a settlement.

Since the death of Makarios in 1977, three Greek Cypriot presidents have negotiated with Denktash: the hard-line Spyros Kyprianou (1977–88); the nonparty, pragmatic George Vassiliou (1988–93); and the veteran Clerides (1993–present). While their methods have varied with their personalities, internal party disposition, and Greek government views, all have adhered to certain basic goals, which center on what Greek Cypriots call the “three freedoms” of movement, resettlement of displaced persons, and property. The latter two imply a return of significant portions of the territory and properties now held by the Turkish Cypriots in the north. These issues have become sacred in the south, where the 160,000 displaced Greek Cypriots and their descendants now make up about a third of the population and are a potent political force. In the Makarios-Denktash agreement of 1977, the Greek Cypriots accepted in principle that Cyprus would become a federal republic, but to this day they continue to seek a strong central government that avoids the pitfalls of the 1960 constitution. In the Kyprianou-Denktash agreement of 1979, they formally abandoned the goal of enosis once again (having already done so with the constitution of 1960). In addition, the Greek Cypriots have consistently demanded a withdrawal of the “occupation
force” of Turkish soldiers and the growing number of Turkish settlers in the north.

The position of the Greek side on the Turkish invasion of 1974, argued successfully in European and U.S. capitals, is that it was clearly illegal. In the event of a breach of the provisions of the Treaty of Guarantee, article 4 enables each guarantor power (Britain, Greece, or Turkey) "to take action with the sole aim of reestab[lishing] the state of affairs created by the present Treaty" (emphasis added)—that is, the independence, territorial integrity, security, and constitution of the republic. Any ambiguity regarding Turkey’s desire to reestablish the status quo in its initial invasion of 20 July was swept away by its second military push to the so-called Attila line in August, after Sampson had abdicated in favor of Clerides and the Greek junta (responsible for Sampson and the coup) had been overthrown. Partly as a result of this argument, the UN and most capitals have continued to recognize Greek Cypriot administrations as the legitimate government of Cyprus and have honored the economic embargo of the north.

But international support has not rested solely on legal arguments. Greek and Greek Cypriot embassies, emigrants, and students abroad have all become highly effective ambassadors, delivering to host governments the message of Turkish barbarism during the invasion, of desperate pleas by mothers seeking their missing sons, and of the plight of those forced from their homes in the north. In 1975 representatives of the European Commission of Human Rights traveled to the island to compile a report. The representatives were barred from the north by Turkey and the new Turkish Cypriot regime, which demanded without success that the commission investigate human rights violations beginning in 1963 and not just those from summer 1974. When filed, the report contained damning evidence of Turkish atrocities. 17 As years went by, reports of pillaging of medieval Orthodox churches and icons were circulated by the Greek side. The picture successfully imprinted on international minds was of a savage Turkish military attack on a defenseless people and the despoliation of their Christian her-

17. European Commission of Human Rights, Report of the Commission, re Applications: Cyprus Against Turkey, nos. 6780/74 and 6950/75 (Brussels: Council of Europe, 10 July 1976). For the Turkish Cypriot demand that the commission investigate atrocities against Turkish Cypriots beginning in 1963, see ibid., vol. 1, 18.
itage. While some of this picture was quite accurate, its historical antecedents were all but forgotten. Much of the world came to believe that the Cyprus problem began in 1974.

The result has been UN Security Council resolutions condemning the retention of Turkish troops on the island, international support for the Greek Cypriot economic embargo of the north, and persistent pressure on Turkey from Western nations to remove its troops and influence its “clients” on the island to cut a deal. In the United States, congressional hearings have shown a remarkably consistent message to administration witnesses for twenty-three years: the villain in the Cyprus problem is Turkey and the administration is not doing enough to press for withdrawal of Turkish troops or for implementation of UN resolutions. In 1995 Senator Alfonse D'Amato and Representative Robert Andrews cosponsored a sense-of-the-Congress resolution that would have reduced U.S. aid to Turkey by five hundred thousand dollars per day until Ankara took “demonstrable steps toward total withdrawal of its military forces from Cyprus.” In a July 1995 hearing of the House Committee on International Relations, Representative Robert Torricelli insisted the United States use all possible leverage on the Turks, including the withholding of “any cooperation or effort on behalf of Turkey with regards to its ambitions in Europe unless and until there is a Turkish military withdrawal and a larger settlement on Cyprus. Period.” Given the relative weakness of the Turkish lobby in the United States and the absence of official Turkish Cypriot diplomatic representation, effective counterarguments in the Congress have been few.

The Turkish Cypriot position in the intercommunal negotiations has been driven by two overriding objectives: ensuring Turkish Cypriots’ security and recognition of their legitimacy as “co-owners” of Cyprus. Since 1974 they have had the twin advantages of continuity with a single negotiator, Rauf Denktash, and of the continued presence of the Turkish garrison, the ultimate leverage against unwanted concessions. As long as these troops remain, the Greek Cypriots are in one sense the *demeudeurs* in the negotia-

tions. Notwithstanding international support for their position, and their partially successful efforts to bring U.S. and European pressure on Turkey, at the end of the day it is the Greek Cypriots who seek a fundamental change in the territorial and political status quo. With the Turkish garrison, Turkish Cypriots are secure inhabitants of 37 percent of the island, operating autonomously with a functional, multiparty democracy. Accordingly, Denktash has refused to put the Turkish garrison on the table in advance of a final settlement.

In another sense, however, the Muslim Cypriots cannot accept the status quo. While their post-1974 existence has been secure from external threat, and is clearly preferable to the vulnerable, enclaved life of the period between 1964 and 1974, their negotiating behavior since the invasion has not simply aimed at preserving what exists. Indeed, it has revealed a profound dissatisfaction with their fate. Turkish Cypriots share with their neighbors to the south a sense of victimhood. They are convinced that they exercised a fundamental right of self-determination in establishing the 1960 constitution and a bicommmunal partnership, both of which were subsequently and illegally abrogated by the Greek Cypriots, leading to an internal Turkish Cypriot exile in their homeland. For them the Turkish invasion was a “peace” action that forestalled further ethnic isolation or worse. Sampson may have been the tool of Athens, but he was Cypriot, and his goal of enosis was widely shared among Greek Cypriots.20

The Turkish Cypriot self-understanding, therefore, is that of the owner illegally evicted by his co-owner through force of arms and saved from destruction by his neighbor. This attitude has led to the demand that Turkish Cypriot “sovereignty” be acknowledged in any settlement. In 1983, frustrated by Kyprianou’s successful access to the UN General Assembly at its expense, the legislative assembly in the north voted unanimously to declare a “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus” with the qualification (emphasized by Denktash) that the declaration was intended to facilitate a federal solution by establishing the political equality of the two communi-

20. See, for example, the 1990 analysis of the legal status of the two Cypriot communities by Monroe Leigh, a former legal advisor to the U.S. secretary of state, available on the homepage of the Turkish Foreign Ministry http://www.mfa.gov.tr:80/. Footnote 13 discusses the legal case for Turkish intervention.
ties. Condemned by the UN Security Council and Western governments, the Turkish Cypriot action is understandable less as a separatist scheme than as a desperate assertion of legitimacy. While Denktash and the assembly would undoubtedly have accepted national autonomy, they can have been under no illusions that the recognition required for nationhood would be forthcoming from an international community that had since 1963 treated them as a recalcitrant minority. The 1983 declaration is better understood as a rejection of the minority label, offered in the only language of sufficient volume available, and an insistence that the north be treated as a founding partner in any constitutional settlement.

Indeed, after the declaration Denktash began to show flexibility in the negotiations. In 1985 and 1986, his concessions led to near agreements on constitutional structure and territory, only to be rejected by Kyprianou on the grounds that the proposals failed to ensure the withdrawal of Turkish troops and would have required Greek Cypriot “recognition” of the north during a transition period. Kyprianou’s hard line contributed to his narrow defeat by George Vassiliou in the 1988 presidential elections. After a period of refusing to meet with Denktash, Vassiliou turned to direct negotiations, which culminated in Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali’s creative Set of Ideas of 1992, followed by an extraordinary push to implement in 1993 and 1994 such confidence-building measures as restoring the Varosha beach resort to its pre-1974 prosperity. At the end of this process, however, little progress had been made.

The failure of the Boutros-Ghali initiative has occasioned much commentary, some of it agreeing with the secretary-general’s May 1994 conclusion that the problem was “a lack of political will on the Turkish Cypriot side.”

23. Varosha, a suburb of the port of Famagusta, was a Greek-Cypriot owned Miami Beach–type resort when the Turkish army took the area in 1974. Since then it has been fenced and its hotels virtually abandoned. It now resembles a jungle on the sea. Teams of experts from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank reported in 1993 that restoring Varosha and Nicosia’s airport could benefit both communities significantly, with the creation of some nine thousand new jobs. The Turkish Cypriots would take up half those jobs and benefit to the tune of $500 million over five years. See Nancy Crawshaw, “Cyprus: A Crisis of Confidence,” World Today (April 1994), cited in Henri Warmenhoven, ed., Western Europe, 4th ed. (Guilford, Eng.: Dushkin, 1995), 193.
One could, he said, understand why their “unhappy experience before 1974 justified [Denktash’s] unforthcoming approach” on a political settlement but not why he rejected proposals such as rebuilding Varosha, which “would bring substantial and tangible benefits . . . without in any way compromising [Turkish Cypriot] security or . . . basic political positions.”²⁴ Indeed, according to UN estimates, the Varosha project alone would increase the Turkish Cypriot gross domestic product (GDP) by 20 percent per annum.²⁵ It was to the secretary-general inconceivable that the Turkish Cypriots, whose GDP and per capita income is less than one-third that of the Greek Cypriots, could resist such a risk-free economic inducement.

Resist they did, and the result has been a deepening of the crisis on Cyprus. Although continuing to participate in UN-sponsored intercommunal negotiations, the Greek Cypriots are now pursuing two risky policies that they doubtless hope will pressure the Turkish side into concessions or, failing that, will at least permit Greek Cyprus to pursue its destiny independently of the north. First, they are deepening and developing a defense relationship with Greece that began in 1993 with the signing of an agreement bringing Cyprus under the Greek defense system. They have also announced the purchase of a Russian anti-aircraft system that will give the Greek Cypriots the capability to counter Turkish air power effectively, a vital mission in any war on the island. This system has the range to engage aircraft over Turkish territory and has brought threats of military action from Ankara.

Second, the Greek Cypriots have put membership in the European Union at the top of their agenda, and the EU seems prepared to oblige. In July 1997, the EU Commission announced that EU-Cyprus accession negotiations would begin in early 1998.

The Greek Cypriots, acting as the only internationally recognized government of Cyprus, applied for EU membership in 1990. At first the EU took the position that accession would be possible only after a settlement; member nations did not want the EU to inherit the Cyprus problem. By 1995,

²⁵. Brey, 23.
however, this perspective had changed. In a series of European Council meetings that year, Greece agreed to lift its veto on the EU-Turkey customs union (long sought by Ankara) and on the Fourth EU-Turkey Financial Protocol in return for an EU decision to begin negotiations with Cyprus whether or not a settlement had been achieved.  

The Greek Cypriots appear to see the UN negotiations as a means of winning a Cyprus settlement on their terms or, if necessary, of taking southern Cyprus into Europe without the north. They had hoped that Ankara, having taken a significant step by achieving the customs union, might then be induced to remove a central obstacle to full EU membership by pressuring Denktash to settle. Moreover, the Turkish Cypriots themselves might see the economic advantages of being included in the union and, rather than being left behind, agree to a settlement that permitted a unified Cyprus to enter the EU.

But this scenario is not playing out as expected. If Turkey’s prospects for entering the EU seemed improved with the customs union in 1995, they appear in late 1997 more remote than ever. In its July 1997 blueprint, Agenda 2000, the EU Commission excluded Turkey altogether from the list of candidates whose accession negotiations will begin in early 1998, thereby reducing substantially the opportunity for the EU and the Greek side to influence Turkey’s Cyprus policy. However (as the EU had announced in 1995), Cyprus is among the candidates, and the commission made it clear that accession negotiations will proceed whether or not the Cyprus dispute is resolved and whether or not the Turkish Cypriots participate in the negotiations.

While the EU will undoubtedly try to secure Turkish Cypriot participation, the latter have consistently condemned the Greek Cypriot EU application as an act of arrogation, a denial of the Turkish Cypriot partnership in governing Cyprus. Consequently, they have refused to cooperate, notwithstanding the clear economic incentives involved. In January 1997, six months prior to the EU announcement, Denktash and Turkey’s President Suleyman Demirel issued a joint statement, ratified unanimously by the Turkish parliament, warning the EU that the onset of accession talks would

lead to an “integration” of Turkey and northern Cyprus. In July, after the EU Commission’s announcement, a second joint statement echoed this warning. In August, Denktash and Turkey’s Foreign Minister Ismail Cem signed a joint agreement establishing a “partnership council” whose professed goal is to “secure a partial integration between the two countries on the basis of economic and financial integration and of partnership in security, defense and foreign policy.”

If it cannot secure immediate Turkish Cypriot participation in the accession talks, the EU may believe that over time the north will still conclude it must participate and agree to a Cyprus settlement in order to avoid further isolation and economic atrophy. There is a certain ironic logic to this approach; in the end it may offer the Turkish Cypriots their only means of retaining a residuum of Cypriot identity, as opposed to opting to become a province of Turkey. It is conceivable that they could come to accept a settlement that gives them less than the full partnership they seek, particularly if Ankara concludes that the consequences of integration are too costly and pushes for such a settlement. But neither Turkish nor Turkish Cypriot behavior during the last four decades suggests such an outcome. It seems far more likely that, given the choice, both will opt for partial or even total integration rather than risk Cyprus becoming what they believe would be an island controlled by Greek Cypriots and their Greek allies, hostile to Turkish and Turkish Cypriot interests.

Some maintain that the annexation of northern Cyprus has long been part of Turkish and Turkish Cypriot strategy and that the inhabitants of the north are more Turkish than Cypriot. They may be right, in which case the division of the island seems inevitable. However, if (as this essay has argued) Turkish Cypriots seek to retain their Cypriot identity, Greek Cypriot policies are blocking the achievement of that goal, in effect driving the north toward Turkey. The EU gambit is therefore a most dangerous strategy. If the EU accepts into Europe the Greek Cypriots but not the Turkish Cypriots, the process of dividing Cyprus will be virtually complete and the hope of reconciliation greatly diminished, if not dead. The EU will have established the Greek portion of a divided and unstable island as its southern-most boundary, deepened Greek-Turkish tensions, and furthered the potential alienation
of Turkey from Europe. Under such circumstances, the prospects for violence on Cyprus, and its spread outside the island, would increase.

It should be noted as well that demographic forces are already steadily transforming the Cyprus north of the Green Line into a province of Turkey. The proportion of mainland Turkish settlers—many of whom arrived in the years immediately after 1974—is increasing at the expense of indigenous Turkish Cypriots. Because reliable statistics are rare, estimates of the numbers of Anatolian Turks on Cyprus vary widely. Behrooz Morvaridi, using Turkish Cypriot figures, estimates that in 1992, of a total population of some 176,000 in the north, between 25,000 and 35,000 were Turkish settlers. Using “all available data,” however, Hansjoerg Brey and Günter Heinritz estimate Turkish settlers to have numbered about 70,000 in 1990. Whatever the actual number, the trend is clear: higher birth rates among the Anatolians and the emigration of Turkish Cypriots seeking greater economic opportunities than those available in their embargued and isolated homeland are leading to a fundamental alteration of the demographic and cultural character of northern Cyprus.27

If this analysis is correct, current policies are moving Cyprus resolutely toward division and instability. There is but one way to alter this process: the Greek Cypriots and their allies must address head-on the core issue of Turkish Cypriot legitimacy. The Cypriot inhabitants of the north have demonstrated that, while economic security is important to them, they will not sacrifice their “sovereignty” to the Greek Cypriots in order to obtain it. Born in part of their history of “partnership” with Greek Cypriots under Ottoman and British rule and in part of the memory of vulnerability between 1963 and 1974, their determination on this point explains Turkish Cypriot behavior more fully than Boutros-Ghali’s lack-of-political-will argument. Their stubborn conviction has been—and we must hope it remains so—that Turkish Cypriots are not Turkish guest workers or a transitory minority but

Cypriots of four-centuries standing whose political and economic vulnerability is, or ought to be, an aberration, not a way of life.

A New Approach

It is time to reconsider whether a substantially new negotiating approach might help achieve the end that all parties say they seek: a federated, independent Cypriot nation-state composed of two constituent ethnic communities, living in two regions, in which the grievances of both sides have been addressed sufficiently to remove the island’s division as a potential source of ethnic conflict and of a broader war. This essay has argued that Cypriot history demonstrates the essentially Cypriot character of the 20 percent Muslim minority, that Denktash’s negotiating behavior can be understood as an attempt to assert that Cypriotness, and that a settlement that acknowledges Turkish Cypriot “co-ownership” can pave the way not only for harmony but ultimately even for a Cypriot national consciousness.

Moreover, it seems clear that the involvement of Turkey and Greece in Cyprus’s affairs has been disjunctive. While the aspirations of both ethnic groups on the island have been bound up with those two countries—and, in the case of the Muslims, their sense of security, also—it is time to consider how that involvement in the military sphere can be eliminated in a way satisfactory to all concerned. The replacement of the defense ties between Cyprus and the “mother countries” is critical to a settlement for two reasons. First, it would tend to confirm for the Turkish Cypriots that enosis has been abandoned in fact, as it has in word, by the Greek side. Second, it would eliminate the prospects of taksim and annexation of northern Cyprus by Turkey, as well as the perceived need for Athens-Nicosia defense cooperation and the even more dangerous rearming of the south now taking place. Moreover, Cyprus can never be whole with Turkish troops resident on the island and with an increasing number of Anatolian settlers. To remove them, and the Turkish right of intervention in Cyprus affairs, is vital to the goal of a sovereign, independent, peaceful Cypriot nation-state.

It goes without saying, however, that this solution cannot be forced on any of the parties. The only credible solution to the gaps in security that these actions would create is a NATO guarantee of Cypriot independence and
security, which would require a transitional NATO force to replace the UN force present since 1964. The latter has in general been a positive element in the dispute, but it cannot provide the Turkish Cypriots a sense of security, both because they believe it failed to protect them in the 1960s and because they have observed the horrific failures of UN peacekeeping with respect to their Muslim brethren in Bosnia. In the end, NATO is the only organization with the authority and credibility to guarantee a settlement and to permit both Greece and Turkey to participate in Cyprus’s defense—although on a multilateral rather than bilateral basis.

A settlement of the Cyprus dispute based on the foregoing analysis would require the following steps:

1. Immediate cessation of the economic embargo on the Turkish Cypriot zone and implementation of the confidence-building measures explored in 1993–94.

2. Drafting of a new, confederal constitution on the Swiss model (The central government would initially have minimal powers, derived entirely and equally from the consent of the two communities. The executive would consist of a rotating presidency and a national council divided equally between the two sides; a bicameral legislature would have an upper chamber with equal representation and a lower chamber with proportional representation. In granting these powers, each community would also cede its right of secession, partition, or union with any other country.)

3. Severing all bilateral defense ties between Cyprus and the “mother countries” (This means the abolition of defense treaties, including the Treaties of Guarantee and Alliance, and the withdrawal in perpetuity of all foreign troops and weapons except as outlined below.)

4. The formal assumption by NATO, under the aegis of the UN, of responsibility for guaranteeing the sovereignty, independence, and security of the nation of Cyprus and its two communities (A NATO force would

28. Once this and the other elements of the approach are accepted, matters such as territory, freedom of movement, and property ownership can be resolved on the basis of principles already agreed. In addition, the work of the Tripartite Committee for Missing Persons in establishing the fate of Greek and Turkish Cypriots missing since 1963 can be completed, drawing on the recent Clerides-Denktash agreement on an exchange of information regarding the graves of Cypriots missing since 1963.
replace the UN force for a fixed period, during which it would withdraw in increments, gradually abolishing the Green Line. The NATO guarantee, however, would remain.)

5. The creation of financial inducements for the return to Turkey of Turkish settlers—or their descendants—who have gained Turkish Cypriot citizenship since 1974

6. The completion of accession negotiations and immediate entry of the united Cypriot state into the European Union

The obstacles to these goals are not trivial. One or another offends the perceived interests of virtually every concerned party. A confederal solution based on political equality requires Greek Cypriots to abandon a centuries-old belief that Cyprus is a Greek island and a more recent conviction, burned no less deeply into their souls, of mortal injury by the Turkish army. They must acknowledge—inwardly as well as internationally—that the aspiration for enosis is dead and irretrievable. For their part, Turkish Cypriots must accept the cutting of their umbilical cord to Turkey and, in due course, the removal of the prophylactic Green Line in the south. They must risk vulnerability in order to win lasting security and prosperity.

Turkey itself must withdraw a military outpost forty miles off its coast, replacing its dominating bilateral influence over the island with a multilateral participation in Cyprus’s security through NATO. The Greek leadership must accept the same bargain, and like its counterparts in Ankara, overcome charges in parliament that it has “abandoned” its ethnic brethren and betrayed the sacred cause. The NATO guarantee is the only plausible answer to such criticisms. Both countries must also conclude that this settlement is the best means of stemming the deterioration of their bilateral relations in a post—Cold War world in which the harmonizing effects of the Soviet threat have disappeared.

Furthermore, the long UN presence on Cyprus will come to an end under such a settlement, although the Security Council will be called upon to grant its imprimatur to the NATO presence. The United States will be required to move Cyprus near the top of its foreign policy agenda, but not entirely in the manner its powerful Greek “lobby” would prefer.

For all of these difficulties, however, the most formidable obstacle to the
new approach is in fact its linchpin—the NATO guarantee. NATO, like the EU prior to 1995, has deliberately remained on the borders of the Cyprus dispute, unwilling to complicate the already formidable task of managing the troublesome Greek-Turkish relationship within the Atlantic Alliance. It is time for NATO to abandon its reticence. It should agree to guarantee Cyprus’s sovereignty and internal security and to provide a peacekeeping force over a fixed period, for two reasons. First, by enabling the broader political settlement on Cyprus, a NATO guarantee can not only stop the deterioration of Greek-Turkish relations but can lay the groundwork for a true Greek-Turkish détente. At the very least, NATO action would create a firebreak against the growing threat of military confrontation between two NATO allies. Such a confrontation would be catastrophic at a time when NATO is attempting to expand into Eastern Europe and to bring its Bosnia experiment to a successful conclusion.

Second, a NATO peacekeeping force on the island would serve not only the short-term mission of fostering harmonious political coexistence among Cypriots but would lay the groundwork for closer NATO-Cyprus relations even after a NATO withdrawal. Cyprus’s strategic importance is ancient and unchanged. Should a united Cyprus enter Europe, the tradition of nonalignment nourished by Makarios would in time likely be superseded by a European consciousness and a desire for entry into other European institutions, such as the Western European Union or even NATO itself. Such a development could present significant strategic benefits to a NATO seeking to export stability to the southern borders of Europe.

Although I believe these to be plausible reasons for NATO involvement on Cyprus, this essay is not an analysis of NATO interests. Its central argument is that the Cyprus tragedy can be overcome and a Cypriot political identity developed only with implementation of a political partnership between Greek and Turkish Cypriots and a cessation of the troublesome involvement of the “mother countries.” The latter can occur only with a security guarantee plausible to all sides, and NATO alone can fit the bill. Without NATO involvement, the result is likely to be continued stalemate and deepening enmity between the two Cypriot communities.

It is worth recalling that the tragedy of Cyprus is not simply the violence on the island. The real tragedy is that Cypriot hatred of Cypriot is of modern
progeny and that it can still be destroyed in its seedbed. But the opportunity is fleeting. As it is, a generation of Cypriot children have for the first time been raised to believe that their island is divided among enemies. Their parents—with our help—must relearn that Cyprus was an island of ethnic neighbors, and that it can be again.