

QUO VADIS CYPRUS FOREVER?

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Kıbrıs Türk ve Rum kesiminin liderleri arasında Ocak ayı sonlarında New York'ta yapılan ve Yeşil Ağaç Zirvesi olarak adlandırılan son müzakerelerin sonucu bizlere her iki kesimin de Annan Planı öncesindeki dönemde mutabık kaldıkları konularda hala uzlaşma içinde olduklarını gösterdi. Bahsi geçen bu son zirvede her iki taraf da masaya yeni ve yaratıcı bir teklifle gelmedi. Rum tarafının Avrupa Birliği üyeliği öncesinde yönetim ve mülkiyet konularında Türk tarafıyla uzlaşması cesaretlendirilmemişken, Avrupa Birliği dönem başkanlığına beş ay kala her iki tarafın uzlaşmalarının oldukça zor olduğunu görmek büyük bir sürpriz değil. Kıbrıs Sorununun 2012 yılı içinde çözümüne yönelik beklentilerin, bazı farklılıkları olmakla birlikte 2004 yılındaki Annan Planı Referandumunun Rum kesimindeki reddi sonrasındaki durumla aynı olduğu söylersek pek de abartmış olmayız.

Back in 2005 I co-authored a monograph published by TESEV, entitled *Quo Vadis Cyprus?* The title was my idea and was supported by the other co-authors. It was a fitting description of the political situation in Cyprus after the failure of the Annan Plan in April 2004.

Yet the title choice was not really influenced either by the supposed origin of the question nor by Henryk Sienkiewicz's novel, fragments of which are still somewhere back in my memory. Had it been so, the title would have suggested that Cyprus knew its way and we – those asking – did not know “the truth”.

Unfortunately, by entitling the working paper *Quo Vadis Cyprus?* we did not really ask where Cyprus was going. We suggested it was going nowhere, or at least nowhere closer to a solution.

Seven years later, I now feel the same.

A brief glance at the outcome of the latest round of negotiations between the

leaders of the two communities in New York in late January, the so-called Green-tree Summit, shows us that the two Cypriot communities still agree approximately on what they did in the period before the Annan Plan. The stumbling blocks also remain more or less the same: property claim mechanisms, citizenship/voting rights and governance. The issue of guarantee was avoided altogether, leaving the chance for the easier themes to be taken on.

Yet neither side came up with innovative ideas or new proposals. Frankly, it would take a good deal of imagination to come up with new ideas after 44 years of negotiations in a problem where all variables are known.

Therefore, it does not seem very exaggerated to say that with a couple of differences, the prospects for a solution to the Cyprus problem in 2012 are what they were after the failure of the Annan

Plan Referendum on the Greek Cypriot side in 2004.

Nevertheless, those differences are far from negligible. Just to mention some, the region is much more unstable and volatile than it was back in 2004, the EU's economy is in (to put it mildly) bad shape and globally we are facing a reshuffling of the balance of power.

Meanwhile, Turkey has become an important regional player while its relations with another regional power, Israel, have deteriorated. After years of hesitation, Greek Cypriots started oil and gas exploitation in cooperation with Israel – but entirely without the cooperation of Turkish Cypriots. Turkish Cypriots, supported by Turkey, claim their right to a portion of the welfare to stem from the prospective natural resources. Greek Cypriots are not sensitive to this claim – perhaps also because they might have doubts about their ability to share the benefits justly among themselves.

The cooperation with Israel does not remain in the area of oil and gas. While the second round of licensing would start soon despite all protests from the Turkish Cypriot and Turkish side and prompting their reciprocal actions, Greek Cypriots plan to lay with their new partner the world's longest sub-sea power cable (1000 kilometers long and carrying up to 2000 megawatts) linking Israel, Cyprus and Greece.

In addition to the program for cooperation for 2012 signed between the armed forces of France and Cyprus, stationing Israeli military jets in Paphos has also been discussed.

While parties are paying more attention to their unilateral businesses than to the reunification efforts, the UN continues, though likely already unwillingly, its Good Offices on the island. Undoubtedly, Secretary General Ban Ki Moon and his Special Envoy for

Cyprus Alexander Downer have been trying hard to help the leaders to overcome the divergences.

However, due to the lack of incentives to conclude settlement, Ban Ki Moon's leverage in the Cyprus case is hardly a half of what was his predecessor Kofi Annan's in 2004. And if Mr. Annan and his team could not succeed in pushing the settlement agreement through the Greek Cypriot constituency in 2004, it would be difficult for Mr. Moon to turn the tables in 2012.

Moreover, his Special Adviser Mr. Downer has already managed to join the long queue of other high UN figures mistrusted by the Greek Cypriots. He narrowly escaped the Greek Cypriot legislature declaring him *persona non grata*.

Overall, the results of the second round of the Greentree Summit should not come as a surprise. If there were no incentives for the Greek Cypriots to compromise with the Turkish Cypriots on the issues of governance or property prior to their EU membership, it is difficult to see why there would be now, five months before their EU presidency. They started preparing themselves for the presidency a long time ago. Now the preparations are finished and the set up does not encompass a vision of the EU presidency conducted jointly with the Turkish Cypriots.

So the question is, what can the UN possibly do vis-à-vis Cyprus in a time of increased threats to global security, a time when its members are struggling with severe economic challenges and with yet another of its envoys falling foul of the Greek Cypriots?

Mr. Downer is about to draft a report that will be submitted to the Security Council in couple of weeks. He is preparing this Report on the Good Offices during a time when even the US is redirecting its military expenditures,

shrinking the US Army and removing some of its battalions from the areas not imposing an imminent danger. UN members contributing immensely into the Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), some of them European countries having serious economic troubles, might find it difficult to explain to their respective Parliaments the necessity to continue to pay.

It seems that the upcoming Report of the Secretary General to the Security Council on his Mission of Good Offices in Cyprus might be of crucial importance for the existence of the UNFICYP. And that is great.

Because, in my humble view, this is the only leverage that would raise the stakes high, the only way out of the never-ending saga of the Cyprus problem. This time, if not scared off by various bills, the Secretary General and his team might mark the breakthrough in the Cyprus reunification, making the parties interested in the compromise settlement.

But if not, *Quo Vadis Cyprus* can be asked forever.

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