

A stylized map of Cyprus composed of a grid of grey dots, with several dots highlighted in red to indicate specific locations or points of interest.

Presidential Elections in Cyprus in 2013

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- The right-wing party Democratic Rally is likely to return to power, twenty years since it first elected its founder, Glafcos Clerides, to the Presidency of the Republic of Cyprus and after ten years in opposition. The party's leader may secure election in the first round, thanks to the alliance with the Democratic Party and the weakening of the governing communist Progressive Party of the Working People.
- The economy displaced the Cyprus Problem as the central issue of the election campaign. The opposition blames the government's inaction for the country's ailing economy, while the government, the ruling AKEL and their candidate blame neoliberal policies and the banking system. The candidate of the Social Democrats EDEK distinguishes himself by proposing to pre-sell hydrocarbons and do away with the Troika. He also openly opposes bizonality in a federal solution.
- Whatever the outcome of the election, it will mark a new era in internal politics and in Cyprus's relations with the European Union and the international community. The rapid weakening of the polarisation between left and right, at the expense of the left, may give rise to new forces. Their main feature is nationalist discourse and radical positions on the Cyprus Issue and other questions. Depending on the winner, Nicosia and Brussels may experience a kind of (their first) honeymoon or, conversely, a new period of strained relations.
- At another level, the new President will have to govern under the scrutiny of the IMF and the European Union's support mechanism. On the positive side, prospects related to hydrocarbons discovered south of the island may mean a brighter future when their exploitation starts.



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1. Introduction

Presidential elections in the Republic of Cyprus take precedence over all other elections; under the Republic's presidential system, only the outcome of this contest may lead to a shift in power. Given that the incumbent president, Demetris Christofias, is not seeking re-election, a new government will be formed by the end of February 2013. The new president will have to face serious challenges, in particular the handling of the financial crisis facing the country, which is awaiting assistance by the European Union's support mechanism and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). A renewal of relations with Brussels, the revival of the stalled talks on the Cyprus Issue with the Turkish Cypriot community and other, domestic issues will top the government's agenda.

The Republic's 1960 Constitution established a bi-communal state with Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots sharing power at all levels. Following the collapse of bi-communality in 1963, the Republic has remained in the hands of Greek Cypriots alone; full separation of the communities and territorial division was brought about through the occupation of the northern part of the island by the Turkish Army, which followed a *coup d'état* by the dictators in Athens in summer 1974. The abolition of power sharing shifted the balance that was initially drawn across community lines to the benefit of the executive power in the Greek-community-owned state. Thus, the president is invested with executive powers with regard to certain issues, but the Council of Ministers is the executive body in most state affairs. However, no conflicts or disagreements between them have been known so far and one might suggest that the president's authority is similar to that of a monarch.

The president remains in office for five years, irrespective of the composition of the parliament; the government needs no vote of confidence, but securing a majority in the House could help the smooth functioning of the state and approval of bills forwarded by the Council of Ministers.

Today's general context and climate is one of disillusionment and anxiety over the future, in contrast to the conditions that prevailed soon after the election of Demetris Christofias in February 2008. His election with a comfortable increase of six points (53.4 percent) was welcome by Brussels as a promise of better rela-

tions than with his predecessor Tassos Papadopoulos and good prospects of an outcome in the talks on the protracted Cyprus Problem. With the passage of years, however, the climate has changed and the high rate of support and approval he initially enjoyed (70 per cent) among the Greek Cypriot electorate declined to as low as 20 per cent. On the one hand, the President and his government faced fierce opposition in and outside the parliament, sometimes arrogant opposition, even by the parties participating in the Council of Ministers; on the other hand, little tolerance of criticism, and persistent laying the blame for all that went wrong on every one else but the government was of little help in reaching compromises.

The worsening of the economy forced the government to apply to the European Support Mechanism and made it the top public issue. All parties except AKEL blame the government for errors and inaction, while the latter and AKEL blame the neoliberal policies that caused a global crisis, the opposition parties that support such policies and the local banks that created huge debts through their exposure to the markets in Greece.

2. Political Forces and Presidential Candidates

The party system is a multiparty one, with strong polarisation between left and right, mainly consolidated since the 1940s. Parties play a very significant and decisive role in all fields of life through strong clientelist bonds with society. However, trust and confidence in them among citizens has been eroded in the past 5–7 years, affecting also the parties' mobilisation abilities. This led to a sharp increase in abstention rates from around 10–12 to 21 and 32 per cent in the parliamentary and the municipal elections of 2011, respectively. All parties have been affected by this crisis of confidence, although DISY to a lesser extent.

AKEL (Ανορθωτικό Κόμμα Εργαζομένου Λαού – Progressive Party of the Working People) is the oldest party. Its influence, founded on active support of labour struggles, strong organisational structures, economic activity and sustaining of the left–right cleavage, has been in decline since it first assumed power (2001) and won the presidency in 2008. The party's »soft NO« to the United Nations proposal (Annan Plan) for a settlement in April

2004, despite its years-long support for rapprochement with the Turkish Cypriots and federation, along with the ups and downs of power and the financial crisis are weakening its appeal.

AKEL opposed the candidacy of Archbishop Makarios in the first presidential elections (December 1959) by supporting, in coalition with the traditional right, Yiannis Clerides, a conservative and father of Glafcos Clerides. It subsequently supported and elected Makarios, Spyros Kyprianou and Tassos Papadopoulos, while in 1988 it elected the businessman George Vassiliou to the presidency. Stavros Malas, a genetician, is the candidate supported by AKEL in the February 2013 elections. His itinerary included social democrats EDEK and the United Democrats (Ενωμένοι Δημοκράτες – EDI). He was proposed as candidate by the incumbent President while holding the portfolio of Minister of Health. He had also contested – without success – a seat in parliament on the ticket of AKEL. Malas actively supported the UN (Annan) Plan.

DISY (Δημοκρατικός Συναγερμός – Democratic Rally), founded in 1976 by Glafcos Clerides from conservative right and nationalist elements, has developed as the most pro-European political force. It elected its founder Glafcos Clerides in 1993 (with the support of DIKO) and in 1998. Going against the majority of its grassroots, it supported the Annan Plan, driven mainly by Nicos Anastasiades, its leader since 1997. The latter managed to fix the pieces and heal the wounds of the party, which in the May 2011 parliamentary elections again became the dominant force, with 34.3 per cent of the votes. The outspoken party leader managed to raise his popularity to the top after trailing for many years behind all the other leaders. He has established strong personal bonds with the European People's Party leaders. In order to calm fears and objections to his past support for the Annan Plan and gain broader support, Anastasiades had to mitigate his positions on the solution of the Cyprus Problem and make vague references to federation.

In seeking the election of Nicos Anastasiades, DISY reached an agreement with DIKO, which formed a programmatic framework on the Cyprus Problem, the economy and energy policy. On the first issue, there are provisions for establishing a framework for the solution of the Problem (see below for details), appointing a negotiator with the Turkish Cypriot side, the role of the National Council and decision-making procedures.

On the economy, it was agreed that growth would aim at people's welfare, combining private initiatives and state intervention where needed. The axes of development include structural changes, investment in human resources, technology upgrade, promotion of research and development and encouragement of innovation. Energy policy addressed two sectors, hydrocarbons and development of renewable energy; one of the objectives is for Cyprus to become a regional centre that will also export energy to Europe.

DIKO (Δημοκρατικό Κόμμα – Democratic Party), founded 1976, has been in government for most of the time since the death of Makarios (1977), with Spyros Kyprianou (1977–1988) and Tassos Papadopoulos (2003–2008) and in coalition with DISY (1993–1998) and with AKEL (2008–2011). DIKO's decision to ally with DISY caused internal splits and disagreements at the leadership and grassroots levels. Its vice-president Nicolas Papadopoulos, son of the late president Tassos Papadopoulos, resigned from his post in January 2013, in disagreement, other cadres already having left the party. The main argument of the dissidents is that Anastasiades' past behaviour and positions on the Cyprus Problem are in opposition to those of DIKO, which demands a federal solution with the »correct content«, near to a unitary state. Having opposed the Annan Plan, DIKO leaders considered the »Yes« vote as an act of treason. At the grassroots level, opinion polls in 2012 suggested a higher rate of intentions to vote for Lillikas than for Anastasiades, in spite of the leadership's choice. The trend appeared to be reversed by the end of January 2013.

Social Democrats **EDEK** (Κίνηση Σοσιαλδημοκρατών – Social Democratic Party), founded in 1969 by Dr Vassos Lyssarides, developed initially under the influence of Afro-Arab ideals and right-wing nationalist ideas before discovering European socialism in the 1980s. After the failure of efforts of the parties other than AKEL and DISY to agree on a common candidate, EDEK chose to support George Lillikas, 52, a former Secretary of Youth in the government of George Vassiliou (1988–1993), AKEL deputy (1996–2003) and minister in the government of Tassos Papadopoulos. Lillikas claims the legacy of Papadopoulos policies on the Cyprus Problem and promotes himself in connection to his »No« vote to the Annan Plan; he also explicitly opposes bizonality in the case of a federal solution. AKEL dissidents who also supported Papadopoulos in the 2008 presidential elections against

their party's Secretary General, former and present DIKO cadres and other groups opposing federation are among Lillikas' supporters.

The smaller parties, **EVROKO** (Ευρωπαϊκό Κόμμα – European Party) and the **Greens** (Οικολόγοι Περιβαλλοντιστές – Ecologists Environmentalists), which have both rejected the Annan Plan, appear split between the candidacies of Anastasiades and Lillikas.

Given that requirements for being a presidential candidate are minimal (over 35 years old, 1,710 Euros registration fee and supported by nine voters, one being the proposing citizen), eleven persons have submitted their candidacy, all approved by the returning officer. This is the first time that (two) women candidates run for the presidential office. Praxoula Antoniadou is the chair of the EDI, a former minister in Demetris Christofias cabinet, and Makaria Stylianou, from protest groups formed after the explosion of ammunition at the naval basis of Mari in July 2011.

3. Campaign Issues and Objectives

The main features of the campaign concern efforts by the candidates to present proposals that touch upon a large number of issues. Particular emphasis is put on the economy in general and on specific sectors that vary in each candidate's programme; employment, growth, the cost of living, problems of small and medium businesses and others. Sectors such as health, education, culture, immigration and the environment are also addressed, while positions on the Cyprus Problem and the main parameters of a solution form a separate chapter. The approach adopted is mostly bureaucratic and managerial, or an amalgam of stereotypical phrases that in some cases lack perspective and miss aspects such as planning and the strategy and means for achieving the proposed goals. Attempts to discredit opponents by referring to their past, views or relations are an everyday phenomenon.

The range and the number of issues addressed by each candidate in their programmes differ considerably:

The electoral programme of Nicos Anastasiades comprises detailed proposals on all major issues on the public agenda. His main positions are a follow-up of the party's main slogan in the 2011 parliamentary elections as a unifying force. His leadership skills as an asset to adequately

respond to the (economic) crisis and his bonds with Europe are also projected. Through the slogan »Cyprus is not alone«, the candidate suggests that Cypriots can count on the support of European allies. The European People's Party held a summit meeting in Limassol on 11 January 2013, with Jose Manuel Baroso, Angela Merkel and other state leaders participating and expressing their support for the presidential candidacy of their host. His opponent candidates and parties claimed that those leaders are responsible for austerity measures; instead of convincing them to assist Cyprus, they made him accept their severe terms and conditions, opponents said.

Anastasiades' main positions favour cooperation of all forces with the formation of a national salvation government that will face the economic crisis, the Cyprus Problem and other questions on the basis of a common strategy. According to the programmatic positions in the agreement signed by DISY and DIKO, the Cyprus Problem is one of foreign aggression and occupation and a solution framework should be drawn on the basis of a number of principles and parameters; these are the UN Decisions and Resolutions and the decisions by the ECHR and the European Court of Justice, as well as the high-level agreements between Makarios and Denktash (1977), Kyprianou-Denktash (1979), the agreement of Papadopoulos with Talat of 8 July 2006 and a framework agreed by the National Council in September 2009. On the other hand, new elements have been introduced, such as the new conditions created by the accession of Cyprus to EU and European law, the »upgraded geostrategic role of Cyprus following the discovery of hydrocarbons« and rejection of the »Cyprus Hellenism of the Annan Plan«. The candidate further presents proposals on young people, education, immigration, health, citizens' security, the modernisation of the state and other issues. He proposes a special contract with the new generation for creating new jobs and assisting entrepreneurship.

The candidate and his party direct their criticisms mainly against the government and the President, held responsible for the state of the economy and the problems facing the country. While they backed Christofias on the Cyprus Problem in his first two years in office, they now criticise what they call his »concessions« on issues such as that of settlers from Turkey, the rotating presidency and others. Proposals made by the other two main candidates are also targeted, in particular on the issue of hydrocarbons and the Cyprus Problem.

Stavros Malas presents proposals on a limited number of areas, including his vision about Cyprus, probably in order to avoid issues on which he may not have the knowledge required to address properly. Given his age and also course in politics, he underlines the concept of »new«: person, proposal and era. In response to Anastasiades' emphasis on skills as a leader to face the crisis, he is projected by stressing that he not only has the skills of a leader, but he is also a trustworthy one. His vision for a free and united Cyprus will create conditions of security and stability that will lead to progress and welfare, he says. Society, economy and the role of the state are approached with an emphasis on research and development, welfare and safeguarding of labour rights, energy self-sufficiency and growth with social responsibility. Economic activity should address external investors, while local entrepreneurship should be assisted by the State, which must serve the people instead of being their master. Cyprus should be safe, strong and a peaceful island, according to Malas.

In his public appearances, Malas lays the blame for the bad state of the economy on the banking system and the international crisis. In their discourse, both the candidate and his supporting party AKEL imply that there is a kind of conspiracy or an offensive of external forces against Cyprus that relate also to the exploitation of hydrocarbons found in the Republic's exclusive economic zone. Without rejecting a bailout, he calls for defending society, labour rights and economic growth that are threatened by proposals made by the Troika. Instead of talking about the past – that is, the responsibility of the government for the state of the economy – he suggests making proposals about the future.

Malas and AKEL criticise Anastasiades for endless mutations and changes of position; they target his relations with the extreme right in Cyprus and with neoliberal leaders in Europe; the latter promote policies that are the causes of the financial crisis globally and in Cyprus, Malas and AKEL claim. Other matters on which Malas criticises his opponent are »his positions and behaviour« during and after the 2004 referendum on the Annan Plan. He accuses him of having launched a complaint to the Council of Europe against then President Papadopoulos and against his country for constraints on free expression.

Malas attempts to present himself as an independent candidate have had little success since he announced

his candidacy after being nominated by Christofias and approved by AKEL. He has no campaign team and his positions do not differ from those of the government and AKEL.

George Lillikas differentiates himself from his opponents and, even though supported by the social democrats of EDEK, he presents himself as »the candidate of the people«, but also one who has ten significant skills every president should have. These skills are, »excellent knowledge of the Cyprus Problem and proof that he can claim everything that belongs to us«; the power to »resist pressures and the designs of foreign circles firmly and effectively, as in 2004«; the »capability to give value to the strategic position of Cyprus, European prospects and international conjectures«, as well as »hydrocarbons, upgrading the role of Cyprus«; he has the »experience, skills, scientific and technocrat knowledge a president requires to succeed«; and he is »a warrant of struggle, continuity and consequence«. Lillikas presents a very broad agenda of subjects, in many cases based on antithesis rather than a positive stance. He is against bizonality in a federal solution, the banking system, British sovereign bases in Cyprus, a bailout, austerity measures, the proposals of the Troika and the presence of the British Coat of Arms over the entrance of the Presidential Palace, which he will remove if elected. On the Cyprus Problem, Lillikas suggests that the agreed bi-communal federal solution frameworks do not take into account today's realities and have to be renegotiated from scratch. His solution for the economic crisis is to sell part of the hydrocarbon reserves to fill the empty state treasury and »chase away the Troika«. He promises that, once elected, he will terminate any agreement with the Troika.

Lillikas repeatedly refers to the legacy of Tassos Papadopoulos, claiming to be his inheritor and projects their common stance against the Annan Plan as an act of national pride and dignity. Resistance to designs of foreign powers must also be based on the same values. He targets his opponents for their »yes« vote because they had positioned themselves against Cyprus Hellenism. Anastasiades receives special treatment as the person who, according to Lillikas, not only supported the »plan that dismantled the Republic of Cyprus«, but also insulted Papadopoulos, charging his motherland before the Council of Europe and ready to revive the solution rejected by the Cypriot people.

4. Scenarios

All opinion polls consistently show Anastasiades as the favourite to win the election; voting intentions suggest a range from 37 to 43 per cent for Anastasiades, from 19 to 24 per cent for Stavros Malas and from 18 to 21 per cent for George Lillikas in the first round. The scenarios for a second round suggest an easier victory against Malas; voting intentions range between 44 and 50 per cent for Anastasiades and from 25 to 30 per cent for Malas, while Anastasiades defeats Lillikas, with voting intentions from 41 to 43 per cent and from 30 to 33 per cent, respectively. We need to address two questions: given the close race between Malas and Lillikas, who is likely to be Anastasiades' second-round opponent? In either case, are the forecasts right about the likely winner?

Malas has better chances because AKEL's party machinery, even though weakened in recent years, is more powerful than that of the forces supporting his opponent and has been gaining ground in recent weeks. Additionally, the polls show a more volatile/less consolidated vote for Lillikas, who is also losing some DIKO voters. With regard to a second round, we must have some reservations as to the outcome because the dynamics of the ballot cannot be predicted before the first-round results. Anastasiades is most likely to win but the ballot cannot be seen as already decided; Lillikas has little chance.

We should also consider the possibility that the ballot is decided in the first round. This will happen if the abstention rate is high and a momentum is created to the benefit of Anastasiades by pulling out mass DIKO voters from among the supporters of Lillikas.

5. Impact of the Outcome

The major challenge the winner will face is the signing of the bailout and the management of the economic crisis. The task is difficult and will require great efforts, good planning and the cooperation of all political forces. The road is already prepared with the tens of bills that were voted into laws by all parties prior to Christmas. One could expect that the parties will continue to rise above their differences and avoid frictions that would endanger the economy and, ultimately, the future of the

Republic. If they did this in a pre-election period, there is little chance it will not continue. At the level of the European Union and debtors, the landscape is not yet clear. References to money laundering or suspicious foreign money in Cyprus banks create some confusion. This is also a matter that spreads suspicion among the sides and is likely to affect the final agreement and the fate of the bailout.

A question mark for Nicosia is how Brussels and other capitals will deal with the new government. Will internal EU differences and the approach that Cyprus is a headache guide the game in a way that would not help to achieve positive results for either of the sides? Can member States find the best ways possible to draw benefit from Cyprus not just as a single member, but as Europe's advanced guard post and bridge to the Middle East and the Orient?

If Anastasiades is elected, there are chances of a good climate and understanding between Nicosia and Brussels, as well as with other European capitals. A number of factors will help in this direction. First, the long history of bonds between DISY and Europe within EU institutions and the European People's Party and the personal relations of its leader and other cadres of the party can warrant good communication bases. The new government's definitely pro-European positions would not leave room for doubt about the thoughts and intentions of the sides; this has been the missing factor with the present government which has caused most problems so far and has delayed or cancelled the conclusion of an agreement. Even though pro-European positions do not mean automatically a solution to all problems, trust and confidence can greatly contribute to finding answers to difficult questions. Closer cooperation with open agendas is expected to be the main feature of relations between Cyprus and Europe

Further to the above, a kind of normalisation could be established in relations between Cyprus and Brussels. It will be the first time since Cyprus entered the EU in 2004 that Nicosia will have a clear pro-European government. The logic of empty chairs in meetings could end, while the presence of Cyprus in European institutions and an eventual application to join the Partnership for Peace and, in due time, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) have the potential to lead to a honeymoon of Nicosia and Brussels, with almost ten years' delay.

With regard to the bailout and facing the economic crisis, what matters from a political point of view is that Cyprus has the potential to do better than other countries, such as Greece ; a well organised state, entrepreneurship, good bases of understanding between political forces and other factors could help. Conversely, if measures are too harsh, this may create a social upheaval which would upset the markets and affect the general psychological climate in the EU. Also needed is better enforcement of the laws, better planning and discipline. The latter leads us to a domestic challenge; this is the hardship of meritocracy.

Favouritism has gradually worn out the solid bases of the administration left by the colonial power in 1960. The role of political parties promoting clientelist relations in exchange for votes has so far been harmful to the rule of law and public affairs. Even though the role of institutions has been strengthened thanks to Europeanisation, there remains a lot to do. We cannot predict how a new government, in particular after DISY remained ten years away from power and with the presence in its ranks of DIKO, which has promoted favouritism, would do on this matter. A lot remains to be done!

6. Possible Impact on Efforts for a Solution to the Cyprus Problem

What will happen if Anastasiadis is elected?

The agreement between DISY and DIKO complicates matters in respect of the above; in addition to the marked differences that have over time distinguished the two parties on the main parameters of both a solution and the procedure to follow, other issues could hamper the process of negotiations, such as the following:

- The appointment of a negotiator to conduct the meetings with the Turkish Cypriot side could undermine the negotiations in many respects. First, they will be undervalued; second, this would mean longer processes for achieving progress, if any; third, there might be difficulties even in agreeing on the nominee. The choice would affect (desired) progress or stagnation.
- The decision-making process through the National Council appears as a further hampering factor, since the positions of the political forces appear impossible or very hard to bridge.

Some of the parameters of a solution framework that should be drawn, as agreed by DISY and DIKO, leave room for many different approaches and interpretations. The rejection of the Annan Plan, the role of the new conditions after EU accession and the upgrade of the geostrategic role of Cyprus thanks to hydrocarbons could be interpreted in a way that views Cyprus as a respectful player and partner in international politics; alternatively, an exaggerated approach could see the island as a major power. Vagueness could be beneficial, it could also make it impossible to agree. The main question relates to the role of DIKO and the effect it may have on various aspects of the work of the new government. We have already referred to meritocracy or, inversely, favouritism. Effects on the handling of the Cyprus problem would depend on the following factors:

- Given the powers of the president and the fact that the agreement was between the parties DISY and DIKO, as well as taking into account that the government needs no vote of confidence, there might be room for not complying with or finding a mean in implementing the terms of the agreement.
- Most DIKO party cadres with a nationalist discourse have already left the party, so the leadership might accommodate their positions on the Cyprus Problem, preferring to benefit in state and other offices.

In any case, if Nicos Anastasiades shows resilience in the way he did in and after 2004, DIKO might be less of an obstacle than some believe. In addition, the provision that EU assistance would be sought for progress in the Cyprus Problem could also be a weakening factor for DIKO's eventual role in imposing views that the president does not share.

What will happen if Lillikas is elected?

He can win the election only if voted for massively by AKEL voters, which requires a pre-electoral agreement after the first round. The question is to know to what extent a policy framework can be respected after the election. There are a number of issues that make this scenario rather uncertain and confused. First, there appears to be no cohesive policy framework and a specific rationale in the candidate's proposals, with some of them based on old-fashioned patriotism, ideas of

the past or populist slogans. An additional factor that spreads confusion as to the policy that would be followed is ideas and views on the Cyprus Problem and other issues of persons and groups supporting or surrounding the candidate; some of them are extreme and leave little room for reconciling other approaches.

The party and political system would also be upset, which would be helped by the lack of trust and popular discontent that has dominated politics in recent years. Coupled with the crisis within AKEL, which is likely to be exacerbated by electoral defeat, the political landscape is likely to change, with some radical groups gaining ground; their discourse so far has a colour of xenophobia, nationalism and excessive demands with regard to the Cyprus Problem, which might be part of the policies that would be followed. Thus with a strong DISY, and DIKO eventually benefiting from being in government, with a weakened AKEL and stable to weak EDEK, there may be also a new political force. In addition to the above, we still have no clues about the vote for the candidate of ELAM (Ελληνικό Λαϊκό Μέτωπο – National Popular Front), which has neo-Nazi tendencies and won one per cent in 2011.

At the European level, an approach by Lillikas that is likely to try to raise Cyprus to the status of a major power would not be very helpful for dialogue. The political discourse of the candidate so far is characterised more by slogans or is based on values with more emotional than rational colour; what is missing is a cohesive policy framework that is adequate to deal with various issues within an organisation such as the European Union or the international community. Thus, putting into action the position »We sell hydrocarbons and chase away the Troika« may question the role and place of Cyprus within the EU and endanger their relations.

What will happen if Malas is elected?

If Stavros Malas wins the election, there are indications of small changes in major policies from what we have witnessed since 2008. The candidate has little experience, no policy framework and no team of his own, in strong contrast to George Vassiliou, elected in 1988 by

AKEL. Vassiliou had the experience, personality and resources to govern and apply policies of his own, even against the policies of AKEL. Malas appears merely to follow AKEL, is surrounded by a team of party cadres and has shown no sign of developing his own policies. He has, however, a different style and approach than the incumbent president, which seems insufficient for devising policies of his own, at least in the short term. If an election win is achieved through alliances before the second round, AKEL influence may be mitigated to a certain extent by that of the allied forces, which might be EDEK and Lillikas. Relations with the EU may be similar to those of the Christofias government. In domestic politics, no majority in the House of Representatives could be an obstacle to promoting government policies. On the handling of the Cyprus Problem, he may expect some support from DISY, which however could be visible only after he shapes his policy course.

Thus, depending on the winner, the outcome of the elections may mean smiles and optimism in Brussels for a new honeymoon period in EU–Cyprus relations to the benefit of common objectives and interests. Conversely, a new road of difficult relations might open up, requiring hard work to find a *modus vivendi*.

Relations between Cyprus and the EU, as well as member states have been hindered since the Republic's accession to the Union. The Cyprus Problem, the referenda of 2004 and the policies of the governments that have followed since then have distracted attention from more substantial matters, such as the role and place Cyprus could occupy within the European family to the benefit of the Union's affairs and interests in general. The author of the present report suggests that Cyprus could be elevated to the advanced guard, but also as an operational post of the EU in the Middle East and the Orient. A study could be conducted to show how EU regional HQs could be established in Cyprus that could play a role in promoting the EU's political, conflict and peace, foreign relations, economic/commercial, energy, defence and other affairs in the region and the Orient in general. This idea needs further elaboration as one might argue that in today's world affairs can be managed only from Brussels. However, proximity in respect of cultural understanding, direct contact and other parameters can make the difference.



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