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The Annan Plan: A Historic Challenge for the Cypriots

Dr. Harry Anastasiou*
Dr. Birol Yesilada*

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The time frame for a final decision on the Cyprus problem is narrowing very rapidly. The Annan Plan underwent the last refinements in an effort to bridge the gap between the two sides. Never before in the history of the Cyprus problem has there been so much effort and energy invested by political leaders, civil society and the international diplomatic community to forge a settlement. But equally important is the fact that never before has there been such a confluence of favorable conditions for arriving at a comprehensive settlement of this protracted problem.

For these reasons it is important for all concerned to be fully aware of the gravity of another failure in settling the Cyprus problem. The consequences of a failure will not only have a grave impact on Greek Cypriot/Turkish Cypriot (G/C-T/C) interests, but also on Greek-Turkish relations, on the region in general and on security interests of the Western Alliance at a critical time. If the two sides miss this historic opportunity for a settlement, it is highly probable that a series of events will follow to the detriment of all concerned. These are:

1. The UN will withdraw its peace-making efforts for the near future.
2. The division of Cyprus will become permanent. Greek Cypriots (G/Cs) will continue on the EU membership road while the Turkish Cypriots (T/Cs) move closer to integration with Turkey.
3. If both sides say "NO" to the plan, Cyprus's EU membership may become doubtful.
4. T/Cs and G/Cs will become permanently alienated from each other.
5. Greek-Turkish relations will suffer a major setback and diminish the progress made in recent years.
6. Turkey's membership in the EU would become more difficult if not impossible.



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7. The ESDI-NATO relations may be strained.
8. Finally, in this worst-case scenario, the prime losers will be those G/Cs and T/Cs who had spent their lives hoping for peace and reconciliation on their Island.

On the other hand, an agreement by the two sides for settling the Cyprus problem entails enormous benefits that for the first time in the history of the Cyprus problem outweigh all of the relative “losses” that each side will incur in reaching the compromises required by the Annan Plan. The gains emanating from an agreed settlement are:

1. A united Cyprus will enter the EU, thus engrafting the G/C and T/C societies and their future development in a broader system of stability, security and wellbeing, a dimension that was absent from all previous efforts at settling the Cyprus problem.
2. The conflict-preventive and peace-building institutions and political culture of the EU will become instated in all of Cyprus as a determining factor in T/C-G/C relations and Greek-Turkish relations.
3. The people of Cyprus will stand to benefit economically from EU membership.
4. The new generation will be freed from the shackles and burden of a problem of the past that they had no part creating, but which was transferred on their shoulders by the previous generations. The new generation will thus re-orient its energy outward, creating a new society with new possibilities and a future within the EU framework.
5. Relations between Turkey and Greece will greatly improve, setting the basis for progress on other outstanding issues, such as those related to the Aegean.
6. Turkey's advancement toward the EU will be greatly enhanced and speeded up.
7. Cyprus, and consequently Turkey, will provide the first much needed example of Muslim societies and states operating securely, freely and cooperatively within western, secular democratic institutions at local, national and regional levels.
8. The EU framework will be extended and deepened in the Eastern Mediterranean region, bringing the EU conciliatory and stabilizing institutions and political culture at the doorstep of the troubled Middle East as envisioned in the Barcelona Declaration.
9. T/Cs, G/Cs, Turkey and Greece will offer the world a success story in peace and reconciliation, at a time when the world is in dire need for hope.

By the most elementary criteria of intelligence and reason, it is clear that in regard to the wellbeing of T/Cs, G/Cs, Turkey, Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean region, the benefits derived from a settlement overwhelmingly eclipse all of the traditional objections of the two sides. For the benefits that now lie within reach go way beyond any of the gains



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that the two sides had strived for and had hoped to attain through their respective traditional positions and struggles.

It is in light of the above realities that we invite all Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders, their foreign supporters, concerned to seize this historic opportunity to bring the Cyprus problem to a just and definitive closure. Their failure will surely be judged harshly by history. But their success will mark them as people of vision and historical significance, who dared open up new horizons for their homeland, for their people and their neighbors. Furthermore, they will take an important step in revitalizing the Greek-Turkish friendship that was started by Ataturk and Venizelos, which subsequent generations failed to solidify.

*Dr. Harry Anastasiou is an Associate Professor in the Conflict Resolution Graduate Program at Portland State University. He is of Greek Cypriot background.

** Dr. Birol Yesilada is a Professor of Political Science and International Studies and holder of the endowed Chair in Contemporary Turkish Studies in the Mark O. Hatfield School of Government at Portland State University. He is of Turkish Cypriot background.