

## Recommendation of a Path to Peace in the Cyprus Conflict

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**Abstract:** Cyprus conflict is one of the protracted social conflicts. Since 1950s, despite all the peaceful efforts no just and lasting peace between the two Cypriot communities to live in peace and security under a Federal Republic has been attained. Federal solution is one way of a structural change, which resolve nationalist or ethnic conflicts. However, conflict resolution practitioners emphasize the necessity of the development of preconditions for effective resolutions of the conflicts. Only then it is possible to create structural changes conducive to a stable peace. It is argued in this article that, in Cyprus, neither the psychological and social conditions nor the necessary mechanisms to enable a federal association to work successfully exist.

**Keywords -** Conflict Resolution, Federalism, Cyprus Conflict

### Introduction

In the world, there is a growing number of ethnic, tribal and national conflicts that remain unresolved. In many of these cases, it is not possible to contain conflict within existing frameworks. All of these conflicts (Lebanon, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Yugoslavia, Northern Ireland, Israel and Cyprus) originate from long years of frustrated victimization evolving into hatred and finally into violent struggle. Thus, policy makers and scholars face with the challenge of credible and long-lasting methods of conflict management and resolution so that groups and nations at odds could co-exist in the same state or as peaceful neighbors.

My attention here will be on the ethnic conflict resolution through federalism, which create structural changes conducive to a stable peace. Federalism is described as the best way to manage nationalistic problems over the world. A standard federal system is favored, as well, by many Europeans and the Greek Cypriot side as a settlement for the Cyprus conflict. As the Cyprus problem is one of those problems where different ethnic and nationalist communities live in one territory and struggle for a political association in which their cultural identity will be protected. I believe that the time has come to rethink the potential success of a federal arrangement in the island as the Greek Cypriot side is on the way for the full membership to the European Union in two years time.

### The success of a federation in the case of Cyprus:

For the durability of federalism the most important factor is the maintenance of both diversity and unity. Both diversity and unity will be realized through the existence of goodwill and commitment, crosscutting cleavages, the number of the units in a federation, the acceptance of a federation as an end in itself and the role of the political parties.

Consequently, the questions in the case of Cyprus should be:

- Are there good solid foundations for establishing a federation?
- Will a federation be a practical solution to resolve the problems between the island's two Greek and Turkish communities?

First of all, in Cyprus there is mistrust and fear between the two communities. In the evolution of federalism, the media especially television, radio and printed press plays an important role Frenkel (1986). In Cyprus, the media are enhancing the mistrust and fear among the people of the island. Apart from the media there is the role of the schools and the church in the case of South Cyprus (1996). These two establishments have a negative impact on the development of perceptions and ideals about each other. In this way hostile attitudes, differing perceptions and misleading communication are favored. There are coercive attempts to address the problem. So the result is an unwillingness to reach a solution. Even with the conclusion of a federal constitution, there is no guarantee that a commitment will be guaranteed for the full acceptance and support of the system because the

qualities of a co-operative relationship are not present. In 1960, a partnership agreement was concluded between the Greek and the Turkish Cypriots to resolve the conflict between the two communities. The suspicion of Turks of Greeks and the different idea of the Greek Cypriots ended the partnership with a civil war. After the de facto partition of the island, the main points of the Greek Cypriot side for a solution has been the return of the refugees and an end to the Turkish guarantee. Nobody can guarantee that after achieving these two objectives in the framework a settlement, the Greek Cypriots will be fully committed to the functioning of a federation or that the Turkish Cypriots will not suspect every move of the Greek Cypriots and feel threatened by them.

Yet there is another factor which raises a question about the communities' commitment to the federal idea. Yet there is no psychological condition, which would foster unity in Cyprus. The positive social-psychological conditions can emerge but they won't emerge immediately even if a federal constitution is written. For the success of a federation a spirit of tolerance and compromise amongst both the leaders and among the communities is needed Salem (1992). Unless co-operation and basic consensus exist the viability and the success of a federation will be doubted. As in the Canadian case the success depends on "you give me this and I will give you that; repeated twenty times" Ibid. Unfortunately this is probably not going to be the case in Cyprus at least in the near future.

The existence of crosscutting cleavages gives stability to a federal system. In Cyprus there will be no crosscutting cleavages because there will be two homogenous groups. Duchacek talks about the Nth group factor which play the role of an integrative glue Duchacek (1988). It means the existence of other communities outside the two territorial communities which makes the other two communities cooperate Ibid. In the disagreements over certain issues in daily politics these disagreements have the potential to destabilize the system because it might lead to the dissatisfaction of the minority group. The disagreements could in theory to be settled by the Supreme Court as a conflict regulating mechanism. But in Cyprus, this mechanism which was tried in the 1960 partnership, was unable to resolve the conflicting interests between the two sides. Thus, it is not advisable to make a settlement dependent on such a mechanism in Cyprus as both sides will look at the issues from the two nationalist perspectives. Connected with the crosscutting cleavage factor is the number of the units of the federation. In Cyprus, the ideal federation is considered to be bi-communal and bi-zonal which means that the number of the main actors is limited to only two communities. There will be no possibility for them to change their power relationship. Particularly, since both communities are very nationalist and lack the commitment to a common authority, they will find themselves in a zero sum game situations. Moreover, there is a numerical imbalance between the two communities in Cyprus. This fact complicates the

situation in the island. In federations the decision making depends on majoritarian mode. The minority group, the Turkish Cypriots in the case of Cyprus, will be expected to place their trust in this mode of decision making. In the near future, this does not seem to be achievable. To reduce any state to only two sectors, brings out spirit of intolerance and the ability to control tensions becomes more difficult Beaufays and Belgium (1988).

The last question is the position of the political parties. The political parties in Cyprus on both sides, the North and the South, will have a higher probability of dividing along linguistic and regional lines in the coming years if a federal constitution is concluded. At least for a few years there will be no national political parties which would stand up for the interests of the country as a whole. Each politician, from either communities- Turkish or Greek, will be dependent on an electoral base that is situated in only one part of the country. In debates in the Parliament they will be caught between their national mandate and the desires of their voters.

The position of the political parties in Belgium is similar to what can be expected in Cyprus. Although in Belgium, this kind of party organization seems successful, the future is not very clear yet, as Belgium is still a young federation. In the 1970s in Belgium, with the start of the regionalization of the party system due to differential economic development in Flanders and Wallonia, the regionalization of the country started as well Bakvis and Chandeler (1987). In Cyprus there are socialist oriented parties in both sides of the island as well. AKEL has been one of the well-organized political forces with leftist orientation (communist till recently) in the Greek side of the island. In the Turkish side, there are TKP and CTP with leftist orientation. Somehow all these parties which might be thought to bring national solidarity, still do not have well-established strategies to that end. Especially the AKEL party, which has more support among the Greek Cypriots than the other two Turkish Cypriot parties in the Northern part of the island, has similar views as to the cause and the solution of the problem with the right wing parties. Yet the leftist parties in the North part of the island favor a federal solution (contrary to the right wing parties which support an independent state). They support, however, the Turkish guarantee and equality of the Turkish Cypriots like the right wing Turkish parties. In conclusion, the party system in the island will have rather separatist than integrative tendencies.

The main objective of this study has been to determine the conditions of durability and workability within a federal arrangement besides the constitutional basis. An analysis was carried out to find out whether the Cypriots should expect that federalization will make it easier to resolve conflicts between them and will bring a long period of peace and stability to the island. As Covell argues for the Belgian case, she says that on balance it seems that federal institutions should ease the process of conflict resolution, Ibid. Federalism is often advocated as a system, which can defend the minority rights by bringing some limitations on the dominance of the majority. But the federal institutions like the supreme court or the charter of the rights in Canada or the School Pact and the Cultural Pact in Belgium on their own would not be able to ensure this. The successful federations benefited from other factors to defending minority rights like crosscutting cleavages, etc. The twenty seven year old partition of the two Cypriot communities left them without any contact and with deep rooted fears of each other. Apart from these facts, they also lack the necessary elements for the success of their federation. Furthermore, the 1992 "Set of Ideas" as the most elaborate work done by the UN since 1974 for the establishment of a bi-communal and bi-zonal federation was inadequate to bring about a compromise formula as to the decision making election of the President or for a proper conflict resolution mechanism or the issue of sovereignty. The Turkish Cypriots regard this set of ideas as inadequate as to their "equitable participation" in the governing process. The Greek side remained non-committed. The Greek and Turkish Cypriots have

conflicting constitutional demands such as the mode of the election of the President and the issue of separate sovereignties for the Greek and Turkish Cypriots and the question of veto powers. Both Vassiliou and Clerides had refused to grant veto powers to the Turkish members of the cabinet because the Greek Cypriots believe that these veto powers granted to Turks will impede governmental efficiency as in the 1960 partnership Bolukbasi (1995). Clerides stated that "although the set of ideas included positive aspects it also was disadvantageous for "Cypriot Hellenism" Ibid.

The proposed solutions did not satisfy neither the Greek Cypriots nor the Turkish Cypriots. The proposals seem to offer superficial solutions to deep problems. The constitutional engineering which is hoped to overcome the Greek-Turkish Cypriot cleavage has not been achieved yet.

The renewed talks (November 1999-August 2000) between the parties under the auspices of the UN General Secretary did not bring a breakthrough. On the contrary the talks came to an end with the refusal of the Turkish Cypriots to sit on the table unless new parameters are brought as basis of negotiation. However, there is still eagerness to solve the Cyprus problem especially by the European Union before the full membership of the Greek Cypriot side, under the name of the Cyprus Republic. This indicates that the ripe time has come for the solution of the problem. But it has to be acknowledged that the present situation seems to discourage the prospects of successfully implementing the concepts of the federal idea.

### **Conclusion**

At the root of the Cyprus conflict is a knot of problematic relationship and conflicting interests. Thus conflict resolution in Cyprus as in all conflicts must therefore concern itself not only with the issues that divide the main parties but also with the social, psychological and political changes that are necessary to address root causes. This indicates the necessity of not only structural transformation but the personal and group transformation as well Miall (1999). It is the responsibility of the third parties, specially the European Union and the United Nations, to see that a federal system as envisioned for Cyprus, would be in danger of failing as is the case in dual federalist arrangements.

It will not be possible for federalism to be achieved and to work successfully in Cyprus. Even in the light of a renewed interest in the Cyprus problem especially by the European Union the probability of a successful negotiated federal settlement looks very remote.

On the basis of this analysis, efforts to identify alternative possible scenarios for the settlement of the conflict are urgent not only for the peace in the island but for the peace of the region as well.

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