

*TESEV Foreign Policy Programme*

# Cypriot Perceptions of Turkey

Rebecca Bryant, Christalla Yakinthou

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**Türkiye Ekonomik ve Sosyal Etüdler Vakfı**  
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# Preface

## *TESEV Foreign Policy Programme*

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This study aims to understand the nature of the increasingly tense relations between Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots as well as Greek Cypriots' feelings about Turkey. Initiated and commissioned by TESEV Foreign Policy Programme, it was conducted by two very competent researchers.

The perceptions on both sides of the island are presented through in-depth interviews with 30 opinion formers from the north and 20 from south. It draws a portrait of how both communities see Turkey that we at TESEV believe will be useful to decision makers in Turkey.

Especially, the thoughts of Turkish Cypriots deserve cautious review. When looking at all the results objectively, it appears Turkey has an image problem in the island's north.

Whereas the Turkish Cypriots demand sovereign equality and the respect of Ankara as a state, as detailed in the following sections, not all their demands are consistent. Nor would it be possible to meet them all.

However, the inconsistency in demands should not be an excuse not to hear the call for equality. As well as going beyond recognition and seeing the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) as an equal sovereign state, Ankara needs to solve a range of problems including the status of the armed forces and its links to the police.

The island's perceptions of Turkey also bring new perspectives for decision makers in Ankara. But the research's findings are not to the benefit of Turkey alone. Policymakers on both sides of the island should

take note. But more than this, those that act on behalf of the international community should find plenty of important results.

While we want to highlight a few of the report's findings here, we have left the majority for the following pages. But before doing so, we would like to once again note that the work of this report is down to the two able researchers, Rebecca Bryant and Christalla Yakinthou. Of course, without the contributions of Enis Erdem Aydın, Jonathan Levack and Sabiha Senyücel as well as the support of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Cyprus and Turkey and the Open Society Foundation Turkey this report would not have been possible.

### **HIGHLIGHTS:**

- Turkish Cypriots demand sovereign equality from the government of Turkey.
- The Greek Cypriots would like to see Turkey as a neighbour who is more constructive and wish to have functioning relations with Turkey.
- Turkish Cypriots are aware of their own governance and management problems and need for reform.
- Greek Cypriots are more concerned with the collapse of the economy of Greece, rather than the role of Turkey on the future of the island.
- Both sides admire the economic performance and democratization process in Turkey. Whereas Greek Cypriots see Turkey's growing economy as a potential opportunity, Turkish Cypriots are more concerned with the implications of developing a 'Turkey-dependent' economy.

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- The presence of Turkey's military forces at current levels is an issue for both sides, though for different reasons.
  - Both sides believe Turkey can take certain steps to move towards a solution, Turkish Cypriots in addition emphasize a lack of will among Greek Cypriots.
  - Neither side is hopeful that a solution will be reached in the short term.

## Thanks and acknowledgements

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*We would also like to extend particular gratitude to all of our interviewees, who generously took time out of their busy schedules to share with us their perspectives.*



# Introduction

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When the Republic of Cyprus' (RoC) projected Council of the European Union (EU) presidency was first tentatively announced in 2004, the RoC had a booming economy and appeared to be one of the EU's most stable and dynamic new members. Greek Cypriots had defeated a plan to reunify the island in a referendum only one week before their scheduled EU accession, at least in part because their president at the time, Tasos Papadopoulos, had argued that their EU membership would be an important bargaining tool against a Turkey seeking entry. This, in turn, was to have enabled them to negotiate a better plan that would have been to Greek Cypriot advantage. At that moment, Greece appeared to be a strong partner, Turkey was in the first throes of Justice and Development Party (AKP)-led reforms, and Turkish Cypriots were deflated by the referendum decision, which left them outside the EU.

At that time, no one could have predicted a Greek financial collapse that would send shock waves through the Cypriot economy, or the rapid rise of Turkey as an economic and regional power. No one could have predicted a new offshore race for natural resources, or changing alliances in which Turkey would abandon its long-time friend, Israel, which in turn would seek a partnership with the Republic of Cyprus. No one could have predicted the explosion of confiscated ammunitions at a naval base near Limassol in 2011 that would bring waves of protest against RoC President Dimitris Christofias, whom many held responsible for the negligence that resulted in thirteen deaths. No one could have predicted Turkish Cypriot protests against Turkish austerity measures, or the movements for good governance and democratisation that would emerge. No one could

have predicted that negotiations would stumble on for many more years, as all sides in the process lost hope and became more concerned with domestic problems that seemed to portend an uncertain future.

The context for this report is a decade of rapid and unpredictable change in an island that in the previous almost thirty years had seemed mired in an unchanging status quo. After the Greek-sponsored coup d'état and Turkish military intervention of 1974, Cyprus' territorial division resulted in the ethnic homogenisation of its two sides and the establishment of separate lives for Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots on either side of a UN-controlled buffer zone. While for the previous decade, following the intercommunal clashes of 1963-64, Turkish Cypriots had desired Turkey's military intervention in the island, that intervention with overwhelming force in the summer of 1974 and the subsequent displacement of approximately one third of the Greek Cypriot population meant that Turkey became a defining element of the Greek Cypriot social and political imaginary in the following decades. And while Greek Cypriots came to know Turkey only through what they learned in school and in the media, Turkish Cypriots came to know Turkey more closely than they had before, and found that the Turkey with whose fate they were now entangled was not the Turkey of their imaginations, the one that they had learned about from their own textbooks, films, and novels. It was a Turkey that was experiencing political turmoil and economic instability, and for Turkish Cypriots it became reliable only to the extent that Cyprus remained, over the following decades, an important Turkish 'national cause.' Although Turkish Cypriots declared their own state in 1983, it remained

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unrecognised by any country besides Turkey, pushing them into further reliance on a state whose behaviour towards the island seemed increasingly to blur the boundaries of protectorate and province.

The catalyst for a period of change in the island came with the beginning of the RoC's EU accession negotiations in 1998. At the time, many observers were hopeful that the EU carrot would prove tempting enough to force concessions from the Turkish side in negotiations. But for Turkish Cypriots, the unchanging status quo was represented by their long-time leader, Rauf Denktaş, who still refused to negotiate without some recognition of his de facto statelet. It was only when the UN put a concrete reunification proposal on the table in late 2002 that Turkish Cypriots took to the streets demanding change, which for them meant sitting at the negotiating table with their Greek Cypriot neighbours and working out a plan that would allow them to enter the EU as partners. Denktaş was sidelined in favour of a moderate leftist leader, Mehmet Ali Talat, who stepped in to negotiate the plan to completion. However, his counterpart in the south, former EOKA (National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters) leader and then RoC president Tasos Papadopoulos, was not so compromising, and he called for the defeat of the plan at referendum. The results were lop-sided, as 65% of Turkish Cypriots supported the plan, while 76% of Greek Cypriots rejected it.

The subsequent entry of the RoC into the EU and the suspension of the EU's *acquis communautaire* in the island's north on 1 May 2004 appeared to be a new and more complicated version of the familiar status quo. Greek Cypriots remained in control of the island's recognised state; Turkish Cypriots remained in limbo, neither able to achieve recognition nor to realise their political will to federation. Only the 2003 opening of the Cyprus checkpoints in response to Turkish Cypriot protests seemed to have brought real change. This included a complicated rethinking of attitudes towards the other and towards the idea of a political partnership that resulted from personal interactions

as reflected at the wider social level. It also included a spate of lawsuits in EU courts regarding private property that had been appropriated or expropriated during the conflict and which appeared to complicate this new situation.<sup>1</sup> The re-start of negotiations stalled for several years, until the election of a new president in the south who was known as a supporter of federation. But even these new talks were soon mired in accusations and counter-accusations, as each side attempted to avoid blame for the negotiations' perceived impending collapse. And the lack of public interest in the talks has been reflected in the scant attention given by the media, which has generally been more concerned with the local effects of global economic crises and dissatisfaction with domestic politics.

Hence, while the impetus for this report is the RoC's EU presidency, that milestone is itself overshadowed by other circumstances that have the potential to reconfigure the Cyprus Problem and the possibilities for its resolution. So while the report aims to understand and represent Turkish and Greek Cypriot assessments of their respective relationships with Turkey today, the 'present' of this report currently appears as a period of flux. The report uses a set of fifty extended interviews to present Cypriots' anxieties, hopes, and fears regarding their relationships with Turkey today and possibilities for

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1 For detail on this resort to legal remedies and its recent developments, see Rhodri Williams and Ayla Gürel, *European Court of Human Rights and the Cyprus Property Issue: Charting a Way Forward*, PRIO Cyprus Centre Paper (Nicosia: PRIO Cyprus Centre, 2011) and Nikos Skoutaris, 'Building transitional justice mechanisms without a peace settlement: A critical appraisal of the recent jurisprudence of the Strasbourg Court on the Cyprus issue,' *European Law Review* 35 (2010): 720-733. For analysis of the cases in respect to negotiating positions, see Kudret Özersay and Ayla Gürel, 'Property and Human Rights in Cyprus: The European Court of Human Rights as a Platform of Political Struggle,' *Middle Eastern Studies* 44, no. 2 (2008), 291-321. For an ethnographic perspective on the issue, see Rebecca Bryant, 'Of Lemons and Laws: Property and the (Trans)national Order in Cyprus,' in *Waging War and Making Peace: Reparations and Human Rights*, ed. Barbara Rose Johnston and Susan Slyomovics (San Francisco, CA: Left Coast Press, 2009).

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the future. And while the relationship with Turkey was foremost in the minds of many of our Turkish Cypriot interviewees, the corollary was clearly not the case among our Greek Cypriot participants. In the south, the role of Turkey in the neighbourhood and the relationship with Turkey was often not the highest in the hierarchy of pressing concerns about the island's future. In many cases, the relationship with Turkey was seen as a more-or-less stable factor. An unhappy one, but only urgent insofar as it is woven into the fabric of daily life and concerns of the future of the Republic of Cyprus. More pressing, at the time of writing, was the impending collapse of the Greek economy and the direct spill over into Cyprus by way of economic, cultural, and social impact.

Moreover, bringing both perspectives together in one report has presented its own set of challenges: while in the Turkish Cypriot community, people across the board have been eager to share their anxieties, fears, hopes, and concerns, Greek Cypriots in a number of cases have been more reticent. There is still a great deal of reluctance among opinion-shapers in the Greek Cypriot community to speak openly about Turkey, and left-over divisions from the 2004 Annan plan referendum were frequently brought up in the interviews. Some interviewees also commented that too much liberalism in their perceptions of Turkey would lead to claims of being a 'traitor' to the Greek Cypriot side. People's caution was reflected in the fact that a condition for almost all interviews in the Greek Cypriot community was complete participant anonymity. By contrast, almost all Turkish Cypriot participants were supportive of sharing their views and were willing to have their names used. For the sake of balance, however, we have anonymised all interviews in the report.

One of the main factors influencing Cypriots' current views on both sides of the island was Turkey's exceptional economic growth. While Turkish Cypriots were cautious about the effects of that growth for them, Greek Cypriot interviewees tended to see it as an opportunity that might enable Greek Cypriot-

*The report uses a set of fifty extended interviews to present Cypriots' anxieties, hopes, and fears regarding their relationships with Turkey today and possibilities for the future.*

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Turkish cooperation, as interest in the Turkish market seemed to create incentives for the business community to bridge the divide.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, ironically, while Turkey's implementation of neoliberal policies has created considerable anxiety amongst Turkish Cypriots, the Greek Cypriot business community has tended to view these changes in a more positive light.

The following report, then, shares the results of thirty interviews with opinion-shapers in Cyprus' north and twenty in the south. Interviewees crosscut the political, gender, and age spectrum, and they included businesspeople, civil servants, union leaders, civil society representatives, and journalists. Interviewees were asked a series of questions regarding their community's relations with Turkey today and hopes for the future, including assessments of the ongoing negotiation process. Each section of the report provides the current context for each community's interpretations of its relationship with Turkey, as well as hopes and suggestions for improving that relationship in the future. And in a concluding section of the report, we draw out some of the similarities and differences that will be important for thinking about Turkey's future role with regard to the island.

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2 Direct trade between Turkey and the Republic of Cyprus is already growing, as trade via Greece has boomed in the south. A recent report in the Turkish Cypriot *Havadis* newspaper claimed that while in 2011, of the 246 countries to which Turkey exported, the RoC was 205<sup>th</sup>, in the first three months of 2012 it had risen to 157<sup>th</sup> (Duygu Alan, 'KKTC ekonomisi için büyük risk,' *Havadis*, 24 April 2012). Moreover, Turkish products are found on shelves in most shops in the south, often under international labels such as Levi's or Ikea, but even under Turkish names. One of the authors of this report, for instance, recently found the products of a Turkish leathermaker on the shelves of one south Nicosia store.



# Viewing Turkey from north Cyprus today



# Viewing Turkey from north Cyprus today

Turkish Cypriots are in despair. A sense of hopelessness, anger, and fear has pervaded this small community, which has survived under various degrees of isolation for half a century. They live in an unrecognised state, which until now has managed to sustain them but today appears on the brink of bankruptcy and collapse. Entrenched nepotism, patronage, and populism have corrupted a system that at the same time is the life-support mechanism for a large segment of the population.<sup>3</sup> And now Turkey, this system's main financier, is demanding a 'fix' to the system in the form of privatisation and austerity measures learned, in part, from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Turkey, then, has become Turkish Cypriots' IMF, and the strikes, riots, and clashes with police that are growing in north Cyprus have begun more and more to resemble the reactions in other countries subject to belt-tightening measures, especially Greece. The difference, however, between north Cyprus and other states is its lack of recognition, which drives it into reliance on its patron

state, Turkey.<sup>4</sup> Both the positive and the negative effects of globalisation and neoliberalism hit north Cyprus from Turkey's shores, leading to increasingly tense relations between Turkey and its 'client' in the Mediterranean.

This chapter aims to present Turkish Cypriot assessments of their current relations with Turkey and of what form that relationship should take in the future. These assessments include anxieties, fears, hopes, and concerns gleaned from a set of thirty extended interviews conducted with Turkish Cypriot opinion-shapers in April and May 2012. Interviewees were representatives of various sectors, including union leaders, civil society representatives, businesspeople, and members of the media. They come from a variety of political positions and represent a cross-section of Turkish Cypriot opinion

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3 On the role of patronage in north Cyprus' political system, see Salih Egemen, *Kıbrıslı Türkler Arasında Siyasal Liderlik* (Nicosia: Salih Egemen, 2006); and Sertaç Sonan, 'From Bankruptcy to Unification and EU Membership?: The Political Economy of Post-Nationalist Transformation in Northern Cyprus,' RAMSES Working Paper 9/07, European Studies Centre, University of Oxford (2007). For specific sectoral analysis, see H. Araslı, A. Bavik, and E. H. Ekiz, 'The Effects of Nepotism on Human Resource Management: The Case of Three, Four, and Five Star Hotels in Northern Cyprus,' *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 26:7 (2006), pp. 295-308; and H. Araslı and M. Tumer, 'Nepotism, Favoritism and Cronyism: A Study of Their Effects on Job Stress and Job Satisfaction in the Banking Industry of North Cyprus,' *Social Behavior and Personality* 36:9 (2008), pp. 1237-1250.

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4 'Patron state' is the term commonly used in international relations to refer to those states on which unrecognised states depend in the absence of other forms of external support. Nina Caspersen summarises the relationship thusly: "Due to their lack of international recognition, unrecognised states are not spoilt for choice when it comes to attracting external support, and patron states therefore fill an important gap. Based on ethnic links or strategic interests, these states choose to support unrecognised states with diplomatic, economic, and military assistance. Such external support helps compensate for the lack of international recognition and significantly assists the process of state-building" (Nina Caspersen, *Unrecognized States* [Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012], pp. 54-55). See also Pal Kolsto, 'The Sustainability and Future of Unrecognized Quasi-States,' *Journal of Peace Research* 43:6 (1996), pp. 723-740; Pal Kolsto and Helge Blakkisrud, 'Living with Non-recognition: State- and Nation-building in South Caucasian Quasi-States,' *Europe-Asia Studies* 60: 3 (2008), pp. 483-509; and Dov Lynch, *Engaging Eurasia's Separatist States: Unresolved Conflicts and De Facto States* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2004).

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regarding relations with their patron. While many emphasised the need for increased self-reliance, none believed that complete independence from their ‘co-ethnic’ state to the north was possible. As a result, while all were critical of that relationship today, almost all presented concrete suggestions for improving that relationship in the future.

## I. A PATERNAL PROTECTORATE

In international media and scholarship, Turkey’s presence in Cyprus is commonly described as that of an ‘occupying power’ or ‘coloniser,’ while relations with Turkish Cypriots have been seen as those of a patron state with its client, or in the terms now used by the European courts, a ‘subordinate authority.’ In domestic discourse, Turkish Cypriots have historically defined Turkey as a protector with whom they have ties that are often likened to kinship, as in the commonly used description of that relationship as one of a ‘motherland’ and ‘babyland.’ As will become clear in this report, while the rhetoric of ‘motherland-babyland’ has lost its power, Turkish Cypriots continue to perceive a closeness with Turkey and persons from Turkey, expressed by one interviewee as a relationship of “flesh and fingernail” (et ve tırnak).

Today, however, that relationship is being shaped and remade by changes over the last decade both in the island and in Turkey. And so when interviewees were asked to find a word to describe that relationship, they usually experienced difficulty finding a single word or phrase that could encapsulate the complexities of the relationship today. They variously named it a “guardianship” (vesayet), a relationship of submission (biat), an asymmetric relationship, a “difficult relationship” (zor bir ilişki), or various forms of dependency, including the European Court of Human Rights’ label of ‘subordinate authority’ (altyönetim). Quite a number of interviewees used familial terms to describe that relationship, though they were often ambivalent about this. These familial terms were perhaps best used by one interviewee who remarked, “The relationship used to be like one between a

*“On paper the only country that recognises the TRNC is Turkey but in practice when we look at that relationship it’s not anything like that between two states. The relationship between the TRNC and Turkey is not governed by the usual rules of law and international diplomacy.”*

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mother and baby, a relationship of love. These days it’s like a relationship between a father and child, more one of discipline.” When asked what sort of relationship it should be, this interviewee said that it should be one of “brotherhood” (kardeşlik), in which Turkey would act as an older sibling, guiding Turkish Cypriots to stand on their own feet.

Indeed, one complaint common to almost all the interviews was that a relationship that they expected and wanted to be ‘brotherly’ was instead paternal. More than half of interviewees expressed the view that ‘Turkey does not recognise the TRNC [Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus],’ meaning that while officially Turkey is the only state to acknowledge the TRNC’s existence, in fact the Republic of Turkey does not behave as though the TRNC is a separate state. For interviewees, this meant that Turkey not only controls the TRNC’s security, but it also effectively controls its internal affairs. This control is exercised both through the present TRNC constitution, which puts the police under the control of the Turkish military in the island, and through Turkey’s yearly aid package, via which certain demands are made. In addition, the TRNC’s Security Council, commonly called the Coordination Committee, is composed of the president, prime minister, and both elected officials and non-elected members, including members of the military, and its decisions are to “receive priority consideration by the Council of Ministers.”<sup>5</sup> Turkish Cypriots are also often dependent on Turkey in foreign relations, and any future solution

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5 TRNC Constitution, Article 111.

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to the island's division must satisfy Turkish Cypriots' patron state. As one union leader put it:

On paper the only country that recognises the TRNC is Turkey but in practice when we look at that relationship it's not anything like that between two states. The relationship between the TRNC and Turkey is not governed by the usual rules of law and international diplomacy. In any case, the European Court of Human Rights has confirmed that it's not. According to international law and to us, north Cyprus is Turkey's subordinate authority. There's no relationship like that between two states, and we don't believe that there will be one.

At the same time, when asked if the current Turkish government behaved differently than previous governments in this regard, almost all interviewees concluded that it did not. Instead, they said that what had changed in the relationship was both Turkey's economic growth and increasing regional influence, and the current failure of Turkish Cypriot politicians to express the interests of their people. Quite a number of interviewees said: 'If Turkey doesn't understand us, it's because we haven't been able to explain ourselves.' These same interviewees tended to conclude that the fault for this failure of communication lay primarily with their own government. As one businessperson phrased it, "What has made the [Turkish] ambassador into a governor is our own incompetent politicians."

While no single label will accurately encapsulate all the ambiguities of the Turkey-north Cyprus relationship, we will refer to it in this report as a paternal protectorate. In international relations, a protectorate is a small or weak state that cedes various degrees of autonomy to a larger state in return for military protection, aid with foreign relations, and in some cases economic contributions. We find many instances of protectorates in international relations: Puerto Rico and Guam are U.S. protectorates, while Bosnia-Herzegovina may be considered a protectorate of the United Nations. However, one characteristic of the protectorate relationship between Turkey and

*"If Turkey doesn't understand us, it's because we haven't been able to explain ourselves."*

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north Cyprus is that it is a de facto protectorate that is not guided or restricted by treaty or protocol.<sup>6</sup> While other protectorate relationships are often outlined in agreements that stipulate the duty of each side to the other, Turkey acts as a protector state for north Cyprus while at the same time claiming to recognise its independence and autonomy.

Before assessing the content of the relationship between Turkey and north Cyprus, it should be noted that in the past two decades an increasing strand of literature in international relations has called into question the idea that sovereignty is necessarily attached to territory,<sup>7</sup> or that it is ever a matter of anarchic relations between equal states.<sup>8</sup> This literature has emphasised that relations between states are often hierarchical, that sovereignty is often partial, and that the autonomy of states is usually

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- 6 Ironically, it is the 1960 constitution of the Republic of Cyprus that gives Turkey guarantor powers in the island, while no such right is given by the 1983 constitution of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.
  - 7 See John Agnew, 'The Territorial Trap: The Geographical Assumptions of International Relations Theory,' *Review of International Political Economy* 1:1 (1994): pp. 53-80, and 'Sovereignty Regimes: Territoriality and State Authority in Contemporary World Politics,' *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 95: 2 (Jun., 2005), pp. 437-461.
  - 8 This anarchic assumption is summarised by Kenneth Waltz, who remarks that in this view of the relations between sovereign states "none is entitled to command; none is required to obey" (Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* [Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979], p. 88). The primary attack on this view has come from those who believe that it ignores the actual existence of hierarchy between states, where in practice states may employ various forms of influence or coercion on other states: "Traditionally, international relations has been reluctant to deal with ideas about hierarchy in the international system, as the international realm is seen as anarchic and therefore the antithesis of hierarchical systems of rule" (Bryan Mabee, 'Discourses of Empire: The US 'Empire', Globalisation and International Relations,' *Third World Quarterly* 25: 8 [2004], p. 1328).

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compromised, both politically and economically.<sup>9</sup> The idea that all states are in some sense dependent on others and engaged in hierarchical relationships was reflected by one interviewee, a right-wing media outlet manager, who remarked:

Look, I don't find it right to think that Turkish Cypriots can be completely independent, or that they can completely administer themselves. These ideas seem very utopian and romantic to me. In any case, there's no such state in the world. The United States of America or China aren't even sufficient for themselves. How are you going to be sufficient for yourself? Is there a country in the world that is completely independent, that is able to formulate policy completely independently of other countries?

Lake has identified three main areas in which there may be a continuum of hierarchical relations. Security, economic, and political relationships, he finds, are the main areas in which states may cede varying degrees of authority to other powers:

Formally, relationships between polities vary along a continuum defined by the degree of hierarchy between two or more polities. . . . In what policy areas is the subordinate polity the ultimate authority? The greater the number of areas of domestic sovereignty, the less hierarchic its relationship with the dominant state is; the fewer the number of areas of domestic sovereignty, the more hierarchic the relationship is. . . . [T]he range of relations is continuous in principle, and clearly defined by variations in who has the authority to decide what.<sup>10</sup>

This continuum includes various levels of dependency, culminating in the imperial, which Lake defines as an authority relationship "in which the rule of the dominant state over both economic and security policy is accepted as more or less legitimate by the members of the subordinate polity."<sup>11</sup>

The relationship between north Cyprus and Turkey has clearly been defined by various degrees of dependency over time, especially in terms of security and the economy. For instance, north Cyprus uses the Turkish Lira and is hence directly tied to the Turkish economy in a phenomenon known as 'dollarization,' which is common to unrecognised states.<sup>12</sup> What we wish to suggest creates ambiguity in this particular relation of domination and authority, and also makes it difficult to regulate, is the perceived familial nature of the relationship, which often slides between the paternal and the paternalistic.

Amongst interviewees, even those who were most critical of Turkey's intervention in the island recognised that Turkish Cypriots perceive a 'kinship' relationship and closeness with persons from Turkey

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9 Writing about this new strand of thinking about sovereignty, David Lake notes, "No longer called vassals, protectorates, or mandates, states with restricted sovereignty continue to exist. Indeed, pure Westphalian sovereignty of the type assumed by the classical perspective may be a status that is enjoyed only by the greatest powers. . . . Nearly all others face greater or lesser restrictions on their sovereignty" (David A. Lake, 'The New Sovereignty in International Relations,' *International Studies Review* 5:3 [2003], p. 311). See, e.g., Richard K. Ashley, 'Untying the Sovereign State: A Double Reading of the Anarchy Problematique,' *Millennium—Journal of International Studies* 17:2 (1998), pp. 227-262; Michael Ross Fowler and Julie Maria Bunc, 'What Constitutes the Sovereign State?' *Review of International Studies* 22:4 (1996), pp. 381-404; Alan James, 'The Equality of States: Contemporary Manifestations of an Ancient Doctrine,' *Review of International Studies* 18:4 (1992), pp. 377-391; Oyrind Osterud, 'The Narrow Gate: Entry to the Club of Sovereign States,' *Review of International Studies* 23 (1997), pp. 167-184; Gerry Simpson, *Great Powers and Outlaw States: Unequal Sovereigns in the International Legal Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); and Janice E. Thomson, 'State Sovereignty in International Relations: Bridging the Gap Between Theory and Empirical Research,' *International Studies Quarterly* 39 (1995), pp. 213-33.

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10 *Ibid.*, 311-12.

11 David A. Lake, 'The New American Empire?', *International Studies Perspectives* 9:3 (2008), p. 284.

12 For instance, the use of the Armenian dram in Nagorno-Karabakh and the Russian ruble in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. On the phenomenon of dollarization, see Eduardo Yeyati, *Dollarization* (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2003).

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and see Turkey as a protector.<sup>13</sup> As one left-wing journalist put it:

This relationship has a social-psychological side. That is, it has an intimate side. That intimate side is because of affection. In other words, a person from Turkey sees Cyprus as being like his own country and sees the people here as his own people. And Turkish Cypriots, even if they see differences between themselves and people from Turkey, and even if they sometimes get angry at Turkey, always look at Turkey with affection. They see Turkey as their security, their support, their protector. This is the social-psychological and emotional side. On the other hand, this has never been a relationship of equality between two countries. The structure here is a representative structure [temsili bir yapıdır, implying that it represents Turkey's interests], and this is actually Turkey's subordinate administration, even like a province of Turkey.

This perceived kinship relationship, then, makes it 'natural' that Turkey would protect Turkish Cypriots and intervene in their affairs. And so like a good father, Turkey has for so long 'taken care of' north Cyprus, protecting it, advising it, giving its allowance, and intervening to chastise. Like other parent-child relationships, Turkish Cypriots must struggle to have their autonomy recognised, and there is therefore often resentment that the child is never allowed to 'grow up.'

Moreover, when this paternal relationship slides into paternalism,<sup>14</sup> relations of dependency also move to

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*Numerous interviewees expressed a desire for a more 'brotherly' relationship with Turkey to indicate discomfort with the tendency of the relationship to slide into paternalism, as well as a desire that Turkey provide guidance without dominating.*

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the imperial end of Lake's scale. Paternalism, or interference against someone's will in the interests of their own good, was also a feature of European colonialism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, especially the belief in a European 'civilising mission.' As the next sections of the report should make clear, the interference entailed by paternalism may also be comprehended as condescension, or a lack of respect for local cultures and political will. Indeed, one of our interviewees termed the relationship one of "incest," a relationship that contained "all sorts of elements that shouldn't be there, that one should be careful against and stay away from." When asked what the relationship should be, this same interviewee remarked that "there's no objection to it being a kinship relationship, but it should be one with a proper form." From this, we may interpret the fact that numerous interviewees expressed a desire for a more 'brotherly' relationship with Turkey to indicate discomfort with the tendency of the relationship to slide into paternalism, as well as a desire that Turkey provide guidance without dominating.

## II. THE CURRENT CONJUNCTURE

In 2003 and 2004, Turkish Cypriots had engaged in a revolt against their long-time nationalist leadership, which refused to enter negotiations with the Greek Cypriot leadership on the basis of a United Nations (UN)-sponsored plan for federation. North Cyprus had

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13 In the latest Cyprus 2015 poll, which surveyed more than one thousand persons on each side of the island, 85% of Turkish Cypriots still favored maintaining Turkey as a guarantor power in the event of a negotiated solution, while more than half wished to retain Turkey's right to intervene unilaterally. (see <http://www.cyprus2015.org/index.php?option=com-phocadownload&view=category&id=7%3Apublic-opinion-poll-july-2011&Itemid=34&lang=en>, accessed 17 July 2012).

14 Philosopher Gerald Dworkin provides a succinct definition: "Paternalism is the interference of a state or an individual with another person, against their will, and defended or motivated by a claim that the person

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interfered with will be better off or protected from harm" ('Paternalism,' Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/paternalism>, accessed 27 June 2012). See also Thaddeus Mason Pope, 'Counting the Dragon's Teeth and Claws: The Definition of Hard Paternalism,' *George State University Law Review* 66o (2003-4), pp. 659-722.

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been hard hit by a banking crisis in 2000, followed by an economic crisis in Turkey in 2001. As one commonly used phrase has it, ‘When Turkey sneezes, north Cyprus catches a cold.’ So when the UN put a reunification plan on the negotiating table in late 2002, large numbers of Turkish Cypriots saw federation and the EU membership that would result as the only way to stability, prosperity, and relief from the uncertainty about their status in the world that had plagued them for decades. Mass rallies in Nicosia’s main squares demanding a federation received the support of Turkey’s Justice and Development Party (AKP), which had recently come to power and wished to clear the obstacle of Cyprus out of its EU path. Former Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktaş was also close to the Turkish military, extremist nationalist groups within Turkey, and the Turkish deep state, all elements whose influence the AKP wished to subdue. As a result, during this period and despite their own fundamental secularism, Turkish Cypriots saw the AKP as an antidote to the nationalist Turkish politicians who for so long had insisted on seeing Cyprus as a ‘national cause.’

However, the Greek Cypriot defeat at referendum of the UN-sponsored plan and the subsequent failure of the EU to ‘reward’ Turkish Cypriots for their own support of it led to a new and increasingly intense period of uncertainty. ‘Belirsizlik,’ or ‘uncertainty’, is the word that Turkish Cypriots invariably use to describe their state, their identity, and their quotidian existence. By the time of the Annan Plan, Turkish Cypriots had begun increasingly to feel the impact of

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labour migration into the island, with all of the side-effects felt around the world: a perception of a rise in crime, changing norms, and altered human landscapes. These effects of globalisation are felt today in many countries that had hitherto received little migration, and they seem invariably to produce ethnocentric, even racist, reactions in media and politics. The same may be said for north Cyprus, though for Turkish Cypriots that migration was received through the one door open to them, Turkey. With 35,000 Turkish soldiers, 30,000 Turkish students, 50,000 Turkish nationals who had acquired TRNC citizenship, and approximately 60-70,000 Turkish workers and their families in the island, it should not be surprising that the small Turkish Cypriot community of approximately 140,000 began, during this period, to feel overwhelmed.<sup>15</sup> Globalisation affected north Cyprus via Turkey, and so the reactions to globalisation felt so often elsewhere took the form of reactions against Turkey and its citizens working in the island. Turkish Cypriots began to see federation as a way to ‘open onto the world,’<sup>16</sup> as well as to free themselves from the excessive influence of Turkey on the social, political, and economic life of the island’s north.<sup>17</sup>

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15 The 1996 census found the de facto population of north Cyprus to be 200,587, and TRNC citizens comprised 82% of this population, or 164,460 persons (including naturalised citizens). The 2006 census showed that the de facto population had risen to 265,100, although the citizen population had grown only minimally, to 178,031. By 2011, the population figure had grown to 294,906. In 1996, there were 30,000 Turkish citizens resident in the island who were not TRNC citizens. This figure had risen in 1996 to 70,525, while today that figure is estimated at 80-90,000; these figures do not include members of the Turkish military and their families. For census results, see [www.devplan.org](http://www.devplan.org) (TRNC State Planning Organisation).

16 One of the main slogans of Mehmet Ali Talat’s pro-Annan Plan campaign was ‘We will be connected to the world’ (‘Dünyaya bağlanacağız’).

17 One important instance of this was the rise of the ‘This Country Is Ours Platform’ (Bu Memleket Bizim Platformu), which united Turkish Cypriots across the political spectrum. For various remarks from political leaders of the period, see Mete Hatay and Rebecca Bryant, ‘The Jasmine Scent of Nicosia: Of Returns, Revolutions, and the Longing for Forbidden Pasts,’

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After the failure of the Annan Plan at referendum, Turkish Cypriots continued to hold out some tentative hope that renewed negotiations might produce results, especially after the 2005 election of Mehmet Ali Talat to the presidency in the island's north and 2008 election of Dimitris Christofias in the south. Both men had long been active in the island's socialist movements, and both were believed to desire a federal solution. However, by 2010, when Talat lost his seat to Derviş Eroğlu, a long-time opponent of federation, it became clear that Turkish Cypriots had begun to lose hope in the process. They had also lost hope in the EU's promises to tie them more closely to Europe, and this EU failure was seen in many circles as one of the reasons for Talat's demise. Turkish Cypriots' two historical 'projects' had failed: after two decades, even strong supporters of the TRNC began to see that it would never be recognised and to think of it as a 'made-up state'; while those who strongly supported federation began to doubt that Greek Cypriots, who had become full EU members, had any motivation to unite with them. The result has been a period of increased anxiety, as Turkish Cypriots see no immediate resolution to their uncertain position. The leader of one NGO remarked:

In north Cyprus people seriously feel in an impasse, and they're very pessimistic. There are no positive expectations about a solution to the Cyprus Problem. The policies followed by the AKP don't contribute to a better quality of life. People are not optimistic about being able to turn these developments, these negativities, around.

In the meantime, Turkey has experienced a period of impressive economic growth and rising regional

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influence that has left Turkish Cypriots more and more under the influence of what several interviewees called 'predatory capitalism' (vahşi kapitalizm) that they believe has little consideration for the special circumstances in which Turkish Cypriots find themselves. Turkish Cypriots, after all, have built up a fragile economic structure that has been shaped by half a century of isolation. That isolation began in the enclave period of the 1960's and continued after 1974, and even after the declaration of their unrecognised state in 1983. Because many Turkish Cypriots, especially on the left, see their current plight as a result of Turkey's strategic interests, which they believe it relentlessly pursued for decades beginning in the 1950's, there is also a tendency to see their own dependence on Turkey as part of a strategic plan to 'separate them from production' (üretimden koparmak) and make north Cyprus into a type of colony. One union leader especially emphasised the negative results for north Cyprus of the neoliberal 'openings' of the 1980s:

During the Özal period after 1980, a conscious strategy was implemented to eliminate Cypriots, separate them from production, to weaken their economy, and to bring them into a position of dependency on Turkey. The perspective on Cyprus of the governments and politicians that have come after Özal has not changed much. The governments of Turkey have seen Cyprus as strategic and as a place that should be Turkified and where Turkey should be in charge.

Especially since 2004 there has been growing private investment in Cyprus by Turkish business, mostly in

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*Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 26:2 (2008), pp. 423-449. On changes in Turkish Cypriot self-conceptions during this period, see Hans Lacher and Erol Kaymak, 'Transforming Identities: Beyond the Politics of Non-Settlement in North Cyprus,' *Mediterranean Politics* 10:2 (2005): pp. 147-166; and Christopher Ramm, 'Assessing Transnational Renegotiation in the Post-1974 Cypriot Community: "Cyprus Donkeys," "Black Beards," and the "EU Carrot",' *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 6:4 (2006), pp. 523-542.

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*“Turkish Cypriots have no voice in the Republic of Cyprus. Turkish Cypriots also have no voice in the Republic of Turkey.”*

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the form of large hotel complexes, as well as increased Turkish government funding for infrastructure, such as roads and a large-scale project to bring water from Anatolia’s Anamur region. However, when asked about the effects of these investments on Turkish Cypriots’ lives, many interviewees were pessimistic. As one left-wing newspaper editor remarked:

From the perspective of Cyprus, the negative thing is, no matter how much capital Turkey brings here, no matter how much the economy is strengthened, indeed no matter how much the quality of life of the people living in Cyprus’s north improves, one problem cannot be resolved. And that problem is that this policy cannot open Turkish Cypriots to the world. Turkish Cypriots can only open to the world as Turkish citizens or as citizens of the Republic of Cyprus. Turkish Cypriots cannot establish a state, an organisation in which they can decide for themselves. Turkish Cypriots have no voice in the Republic of Cyprus. Turkish Cypriots also have no voice in the Republic of Turkey. Right now, Turkish Cypriots’ political will is not represented in the Republic of Cyprus. And when your political will is not represented, you have no chance to call anyone to account. But the same thing is true for Turkey. And this reality does not change. The real problem is that Turkish Cypriots, or those persons living in north Cyprus, have become a sandwich between different slices of bread, whether Turkey or the Republic of Cyprus or the EU.

In fact, interviewees were divided about the effect of Turkey’s growing economic strength on Turkish Cypriots. While the business community that conducts trade with Turkey was generally positive about it, seeing it as an opportunity that should be utilised, local small businesspersons and union leaders were critical and anxious, claiming that Turkish investments in Cyprus’ north had little benefit for local communities. The owner of one of north

Cyprus’ largest import companies said that they had benefited from this growth:

In the end, the strengthening and development of Turkey’s economy is good for us. If we are to speak from the perspective of the business world, both the multi-national companies investing in Turkey and Turkish capital are beneficial for us. For example, various international companies like Henkel, Unilever, and Proctor and Gamble have had their subsidiaries, and consumers were buying these products. But now these same brands are Turkish Henkel-Unilever. For instance, because of the language and culture difference, the German Henkel couldn’t have a direct relationship with the consumer here. People here watch Turkish television channels, and their consumption habits are shaped by them. People prefer brands that have Turkish writing on them. Generally investments in Turkey are reflected positively here. And for us it’s usually easier to get our products via Turkey, in the same way that it’s easier for Greek Cypriots to get their products via Greece.

However, the view of one teachers’ union leader reflected a more general perception, as also seen in the Turkish Cypriot media:

The Turkish capital that makes investments here gets land for free, and the infrastructure and loans are provided by the Turkish government. They give, for instance, 350 million dollars, and this becomes a debt on our shoulders. They laid a road to the Karpaz Peninsula, but that road wasn’t for us, it was to support the investments made in . . . . Bafra. For instance, they create desalination plants, but that water goes first to the hotels, then to the local people. These hotels are exempt from taxes for fifteen years, they don’t pay taxes. Despite the fact that these hotels are supposed to employ 70% Turkish Cypriots, they bring almost all their personnel from Turkey. In such a case, the people in Bafra village, right outside the hotel, remain unemployed. They can force a worker from Turkey to work fourteen hours without social insurance, without the right to join a union, and for a salary under the minimum wage. . . . In other words, these

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investments don't improve our lives in any way. And if we're going to discuss it from the perspective of tourism, these hotels don't bring tourism to the island. These people that we call tourists come to gamble but never step out of the hotel to eat in a local restaurant or spend their money elsewhere.

In the mainstream media, apart from those media outlets supporting the current Turkish Cypriot government, Turkish investment is rarely portrayed in a positive light. Many columnists claim that investment is for the benefit of partisans of AKP, while others discuss the way that north Cyprus' resources are being exploited while Turkish Cypriots receive few benefits. There is also increasing reaction both in the media and public to the environmental effects of large-scale tourism and other projects, especially in the previously untouched Karpassia peninsula. These investments, then, create an increasing sense that north Cyprus is being exploited for Turkey's and Turkish capital's interests while Turkish Cypriots have little or no voice.

With the clear failure of Turkish Cypriots' two 'projects'—recognition for their statelet, or federation and EU membership—the members of this small community have begun to feel more and more at the mercy of their patron state to the north, which in the meantime has grown into a regional economic and political power for whom, they believe, Cyprus is no longer a 'national cause' but rather a pawn that can be bargained. One union leader remarked:

Turkey is playing a game, and in that game it is trying to use Turkish Cypriots. Turkey says that it's defending our rights, but there's nothing of that sort. There's no Turkey defending the Turkish Cypriot community's rights anywhere to be seen. Turkey is after its own interests and becoming a regional power. And when we look at Turkey's relations with the EU, Cyprus appears to be a pawn. Occasionally, 'let's give back Varosha, and in return the embargoes and isolations can be lifted' and things like that are put on the table, making it seem like a trading agreement. I don't believe that Turkey is pursuing a sincere policy regarding Cyprus.

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*“It's not important to them whether there are Turkish Cypriots in the island; what's important is whether or not their policies in the island are in Turkey's interests.”*

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In addition, many interviewees claimed that Turkey does not understand the Turkish Cypriot community, makes no efforts to understand it, and instead pursues its own interests in the island. One journalist writing for the largest north Cyprus newspaper remarked:

I think Turkey makes no effort to understand. I don't even think that the AKP sees Turkish Cypriots as the reason for Turkey to be in the island. The AKP's attitude regarding Cyprus is very self-assured, even megalomaniacal. It's not important to them whether there are Turkish Cypriots in the island; what's important is whether or not their policies in the island are in Turkey's interests. I don't believe that any government of the Republic of Turkey has been especially concerned about Turkish Cypriots' existence or future. If every single Turkish Cypriot is exterminated or migrates from the island I don't think it would be a problem for the AKP. The AKP does what it wants.

All interviewees were in agreement that the Turkish state pursues its own interests, though most interviewees also concurred with one businessperson who claimed, “If Turkey doesn't understand us, it's because we haven't been able to explain ourselves.” This is a theme to which we will return later in this report, but it provides here a context for understanding Turkish Cypriots' sense that they are being politically and economically railroaded and that they are not fully able to exercise their political will.

## A. Viewing the AKP

Turkish Cypriots' views of the AKP's performance in Turkey were mostly in the range of open approval to grudging admiration, with much concern expressed about current developments in Turkey and their potential repercussions in Cyprus. Like Greek Cypriot interviewees, almost all Turkish Cypriots interviewed for this report expressed admiration for Turkey's

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*“AKP was approaching the Cyprus Problem differently and rejecting the idea that ‘no solution is a solution.’ But in the period starting in 2010 and continuing until today, we can say that the AKP has come closer to the line of previous Turkish governments.”*

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economic growth and the AKP’s ability to bring the military under civilian control, but also voiced concern that as the AKP became more self-assured, it was slipping with regard to its human rights record. One left-wing journalist commented:

First of all, we have to divide the AKP into two periods. The first period is the period until 2009. The second period is the AKP period that came about after the 2009 elections, when the party was significantly strengthened. In these two periods, we saw two very different faces of AKP. In the AKP’s first period, it was a party that was opposing the status quo and all the given ‘truths,’ that was making important steps towards democratisation and reduction of military influence, that was approaching the Cyprus Problem differently and rejecting the idea that ‘no solution is a solution.’ But in the period starting in 2010 and continuing until today, we can say that the AKP has come closer to the line of previous Turkish governments.

An EU expert emphasised that the stability brought by the AK Party had other impacts, and that certain problems that had not even been discussed by previous government were now brought to the table, even if they were not necessarily solved:

If we evaluate the past ten years, we see that a lot of important reforms have been made and that there have been attempts to solve problems that remained unsolved for years, such as the Armenian problem and the Kurdish problem. The biggest reason for Turkey’s economic growth is the stability of its foreign policy. Stability in foreign policy affects domestic policy positively. Because of all this, I think that the AKP has had an important positive impact on Turkey politically, socially, and economically.

Even those interviewees who, from the perspective of the present, evaluate the AKP’s overall performance negatively admired the way that it had challenged the entrenched political system and its nationalist elements, and especially the way that it had managed to put the military under civilian control. One centre-left journalist remarked,

Before the AKP, there was an introverted state structure in which the military and bureaucracy were in control, there was no thought of opening to the outside world, and there was a limited economic capacity. With the coming of the AK Party this structure was broken down. The economy was opened to the outside. Civil society was strengthened. . . . But recently this situation seems to be changing. . . . The most important problem is that, because the AK Party’s constituency is largely religious, the AKP has started to measure civilian life in terms of religiosity. I also think that because of their excessive self-confidence, they’ve weakened the democratisation process.

These observations were echoed by one researcher who remarked that after a decade in power, it was time for a change:

I think the AK Party has passed its expiration date, in other words that it’s time for Tayyip Erdoğan not to continue. If you ask why, it’s because at this point in Turkey, if you say that you’re a member of the AK Party and you’re religious, you have all sorts of opportunities opened to you. In another period, this was the case for the Kemalists, now it’s religiosity and mosques that have more impact.

So while almost all interviewees viewed the AKP’s political record as initially very positive and more recently mixed, there were more divergent views on its economic record. Those on the left tended to see Turkey’s recent economic growth as a bubble that had not changed the income level of most average Turks. This view was expressed by one union leader:

I think the AKP influence on Turkey has not been particularly positive. Since the AKP came to power it’s been implementing neoliberal economic policies

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and has had a very hypocritical stance towards the working sector and the working class.

The perspective of the business community, on the other hand, was uniformly positive. One businessperson remarked:

As a businessperson, I see that there's more investment in Turkey, more foreign investors coming to Turkey. Turkish companies have become more competitive on the international level. There's been support for small and medium-sized businesses that has helped to make them more competitive. When looked at from that perspective, I see most of the AKP's policies in a positive light.

When asked about the effect of the AKP on Cyprus, many interviewees commented that Turkish Cypriots have had a difficult time comprehending the AKP. One businessperson observed:

We Turkish Cypriots of course have long been used to a Kemalist and secular Turkey, and we know their mindset. The way the AKP looks at things, at the Cyprus Problem and the Cypriot Turk, is completely different. I know this because I worked with them for seven years. In other words, the AKP is a change of mindset and mentality. The AKP's change with regard to Cyprus was to look for a solution within UN parameters. The older Kemalists were always more on the side of keeping the TRNC going. The AKP shows a lot of interest in the economy. For the AKP production is important, because they're going to fill the bellies of the poor.

Interviewees were divided in their views on the AKP's religious orientation. While many appeared to see it as a representation of the Turkish public's political will, others were concerned about its potential effects on the more secular Turkish Cypriot society. One leftist journalist working for the largest Turkish Cypriot daily stated:

There are a lot of things about the AKP that I support, and it doesn't bother me that they're religious. I don't think that the AK Party has a structure that's very different from a lot of parties in Europe. In the end, there's a democracy, and if there's not a totalitarian

structure, people will use religion the way they want. When I compare the AKP with the Poles, the Spanish, and even closer to home, with Greece and Greek Cypriots, they don't seem so religious to me. It doesn't bother me that they pray five times a day, go to the mosque on Fridays, keep the fast, give tithes, and cover their heads. In any case, I see this as appropriate for the social structure of Turkey.

The idea that the AKP is a democratic representation of Turkey was repeated by many interviewees, but several also expressed concern that the AKP was attempting to implement similar, religious-oriented policies in Cyprus. One left-wing journalist commented:

At issue is a mindset that sees Cyprus' north as a subordinate authority, that has implemented policies to Turkify it, and that, different from the 1990's, is today trying more to Islamise it.

Indeed, there is a widespread belief in north Cyprus today that the AKP is implementing a policy to instill Sunni Islam in Cyprus' north, in the form of theological [imam-hatip] schools, religious classes in schools, and increasing numbers of mosques.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> While some of this perception appears to be influenced by media presentation of certain changes, at the same time it is clear that the AKP has supported the building of mosques and religious education in ways that previous Turkish governments had not. Until 2002, there had been nine new mosques constructed in north Cyprus, while since 2002 twenty-nine new mosques have been constructed. Apart from two of these new mosques, all were constructed in formerly Greek Cypriot villages where Greek Orthodox churches were previously used as mosques, and all were constructed at the request of those villages' current residents. While in the past there had been difficulty securing funds for such construction, the AKP has facilitated this. In addition, the private Near East University is opening a theological school and recently announced the construction of what will be north Cyprus' largest mosque. And recently an imam-hatip school was opened in a vocational school with the support of the Mufti, who noted the lack of trained Cypriot imams. In a recent interview, former TRNC president Mehmet Ali Talat remarked, "The imam problem is a bleeding wound, and the reason for it not having been solved is the left. We do not have a Turkish Cypriot imam to perform funerals. This is a problem. We should have solved this. We could have solved it in six years, but we became trapped in our own obsessions and could not manage it" (Kadri Gürsel, "Kıbrıslı imam" özeleştirisi, *Milliyet*, 18 June 2012).

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In much public discourse this is expressed as an attempt to ‘Islamise’ a secular and tolerant society. One union leader commented:

I’m not against any religious belief, but instead of bringing Sunni Islam to the forefront, we should leave everyone free to believe what they want. We have to have respect for Sunni Muslims, Alevis, Maronites living in north Cyprus, Greek Cypriots living in the Karpassia. From this perspective, I believe that the AKP is not trying to help us but to assimilate us.

One factor shaping this perception that was mentioned by a number of interviewees is the rise in visible signs of Muslim identity, including the proposed construction of a theological school and educational complex outside Nicosia.<sup>19</sup> One businessperson commented:

We could give the examples of religious complexes being built and imam-hatip schools being opened. These sorts of things don’t really have any importance for Cypriots. When I say they don’t have importance, I’m not saying Cypriots don’t believe in Allah, but that if they do believe, it’s inside them. For Cypriots, family values are more important. The Sunni ideology is foreign to them. It may be that these sorts of things are desired because of the changing demographic structure of the community. What makes me uncomfortable is that things are being implemented without us having any control.

Some saw this as a blatant lack of attention to Turkish Cypriots’ priorities and an attempt to make them into more strictly practicing Sunni Muslims. One trade association leader remarked:

The Cypriot Turk is Muslim but doesn’t really concern himself with religious practice. For instance, he

*“What makes me uncomfortable is that things are being implemented without us having any control.”*

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doesn’t pray five times a day, but he celebrates the religious holidays. He goes to the mosque when he wants. The Cypriot Turkish public may not practice everything to the letter, but a Turkish Cypriot would never let anyone doubt his Muslim identity. If we look at the investments taking place recently in north Cyprus, there are I don’t know how many large mosques, and there’s supposed to be a religious complex built. Of course, since these investments are made with state support, I think this means that the AKP is trying to deepen the Muslim identity in the island. The Cypriot Turkish public doesn’t feel a need for these investments. For instance, they say instead of a mosque, build a school or a road, that is, we have more important priorities.

Overall, then, the AKP’s rise to power in Turkey has changed the nature of Turkish Cypriots’ relationships with the Turkish state by breaking down the familiar rhetoric that had seen Cyprus as a ‘national cause’ and by bringing the military under civilian control. While the AKP’s early democratising reforms were uniformly viewed in a positive light, there is now concern about the direction in which the AKP is moving. Turkish Cypriots are also ideologically divided on the effects of neoliberal reforms on the Turkish economy, businesspeople expressing satisfaction with Turkey’s economic growth and persons on the political left tending to see it as a bubble. And while Turkish Cypriots in general are sympathetic to the struggles of an element of Turkish society that had been excluded by previous regimes, and while several interviewees commented that it was “natural” for a conservative party to be in power since Turkish society is conservative, they also worried about the party’s capacity to understand their own more tolerant version of secularism.

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**19** One of the concerns regarding this proposed construction is that it is being funded by a religious foundation that was established only a few months earlier. Despite the origins of the foundation and its intent being unclear, the Evkaf Foundation has given it a significant amount of land on the outskirts of Nicosia for a very low rent and without an open tender.

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## B. Current fears and anxieties

The current context, then, is one of a Turkey that is a growing economic and regional power and whose relationship with the Turkish Cypriot community has significantly changed over the past decade. Within this broader context, there are three interrelated issues that summarise Turkish Cypriot fears and anxieties regarding their relationship with Turkey:

### (1). Immigration and ‘cultural erosion’

Beginning in the 1990’s, Turkish Cypriots began to express increasing anxiety that they were being outnumbered by immigrants from Turkey. Because north Cyprus’ only door to the world at that time was through Turkey, this also meant that economic migrants arrived via Turkey and that most were Turkish citizens. Despite the opening of checkpoints in 2003, Turkey and points east remain the main source of cheap labour in the island’s north. Most of these economic migrants are male, and many arrive without their families, living in groups of sometimes twenty or more in hostels in Nicosia’s walled city or in hastily constructed facilities on construction sites. Almost all of the interviewees emphasised that migrant workers needed to have proper protection by the state, which they currently lack. However, the main reason that they lack such protection is what one researcher has elsewhere called ‘a discourse of demographic danger,’ especially prevalent in north Cyprus’ media, which presents migrant workers as a threat to Turkish Cypriots’ way of life.<sup>20</sup>

There is considerable confusion of categories in this discourse. After the division of the island in 1974, approximately 30,000 Turkish nationals arrived and

settled in the island’s north as part of a facilitated migration intended to increase the Turkish population in the island.<sup>21</sup> This act of demographic engineering was planned by the Turkish Cypriot leadership in collaboration with the Turkish state and primarily involved moving persons displaced as a result of dams or other state projects to the island’s north. Soldiers who had participated in the military intervention were also encouraged to settle in the island and were given Greek Cypriot properties. Although these persons are called ‘settlers’ in academic and popular literature in English, they do not resemble settlers in other colonial nationalist projects such as Israel, in that many did not come of their own volition, and quite a few knew little about Cyprus when they arrived. However, upon arrival they were given Greek Cypriot houses and citizenship in Turkish Cypriots’ new state, and they became an important element in building an economy out of Greek Cypriot land and enterprises. Many were used as agricultural labour, and they were usually settled in remote areas where Turkish Cypriots did not wish to live, such as the Karpassia Peninsula. Many others married Turkish Cypriots and were incorporated into the community, while their children and grandchildren speak the Turkish Cypriot dialect and often are indistinguishable from Turkish Cypriots.

This facilitated migration ended in 1979, and so these ‘settlers’ should be distinguished from persons who later arrived in the island as labour migrants. The latter group comes to the island of its own volition, seeking a better life. This population began to increase in the 1980’s and 1990’s with the growth of the tourism and later construction industries in the island’s north, as both these industries are dependent on cheap labour. However, the numbers of these migrants, as well as a perception of a rise in crime, has caused Turkish Cypriots to perceive this influx as a ‘population problem,’ and popular discourse often accuses Turkey of ‘sending these people to the island.’

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20 See Mete Hatay, *Is the Turkish Cypriot Population Shrinking? An Overview of the Ethno-Demography of Cyprus in the Light of the Preliminary Results of the 2006 Turkish-Cypriot Census* (Oslo/Nicosia: PRIO Report 2/2007) and ‘The Problem of Pigeons: Orientalism, Xenophobia, and a Rhetoric of the “Local” in North Cyprus,’ *Cyprus Review* 20:2 (2008), pp. 145-172; also Hatice Kurtuluş and Semra Purkis, ‘Türkiye’den Kuzey Kıbrıs’a göç dalgaları: Lefkoşa’nın dışlanmış göçmen-enformel emekçileri’, *Toplum ve Bilim*, Vol. 112 (2008), pp. 60-101.

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21 See Mete Hatay, *Beyond Numbers: An Inquiry into the Political Integration of the Turkish ‘Settlers’ in Northern Cyprus* (Oslo/Nicosia: PRIO Report 4/2005).

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This is often cast as a policy of ‘Turkification,’ or, with the rise of the AKP, as ‘Islamisation.’ In addition, the entrenched patronage system in the island’s north has encouraged corruption of the distribution of citizenship, where in most cases the parties distributing citizenship to Turkish nationals were on the political right. Citizenships were often given immediately before elections, creating in Turkish Cypriots a fear that immigrants would take away their political will. It should be noted, however, that of the current citizen population with voting rights, 25% are of Turkish origin.

For most Turkish Cypriots today, then, ‘population’ is at the top of their list of both social and economic problems, as well as one of the main sources of tension with the Turkish government and Turkish public. One head of a business association commented, for instance:

You see best the change in the way Turkey looks at Cyprus when you go to Turkey and get in a taxi. It used to be that when you went from Cyprus to Turkey they would ask, ‘Big brother, you came from Cyprus? How are things there?’ They would show a special interest. But now they ask, ‘Big brother, they say you don’t love us. Is that true?’

Others experienced this within the island, in what they saw as the discriminatory practices of Turkish businesses in Cyprus. One businessperson who owns a communication firm noted:

Here when we go to some of the hotels for work, the Turks (Türkiyeliler) look at us like, you don’t love us, you don’t work. For instance, you go to a company to make a bid, and they say ‘you Cypriots are like this, you’re like that,’ that is, the person across from you heavily criticises you and your people.

In the press, the population problem is often presented as one of ‘the glass overflowing,’ in other words, of collapsed social services such as hospitals running over-capacity because of inadequate planning for a rapidly expanding immigrant population. As we note below, many see this as one of the first changes that needs to be made in relations with the Turkish

*“I would want social projects aimed at integrating this population that has immigrated to Cyprus into the social fabric.”*

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government, as well as a subject for further planning. One journalist commented:

First of all, I would want that at least at this point there be a line drawn regarding the population flow. On this subject the glass is full. I would want social projects aimed at integrating this population that has immigrated to Cyprus into the social fabric. At the moment, the child of a family that comes from the Black Sea region is raised as someone from the Black Sea. No matter where people come from, they bring their culture with them, but they should also grow up and live with the culture and fabric of the place to which they’ve migrated. For this to happen, we need serious planning because otherwise with people growing up so separated and carrying so much anger, at some point it’s going to explode.

Although in recent years certain analysts in the island have begun to see economic migration as related to global trends, these tend to be in a minority. One businessperson remarked:

We Cypriots have a tendency to look at these events only from the perspective of Cyprus. Because of that, we think that whatever goes wrong is only going wrong in Cyprus. All the problems that north Cyprus is experiencing at the moment are also being experienced in south Cyprus and all the Mediterranean countries. Right now all the Mediterranean countries are in close contact with [western] Europe. Almost all these countries are either EU members or very close to the EU. The problem is that most of these countries can’t produce as much as [western] Europe, but they want to consume as much. This is the first problem, and it affects us directly. The second problem is that neoliberalism is now the dominant system, and closed economies have disappeared. That is, we used to grow our bananas in Yeşilirmak and our cotton in the Karpaz, but now we get our bananas from Nicaragua. . . . Wherever you look in the world,

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*“Because we look at everything only from the perspective of Cyprus, and because we always blame Turkey for everything, we can’t make a correct diagnosis.”*

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cheap labour is moving all over the place. This situation is the same in Paris, in London, in New York, or in Istanbul. Our own economy also wants cheap labour, and we’ve received as many labour migrants as we have population. The public experience social problems because of this. . . . Because we look at everything only from the perspective of Cyprus, and because we always blame Turkey for everything, we can’t make a correct diagnosis.

In addition, certain members of an older generation argue that the youth see Turks only from the perspective of Cyprus and understand little about Turkey today. One nationalist head of a business association claimed:

In 1967 we were about a thousand students studying in Turkey on fighters’ scholarships. In those days studying in Turkey was important. Those who went from here to Turkey didn’t return without visiting Anıtkabir [Atatürk’s mausoleum]. In that period in Turkey we met a lot of good people. We saw Turkish culture from the perspective of the educated segment in the cities. For that reason we had no anger against Turkey. Most of us had Turkish husbands and wives. After the Peace Operation we established universities in Cyprus. Today our young people who study here graduate without ever seeing Turkey. They just read the newspapers here and see that a Türkiyeli broke into someone’s house or killed someone and this image of the bad Türkiyeli is now what’s lodged in their minds. In the university canteens, you have Cypriots on one side and Türkiyeliler on the other, so they don’t interact and have begun to ‘otherise’ each other. So this new generation sees Turkey in a different way and has started not to like persons from Turkey.

In general, then, there is an increasing social division and tension in the island between persons now calling

themselves ‘original Cypriots’ and those who have migrated to the island—either as settlers or immigrant workers—from Turkey. Collapsed social services and increased crime are attributed to migrants, while the popular press gives the impression that Turkey is facilitating migration into the island in order to take away Turkish Cypriots’ political will. The impression of Turkey ‘sending these people’ is a holdover from the period when Turkey did engage in a facilitated migration. In addition, the ‘discourse of demographic danger,’ which has its roots in the immediate post-1974 period, causes Cypriots to doubt census results and population figures given by their own government, which in any case is not properly monitored by international agencies due to lack of recognition. As a result, the Turkish Cypriot media and popular discourse tend to speculate wildly about the population in the island, giving figures from half a million to a million. Indeed, in television programmes following the last census, taken in November 2011, some callers insisted that if the result was less than half a million they would not believe it. In other words, while non-recognition and the accompanying lack of external monitoring call facts and figures into question, Turkish Cypriots in their daily lives have a sense that their culture and the human landscape around them are changing.

This, in turn, has led to Turkish Cypriots’ current perception that they are today experiencing an erosion of their local culture in consequence of the influx of migrants into the island. As noted above, while similar phenomena may be observed in other countries that have received large numbers of migrants, Turkish Cypriots’ single door to the world via Turkey means that those migrants are primarily Turkish nationals. As a result, this ‘cultural erosion’ is often described as a type of ‘Turkification.’ Despite such claims, as has happened elsewhere in the world, Turkish Cypriots are today experiencing an explosion of local culture, with television shows that emphasise Cypriot traditional village culture; a new market in Cypriot traditional food, music, and folk dance; and new ‘traditional’ festivals celebrating everything from local tulips to

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wild artichokes. This is a phenomenon that has elsewhere been described as the emergence of the local within and in reaction to the global.<sup>22</sup> In Cyprus, this has also taken the form of a new nostalgia for former villages and a time before the current ‘social degeneration.’<sup>23</sup> Along with village festivals, Turkish Cypriots displaced from the island’s south have also begun to have reunions. After one such reunion, a parliamentarian currently representing the Güzeyurt region remarked in newspaper commentary:

I saw people from Limassol that I had not seen for 38 years. There was an incredible joy in everyone. But this should not be understood as a chauvinist movement. I can say that it was a movement to reclaim our culture based on the idea that ‘those people who cannot claim their own micro-cultures cannot embrace other cultures or become more worldly.’ It was a quiet resistance against the cultural erosion that we have experienced in the last years. I think that the First Meeting of Limassol Turkish Cypriots was an event that shows that we are able to reclaim our cultural values and carry this community’s existence into the future.<sup>24</sup>

One important factor influencing Turkish Cypriots’ sense of ongoing cultural erosion is the apparent rise in crime as reflected in Cypriot newspapers and the tendency of those newspapers to attribute all crime to immigrants from Turkey. Certain newspapers have a tendency to make such crimes their primary stories, and while they invariably report on the suspects’

places of origin when they are non-Cypriot, they almost always suppress the places of origin when they are Cypriot. As a result, the general impression is that all crime, and particularly all serious crime, is committed by foreigners, especially persons from Turkey. This has produced what in the sociological literature is called a moral panic, a term used to refer to perceived threats to social order.<sup>25</sup> In a recent incident that occurred while the research for this report was ongoing, a young boy whose parents were from Turkey was raped and murdered by his father, and the body was buried at a garbage dump. In Internet and other public commentary on the incident, certain extreme commentators portrayed this behaviour as a typical part of ‘Turkish culture’ and a reason to close Cypriot ports to all persons coming from Turkey.

One legal expert noted that the discourse of a disappearing identity was related to the fact that almost all migrants come from the ‘guardian’ country; that Turkish Cypriots have historical reasons to fear an interference in their political will; and that there is therefore a confusion of Turkish immigrants with the presence of Turkish military might and economic power in the island:

The idea that people are losing their identity, or that they used to keep their doors unlocked in the past, are all things we see elsewhere. These things are experienced in Europe, in America, in every country that receives migrants. Of course, because we have more immigration, we experience this more. Additionally, I think another important characteristic is that we receive immigration from the country that’s keeping us under its guardianship. There’s probably no other country in the world that receives this much immigration from the country that’s keeping them as its protectorate. In fact, it’s usually the reverse, and it’s the guardian country that receives that immigration. . . .

From my perspective, and as far as I can see, what people perceive as disappearing is really a will that

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22 On the self-conscious construction of new ethnic identities within the global order, see John L. Comaroff, ‘Ethnicity, Nationalism, and the Politics of Difference in an Age of Revolution,’ in *The Politics of Difference: Ethnic Premises in a World of Power*, ed. E. N. Wilsen and P. A. McAllister (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 162-184, and John L. and Jean Comaroff, *Ethnicity, Inc.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

23 See Hatay and Bryant 2008, as well as Rebecca Bryant, ‘Nostalgia and the Discovery of Loss: Re-refugizing the Turkish Cypriot Past,’ in *Ethnographies of Nostalgia*, ed. D. Berliner and O. Ange (Oxford: Berghahn Books, forthcoming).

24 Mehmet Çağlar, ‘Birinci Leymosunlular Pikniği,’ *Star Kıbrıs*, 04 June 2012.

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25 Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (St Albans: Paladin, 1973).

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they can't have and that's disappearing. I think that what people call 'identity' is really this political will. If Turkish Cypriots can be sure that the immigrants coming here are not going to interfere in their will, probably their reaction would be different. Of course, there would still be reactions about social and cultural erosion, but what's really being lost and is at risk here is this will.

But while most interviewees saw the 'population problem' as being one of the most important issues affecting their daily lives, many said that the primary problem was with their own administration, as well as a neoliberal system in which businesspeople demanded cheap labor. One high-level administrator reiterated that much of the population movement to the island was a global trend, but that it was experienced differently in Cyprus:

I dislike this rhetoric of 'We're disappearing, we're going extinct.' These days the entire world is in communication with each other, and there's no such thing as just living in one's own little village. At the moment the world doesn't have a stable structure, everyone is going to where they can be most productive and make the most money. That's why there's a population movement all over the world. We also have such a population movement. What's wrong here is that this population movement is without rules or regulations. For instance, people who in Turkey have committed crimes or aren't wanted anywhere decide they're going to try their luck here. This is an island country, and people should go through tight controls. Actually, Turkey isn't against this, it's our own administrators who are against it. Because of these people coming from Turkey, we have a cheap labour force. . . . I don't think that Turkey is going to take a position against controlling the population coming here.

Some, however, disagreed and related the problem directly to Turkey's responsibilities in the island. One trade association leader commented:

The uncontrolled rise in population and problems in public security are both Turkey's mistakes and those of our own administrators. Of course Turkey wants

its citizens here to be treated better, but Turkey should not object when persons who've committed crimes here are deported. Turkey also shouldn't object if these people are sent back because during interrogation at the airport there's something that's found suspicious about them.

One left-wing journalist attributed full responsibility to Turkey, as according to Article 10 of the TRNC constitution the Turkish Cypriot police force is under the control of the Turkish army in the island. He noted:

If the issue is security, it is the Turkish armed forces responsible for security here. That is, the Chief of Staff in Turkey is responsible for public security here. The police here are tied directly to them. If the police are ineffective in catching criminals or those who've entered the country illegally, this is Turkey's responsibility. In addition, the current social uproar that we're experiencing is Turkey's responsibility. I'll give you an example from England. For instance, the English are very disturbed by their own [football] hooligans going to other countries and causing trouble. In such situations, the English public makes fun of its hooligans and makes it clear that they're ashamed of the crimes they've committed in other countries. Even the most conservative, the most right-wing newspapers will do this. The English government has taken a number of measures to prevent such things happening, including obstructing their ability to leave the country. When I look at the prisons here and see that 80% of the prisoners are carrying identity cards from the Republic of Turkey, I believe that it's Turkey's responsibility to put a stop to it.

And a law professor who often writes and appears in Cyprus' left-wing media noted that Turkey's tendency to view north Cyprus as a province rather than a separate state was largely responsible for the problem:

If Turkey had not approached the problem with the attitude of, 'You're in any case one of us, if there's immigration to Istanbul, why should there not be immigration to Cyprus?' and if it had paid more attention to the balance of things here, the current situation would be different. For instance, whereas in

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the past people entered the island from Turkey with passports, Turkey suddenly said, 'Okay, now I'm lifting the passport requirement.' If Turkey had not done this, and if it had not called those who protested Rumcu [supporters of Greek Cypriots], we could have avoided all this. Okay, we still would have had immigration, but it would not have been this much. I don't want to say that Turkey is sending migrants here but rather that it could control the number of migrants if it wanted to.

This important public issue, then, is generally viewed as partially or fully Turkey's responsibility, either because Turkey should be amenable to restrictions on entrance to the island or because it should be responsible for the conduct of its citizens abroad. And those who emphasise that population movement is a global phenomenon still remark that this is an issue about which Turkey should be especially careful, as it is often perceived as a form of control or taking away Turkish Cypriots' 'political will.'

## **(2) Privatisation and austerity measures**

The past two years in north Cyprus have seen the implementation of austerity measures attached to the Turkish aid package for the community. These austerity measures followed on the heels of the bankruptcy of the Turkish Cypriot national airline, which left more than three hundred persons out of work, or approximately 0.05% of the adult citizen workforce. The measures have included the planned privatisation of public works and reduction in the public service. Presently the TRNC government sends 50,000 checks every month to its current and former employees. With a citizen population of only 190,000, this suggests that at least one government paycheck goes to every Turkish Cypriot family each month. This

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bloated bureaucracy is also perceived by all interviewees as ineffective and unable to provide adequate services. One educator and columnist noted:

Turkey is saying to us, 'Brother, you spend 85% of your national income on salaries, and the world average is 30%.' In other words, 30% of a country's income should go to public service salaries, and the rest should go to public investments and social welfare policies. We spend 85% of what we have in our pocket and then can't provide social services.

Many also noted that administrators tended to be political appointees and so were not necessarily trained in the fields in which they work. One businessperson commented:

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*"We fought a struggle for freedom, but we haven't been able to fight for establishing our existence."*

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The governments here, after they come to power, are just interested in pursuing good relations with Turkey in order to stay in power. Because they're not able to see any hope or excitement regarding the future, they do not try to produce long-term strategies or projects. Also, everything here is done in a partisan, unprofessional way. Right now there's a huge difference between the quality of a high-level bureaucrat in Turkey and one here. Administrators in Turkey are professional, but that's not the case here.

One head of a tourism association summed up the problem by remarking, "We fought a struggle for freedom, but we haven't been able to fight for establishing our existence" (Biz kurtuluş kavgası verdik ama kuruluş kavgası veremedik). That same tourism association head continued:

We're used to receiving orders, and for that reason there's been a big gap in administration. If you leave a gap in the administration in any country, interests will come to fill it. These interest groups of course will fill that space according to their own interests. For example, they said, 'Let's make Cyprus an island

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*“As long as the administration here is weak, Turkey is strong here.”*

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for tourism.’ And because the TRNC isn’t recognised, they decided to make this gambling tourism. Fine. Hotels are being built, but no one wants to work in those hotels. Both the ones building the hotels and everyone working in the hotels comes from Turkey. And then they say, ‘Everything’s coming from Turkey.’ Okay, but you don’t want to work. If you don’t do it, someone else will come and do it. The administration of Cyprus is terrible. In fact, the administration is so degenerated that neither Turkey nor we can fix it. In any case, Turkey doesn’t want to fix it. As long as the administration here is weak, Turkey is strong here. For example, the ambassador says in a lot of cases, ‘They can’t do this,’ and he intervenes. In that case, people say that Turkey’s administration is above our own. In fact, that’s the way it is, but there’s a huge difference between a local administration and one coming from Turkey, whether it’s in education, in experience, in the way they work. . . . As a result, the more the Turkish Cypriot identity is worn down, the greater the anger towards Turkey.

Similarly, one journalist from a centre-left newspaper observed:

Turkish Cypriots need to be more creative. Turkish Cypriots have a big role in things being the way they are. In the past there were interventions on a number of occasions, and the military formed inappropriate alliances with various civilians, but Turkish Cypriots didn’t really react. One shouldn’t always throw the ball in Turkey’s court. There are problems, and these need to be diagnosed and fixed.

Or one researcher who is currently engaged in a survey on the relationship between Turkish Cypriots and Turkish nationals noted:

I think Cypriot Turks don’t engage in real self-criticism. And the price of that is that they’re always looking for someone to blame. If we had had a normal administration, we’d be in a worse state than

Greece. We would’ve gone bankrupt and closed up shop a long time ago. Nothing works properly.

After the division of the island in 1974, Turkish Cypriots had formed a mixed economy that was highly dependent on work in the public service to support small business. This was modelled on Turkey’s own economy, which until the 1980’s attempted to find a middle way between state-run and private enterprise.<sup>26</sup> In 1974, Turkey had a closed economy based on import substitution industrialisation, and it also suffered from an inefficient and bloated public sector. Turkey’s experience with an open market economy began in the 1980’s and gained speed in the 1990’s and especially the 2000’s, after the AKP came to power. The privatisation of state industry was met with strikes and public protest, as the public sector shrank and formerly state industries were opened to investment by foreign capital.

While north Cyprus has always felt the effect of these changes, it is often several steps behind events in Turkey. Moreover, north Cyprus has been isolated by default, because of its unrecognised status, and so is in any case unable fully to open its economy, even if it so desired. In addition, a 1994 decision of the European Court of Justice forbade import into Europe of goods bearing a TRNC stamp, especially produce, increasing Turkish Cypriots’ economic isolation. Past Turkish governments have proposed various projects to overcome this isolation, including the development of universities and the tourism sector. However, today Turkish Cypriots find that their universities, for instance, are outside the Bologna process, while the multiplication of universities in Turkey threatens the existence of this economic sector in the island. Similarly, while Turkey’s tourism sector is growing

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<sup>26</sup> The etatism that governed Turkey’s mixed economy also gave a key role to the public sector. See, e.g., William M. Hale, *The Political and Economic Development of Modern Turkey* (Kent: Croom Helm Ltd., 1981), and Öztin Akgüç, ‘The Development of the Public Sector in Turkey’s Mixed Economy,’ in *Turkey’s and Other Countries’ Experience with the Mixed Economy*, ed. M. Hiç (Istanbul University, Faculty of Economics, 1979).

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daily, the lack of direct flights to the island's north is a hindrance to developing a market outside Anatolia. In addition, interviewees often referred to north Cyprus as Turkey's 'dumping ground' (arka çöplüğü), referring to the various economic activities that are illegal in Turkey but available in Cyprus. One union leader remarked, "North Cyprus is Turkey's dumping ground. Whatever economic activities are not wanted in Turkey—casinos, prostitution, offshore banks, money laundering—are all sent here."

The current implementation of neoliberal reforms in the island's north, then, must be seen within the context of Turkish Cypriots' economic dependence on Turkey and inability to avoid following that country's economic planning policies. At the same time, those policies have different effects on the de facto isolated economy of north Cyprus than they have in Turkey. Turkish Cypriots have difficulty understanding how these measures will aid in developing their economy in a context of isolation, and many interviewees commented that this has not been sufficiently explained to them, either by Turkey or by their own government. In addition, the 'stateness' of their unrecognised state is often manifest for Turkish Cypriots in the national institutions that embody it, and this, in turn, has led to emotional reactions by those who see the destruction of national enterprises as a threat to their survival as a community. Such reactions were especially visible in the bankruptcy of the national airline, which was described in newspapers as Turkish Cypriots' representative institution abroad.

Reactions to neoliberal reforms, then, have been divided among those who resist them on principle, those who believe that they cannot have a positive effect on this isolated economy, and those who see them as inevitable and argue that what is needed is a vision of what the Turkish Cypriot economy can become. Among those who resist on principle is a socialist youth group leader, who commented:

Turkey is the instrument for implementing neoliberal policies. Do you think that if Turkey were not here,

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*"[Neoliberal] policies are being implemented everywhere in the world, and they're implemented in Cyprus by Turkey's hand."*

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the neoliberal policies implemented in Germany and France wouldn't be implemented here? Of course they would be implemented here, but perhaps in a different way. (Her yiğidin bir yoğurt yeme tarzı vardır). These policies are fed by the IMF, the World Bank, and even the EU's own expansion policies. In other words, it isn't as though Turkey said, 'Come on, let's privatise all of Turkish Cypriots' public enterprises so that they have nothing left of their own.' Turkey isn't looking at it this way, this is just something that's used for agitation. Turkey is the agent of these policies. Of course, saying Turkey's the agent doesn't mean that we shouldn't struggle against it, of course we should. This situation is a policy arising from the current crisis of capitalism and the attempt to raise profit levels. These policies are being implemented everywhere in the world, and they're implemented in Cyprus by Turkey's hand.

Union leaders, on the other hand, tend to argue that the effects on the isolated Turkish Cypriot economy can only be disastrous. One claimed:

In the past three years, because of the economic package imposed by the current [Turkish] government, there's been a growing impoverishment in Cyprus. Persons working in the highest positions in the civil service haven't seen even one kuruş [penny/cent] of a raise. At the same time, life is becoming more expensive, there are price increases every day, and the living standards of workers are falling. Persons working at minimum wage are struggling to get by, and there hasn't been an increase in the minimum wage in two years. From this perspective, I don't see Turkey's economic

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*"In the past three years, because of the economic package imposed by the current [Turkish] government, there's been a growing impoverishment in Cyprus."*

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growth as benefiting Cypriot workers or the Cypriot economy.

Others argue that these changes are inevitable, that they will be painful but can work, but that the Turkish Cypriot government needs to develop a vision of what the Turkish Cypriot economy will look like:

Actually, Turkey is saying that it doesn't want the TRNC to be a black hole in its budget, and so however it has acted for the benefit of its own people, it's going to behave in north Cyprus. But we perceive this differently. For instance, a person in Adana doesn't cry and moan, asking why the state doesn't put money in his pocket and instead gives him opportunities for credit. Turkey's regional development plan has been the opportunity for many families to found businesses, and the credit that has been given has made it possible for many people to feed their families and be happy. Here, because Turkey has just given money in bulk, it's hard for it to take a step back. People perceive this as enmity, but in fact Turkey is just doing what it knows how to do and implementing it in north Cyprus. . . . What's unhealthy here is that the government representing Turkish Cypriots doesn't attempt to convince them and gain their support to develop a parallel policy to that of the AKP. . . .

Within this context, almost all interviewees placed considerable blame on their own politicians for attempting to continue in an outdated system that was pulling them farther and farther from Turkey's own development and the opportunities it represents. A number of interviewees commented on the fact that in the past, while Turkish Cypriot politicians would often make promises to Turkey to implement certain reforms, they would always find ways to avoid these. One high-level administrator remarked:

The biggest favour Turkey can do here is to give up financing Turkish Cypriots' mistakes. As long as Turkey continues to finance Turkish Cypriots' mistakes, those mistakes are going to continue to be made. Turkey especially needs to take measures to prevent unnecessary employment in the public sector. Most employment in the public sector here is

unfair and partisan. In other words, Turkey needs to stop helping us whenever we get in trouble. . . . The politicians here just know how to stroke Turkey's pride in order to get money. . . . AKP has been in power for ten years, but our people have been in power for fifty years, and they have master's degrees in lying to Turkey. They said there would be privatisation, but not a single institution has been privatised. They said taxes would be taken from retirees, but three months later the court reversed this. They said they would solve the public sector employment problem, but there are still partisan appointments being made. In other words, the things Turkey wants to do here are being prevented.

Many others commented that it was precisely the politicians that this interviewee describes as having "master's degrees in lying to Turkey" who have failed to explain what benefits certain reforms could have, precisely because they had no intention of implementing those reforms. One educator and commentator found this to be a narrow vision:

The fact that the Turkish Aid Commission is this active here harms my honour, but at the same time I find their explanations convincing. The Aid Commission says that the money they're giving is getting distributed between people and that the money that they're giving as aid isn't actually serving the public. This situation has been going on for years. No one should take this the wrong way, but Turkey is a modernizing country, and no one in Turkey is stupid, they see what's going on here. Because they don't trust the politicians here, they are moving in the direction of a type of relationship with Turkish Cypriots that isn't healthy. The step we have to make here is to get rid of this warped system in order to have a more just and honest administration, and this is going to present us with all sorts of opportunities. In other words, the relationship between Turkey and north Cyprus becoming more healthy and equal depends on our ability to implement a more transparent and modern system.

One civil society representative and former administrator gave this situation a historical context

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*“The relationship between Turkey and north Cyprus becoming more healthy and equal depends on our ability to implement a more transparent and modern system.”*

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that at the same time provides an explanation for current perceptions of the AKP in north Cyprus:

I was a bureaucrat from 1978 to 2008, and in fact in the last period I was a high level bureaucrat. For that reason, I'm someone who was able to follow the financial discussions with Turkey and economic policies from up close. And I can say that before the AKP, the relations between the TRNC and Turkey were mostly shaped by the military. The military always approved the requests coming from Cyprus for economic aid. In other words, we would make certain agreements with Turkey, and Turkey would place certain conditions on its aid, but when the military intervened these conditions were always softened. In other words, the economic aid that we wanted was always secured by the intervention of the military.

Now in the past few years, with the rise to power of the AKP, there's been a reduction of the military's influence, and at this point the military can't step in on subjects like this. So in fact it seems that with the AKP party coming to power, relations between Turkey and the TRNC have become more normal. We can say that they've been put on a more political foundation. At the moment Turkey is taking a harder line on having its financial programmes and certain measures implemented. So those requests that in the past were viewed favourably because of the military aren't looked at in the same way today. Of course, because the AKP has also adopted a more despotic attitude, it's been looked at with antipathy here. That is, if for years you say yes to everything your child wants and sudden say no to something, of

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*“At the moment, I find the AKP to be taking a harder line than necessary. . . . In other words, I can say that the AKP is harming the way that Turkish Cypriots view Turkey.”*

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course it's going to create a reaction, and the relations at the moment resemble that a bit. At the moment, I find the AKP to be taking a harder line than necessary. Maybe it's natural for the AKP to be in the position of giving orders, but it tends to harm the relationship. And because of this, it seems to me that the AKP, rather than winning is losing. In other words, I can say that the AKP is harming the way that Turkish Cypriots view Turkey.

There is, then, considerable difference of opinion regarding the necessity of austerity measures and the means of their implementation in an isolated economy. While almost all interviewees found fault with their own government, both for its inefficient and corrupt administration and for its failure to formulate an economic vision, there was also considerable criticism of the way in which the AKP has handled this situation.

### **(3) Paternalism**

As the previous section makes clear, interviewees recognised serious problems in their own administration, and several of them expressed the belief that an improvement in that administration would put the relationship with Turkey on a better footing. However, all interviewees also expressed frustration with the way in which relations with the Turkish government have recently been conducted, echoing the above civil society representative's assessment of them as “despotic.” They express frustration with the way in which, in the past couple of years, the Turkish press and officials have portrayed Turkish Cypriots as spoiled and ungrateful children. This attitude they find paternalistic and condescending, one that does not give appropriate respect to their independence or, as they put it in the colloquial, “put them in the place of men” (adam yerine koymak).

This paternalistic attitude came to a climax at the beginning of 2011, when Prime Minister Erdoğan replied indignantly to protests against austerity measures. Erdoğan remarked at the time:

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Lately there have been provocative protests in north Cyprus. They're organising these with the south. . . . They tell us 'get out.' . . . They have no right to engage in protests like this against Turkey. The very lowest civil servant salary is close to 10,000 TL. . . . The gentleman gets 10,000 lira and shamelessly holds such a protest. . . . They say 'Turkey should get out of here.' Who are you to say something like that? (Sen kimsin be adam). I have martyrs, I have wounded veterans, I have strategic interests. Whatever business Greece has in Cyprus, Turkey also has the same business for strategic reasons. . . . It's quite telling for those who are being fed by our country to take this route (Ülkemizden beslenenlerin bu yola girmesi manidardır).<sup>27</sup>

Erdoğan then claimed that he would order the TRNC prime minister to Ankara and call him to account (çağırıp kendisiyle konuşacağım, soracağız).

The language used here is inflammatory: Turkish Cypriots interpreted Erdoğan's use of the word besleniyorlar to mean that Turkish Cypriots are besleme, a word used to describe the traditional practice of taking poor children into one's home and raising them as a type of servant. The tone with which Erdoğan says that he will call the TRNC prime minister to his office suggests, again, a master calling his servant, or a father calling his son to account. The immediate reaction in the Turkish Cypriot media was shock and indignation. The editor of one Cypriot newspaper that has been highly critical of Turkey asked, as Erdoğan had done, "Who are you to say something like that?" and then went on to ask where Erdoğan was during the years that the editor was a fighter waking in the mornings behind a sandbag.<sup>28</sup> One of the left-wing newspapers asked, "You say you have martyrs, you have wounded veterans. Fine, but did Turkish Cypriots suffer so little or give so little life?"<sup>29</sup> And even one of the newspapers that is known

for supporting the AKP commented, "Erdoğan in any case has begun to talk like a coloniser. We have no need for a president in a puppet government. This state that we call the TRNC should be abolished and joined to Turkey. A governor should be sent to Cyprus so that it can be a modern colony."<sup>30</sup>

Although relations subsequently improved with the appointment of a new minister in charge of Cypriot affairs, these incidents appeared to have soured relations and have given most Turkish Cypriots the impression that the Turkish government has no respect for their political will. One researcher remarked:

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*"Turkey behaves as though the structure here has no value, as though there is no thought in it, and whatever Turkey says will happen, whatever Turkey says is right."*

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I would describe this relationship as one between the one giving the orders and the one who's trampled on, one from far above and far below. Turkey behaves as though the structure here has no value, as though there is no thought in it, and whatever Turkey says will happen, whatever Turkey says is right. At the moment things are leading in that direction. What we're talking about is a characterless relationship. The fact that the Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey comes here and says that he's going to build roads and bridges is disgraceful to the name of democracy, to the name of international law, to the name of the people living here. As long as we have our own elected representatives and our own constitution, it's disgraceful to have a prime minister from Turkey come here and say something like that.

Indeed, all interviewees expressed the view that the relationship was currently one lacking in respect. The leader of a tourism organisation remarked that the relationship was a possessive one:

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27 İsmail Küçükaya, 'Hem para alıyorlar, hem 'çek git' diyorlar,' *Akşam Gazetesi*, 4 February 2011.

28 Şener Levent, 'Açı: Ya Sen Kimsin?,' *Afrika Gazetesi*, 5 February 2011.

29 Cenk Mutluyakalı, 'Asıl siz kimsiniz?,' *Yenidüzen*, 5 February 2011.

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30 Doğan Harman, 'Sen kimsin be adam?,' *Kıbrıslı*, 5 February 2011.

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*“The mother-child or father-child relationship bothers me. I don’t want to be a child anymore. I want to grow up.”*

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The relationship between Turkey and north Cyprus isn’t pleasant. It’s possessive, that is, it’s based on their ‘taking care of us.’ And I don’t think they give any importance to the sociological and psychological effects of this relationship of ‘looking after’ us.

This, in turn, had caused the rhetoric of a familial relationship to lose its power. One journalist remarked:

I don’t believe anymore in that motherland-babyland rhetoric. I never believe in that sort of thing, because the mother always wins. I don’t believe the baby wins anything.

Or in the words of one hotel association leader:

The mother-child or father-child relationship bothers me. I don’t want to be a child anymore. I want to grow up.

One researcher explained the social-psychological roots of this change:

Actually, I think that the Turkish governments and political parties do not understand Cyprus and the Turkish Cypriot community very well. But this isn’t their fault, because we have this problem of not being able to explain ourselves. And the whole ‘motherland-babyland’ business just makes the relationship hollow. Because no matter how successful a child may be, it’s still the child of its mother and father. I think that psychology, that mental state is very influential here. For this reason, I think that there’s no real character in the relationship, and the people there [in Turkey] can’t really understand you. For instance, people can’t comprehend if this is a separate state, or a separate region, or a separate entity.

Further, in response to the perceived lack of respect towards their institutions and the erosion of the familial or paternalistic rhetoric, most interviewees were of the opinion that austerity measures were

being undertaken without proper consultation with them; without regard to their needs or way of life; and without consideration of their special status as citizens of an unrecognised state.

At the same time, almost all interviewees were of the opinion that a large share of the responsibility for the current problems in this relationship lay with their own politicians, who were unable to express their needs or stand up for their rights. A popular local columnist observed, “The inability of our local politicians to have a tough stance and to say to Ankara, ‘This is who I am’ only makes the current situation worse.” In this regard, one manager of a local bank gave the following example:

My father was the head of the postal service here. At one point, he wrote a letter to the head of the postal service in Ankara, and the letter was sent by some administrator there to the Adana provincial postal service director. He objected, even went to the Turkish ambassador in protest. In the end, the Minister of the Interior stepped in and gave orders that the head of the postal service here should be in correspondence with the head of the Turkish postal service, because this was a relationship between two states. He achieved that, but if he hadn’t stood up for his position, if he had just let it slide, the next thing would be that the Adana postal service would direct him to the postal office of some Adana town.

Several interviewees also commented that the current widespread belief that Turkish Cypriots are parasitic on Turkey developed with the neoliberal openings of the post-1980 coup period in Turkey. One researcher remarked:

Actually, until Özal came to power the relationship between Turkey and north Cyprus was like that between two states. When Özal came that relationship started to change. Especially with Özal Turkey started following a policy of ‘thanks to the motherland’ that also hid a number of nationalist elements. And people here somehow were never able to break down the image that they came here and saved us. The administration here also has not done anything that would make its ‘mother’ proud.

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*“Our relationship is portrayed as that between Cyprus the spoiled child and Turkey the stepmother who doesn’t want to look after the child but has to. . . .”*

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Actually, maybe it did a lot of things, but it wasn’t able to explain itself.

However, there was also a unanimous opinion that the current political system in north Cyprus lends itself to such dependency through a system of patronage that does not encourage good administration or creativity. In this system, politicians have tended to maintain power through preserving good relations with Turkey and continuing its life-support to this small community. According to one businesswoman:

Our relationship is portrayed as that between Cyprus the spoiled child and Turkey the stepmother who doesn’t want to look after the child but has to. . . . Because politicians here always look at things in a populist way and just say, ‘Let’s get past this election; let’s get past that election,’ there’s never been any stability. In this situation, Cyprus is put in the position of a child that’s always making excuses to its mother and saying, ‘This time I’ll change, I swear. This is the last time. Just give me another chance.’ But those promises are never kept. At this point the mother is going to find some more drastic solutions and implement certain measures.

One manager of a Turkish Cypriot bank commented in a similar vein:

From what I’ve seen, our bureaucrats are activated by the worry of how they’re going to explain what they’ve done wrong. And because they behave this way, when the Aid Commission tries to correct their mistakes, it creates the impression that they’re imposing things. . . . But I think that if we do the right thing, we would not be in such a position, and there would be no problems between Turkey and us.

One leader of a hoteliers’ association observed that the attitudes of their own politicians encouraged the interference of Turkey:

This government would do anything to be re-elected, would follow any line. And because the AKP is aware of this, it’s engaged in an irredentist politics. Maybe it won’t be possible to eliminate a Cypriot identity, but the AKP is doing its best to minimise it. But from the perspective of the AKP, this is normal. If you don’t know what you want and can’t govern yourself properly, someone will come and do it for you.

Several others remarked that Turkish Cypriot politicians were not engaged in creating alternative projects to those proposed by the Turkish aid commission, or in attempting to convince that commission of why the various austerity measures demanded by the aid package might not be beneficial to the community. One EU expert who has been involved in attempting to implement certain EU reforms commented:

Turkey’s policies will always have an effect here, but in such a small community it should not be difficult to protect people’s way of life and keep it to a certain standard. Like always, we take the easy road and blame Turkey. Actually, this is both because we avoid responsibility and also because we resist change. The world is changing, but we still say let’s not change, let’s not renew ourselves, let’s not produce. . . . Okay, Turkey has an effect on the problems here, but if you do the right thing I really don’t think Turkey’s going to stand in the way. For instance, there have been times when I’ve convinced the highest-level bureaucrats in Turkey about things, whether having to do with the negotiations or our own reforms. On some subjects they convinced us. But if our administrations understand everything the bureaucrats sent from Turkey say as though it’s a passage from the Qur’an, then we have problems.

Another administrator observed that in the past, bureaucrats from Cyprus were well-trained and commanded respect, but over the past two decades the politicisation of the civil service had given jobs to untrained persons at the same time that Turkey’s bureaucracy was improving and becoming more professional. The same EU expert, who has contacts at many levels in Turkey, remarked that in the 1990s

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there were so few administrators in Turkey who knew foreign languages that he was often called in to represent Turkey at meetings:

In that time in Turkey we had a hard time finding someone who could speak English or who could communicate with us. But after that, in the 1990s, they began to send a lot of people abroad for education in commercial law, English, and things like that. . . . For example, in 2002 when Turkey went to Brussels they didn't even have an environmental policy, and everyone laughed at them. But when they went back in 2005, a friend of mine sent an email to me saying, 'We are impressed. They came in a team of sixty people, and they had designed what sort of country they want to have in 2050.' In other words, even the bureaucrats in Europe were impressed.

This same expert observed that in contrast to this rapid positive development, the capability of the Turkish Cypriot civil service had slid backwards during the same period as a result of political appointments:

It used to be that in Cyprus we had bureaucrats educated during the British period, and those bureaucrats knew how to work and had a seriousness about them, a work ethic. This was one of the main things that made Turkey respect us, even want to be like us. It used to be that when you said you had come from Cyprus people were really interested, but today when you go even taxi drivers have a negative reaction. What brought us to this point with Turkey? In 1994 we signed a trilateral decree, and after that even administrators were able to be political appointments. When that happened the civil service became politicised. If there are 8000 people working in the civil service now, 6000 are from the UBP [National Unity Party] and 2000 from the CTP [Republican Turkish Party]. And when CTP comes to power, the UBP people don't work, while when UBP comes to power, the CTP people don't work. As a result of this, the bureaucrats in Turkey lost their respect for us. When a high-level bureaucrat goes to a meeting and opens his mouth, or when he brings up a subject, he should command respect. When he can't do this, Turkey isn't going to respect us. And after 1994 with the increase in competition and the

increasing influence of free market economy, we were even more squeezed into a corner. At this point we couldn't run the country, and the easiest thing was to blame Turkey.

The hopelessness that currently pervades the community, then, was attributed by most interviewees to a corrupt political system that has stifled creative solutions to Turkish Cypriots' problems and has fostered a dependency on Turkey that most entrenched politicians do not have the will to challenge. And while several interviewees noted that the paternalistic attitude towards Turkish Cypriots dates to the 1980's, some also observed that the AKP's business-mindedness has given that relationship a new tone in recent years. One businessman pointed out:

This is a relationship that is shaped by the AKP mentality, and they're very sensitive on the subject of production. For instance, whether it's building a dam or bringing water, they don't hesitate to spend money. But if there's an unnecessary raise given to civil servants, they want their money back.

And this business-like attitude, while appreciated by the business community in north Cyprus, is precisely what was perceived by many interviewees as the inhuman effects of "predatory capitalism," which could not take into account the fears and anxieties of a small community in an unrecognised state. One centre-left journalist observed:

Because these people already belong to an unrecognised state, they identify themselves with its institutions. That's why they think that Turkey first came here and took charge of security, then it took charge of our administrative system, and now it's going to take over public works and leave us without any influence. A psychology is developing in which people believe that the rules of predatory capitalism will rule, and the weak will be eliminated and the strong survive, and then even stronger ones will come. It's forgotten that this is an island community, and Turkey tends to behave as though it's a town in Anatolia. Tomorrow a new mosque will open, the next day an imam-hatip school, after that electricity

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*“However they treat a town in the mainland is how they treat this place. This leads to psychological discomfort in the community. In any case, there’s already a hundred-year-old identity reflex continued from struggles against the English and Greek Cypriots.”*

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and water will come from Ankara, new bank branches will open and their managers will come from Ankara. In other words, however they treat a town in the mainland is how they treat this place. This leads to psychological discomfort in the community. In any case, there’s already a hundred-year-old identity reflex continued from struggles against the English and Greek Cypriots.

For almost all interviewees, then, the key to improving the relationship with Turkey lay in respecting Turkish Cypriots’ independence and will and aiding them to stand on their feet, both politically and economically.

### III. IMPROVING THE RELATIONSHIP

As noted in the introduction and throughout this report, Turkish Cypriots see their relationship with Turkey today as one of over-dependence, even submission. In addition, almost all interviewees complained that while Turkey technically recognises the TRNC as a separate state, it behaves as though north Cyprus is a province, or even a small town, to be governed in a similar way. For all interviewees, this implied a lack of recognition or understanding of their unique culture as an island community and special status as citizens of an unrecognised state. As one researcher expressed it, “The relationship is not one that demonstrates any respect for Turkish Cypriots’ existence, their culture, their beliefs.” When asked to define what recognition of their culture might mean, one journalist remarked:

In this island, Turkish Cypriots speak Turkish and see themselves as in some way Muslim, but they don’t want to be seen as Turks. They want to see themselves as a separate community. In any case, in

the past Turkish Cypriots have taken up guns and fought for this. And just when they thought they’d won that struggle, they began to see that maybe they hadn’t. . . . Even if Turkish Cypriots don’t have a state that is completely recognised, they want a democratic entity, a structure, that is their own and that will allow them to determine their own future. . . . These people are saying, we’re here, and we want to determine our own future. We can have a strategic friendship with Turkey.

All interviewees hoped that the relationship would become one of mutual respect, a relationship of friendship or even “brotherliness.” And when asked what they would want the relationship with Turkey to be and what steps they would recommend to improve that relationship, all interviewees shared similar views, and their responses had overlapping themes.

#### A. Respect

All those interviewed at some point remarked that the relationship between north Cyprus and Turkey should be founded on mutual respect. Some interpreted this as a respect for Turkish Cypriots’ separate culture and special conditions as citizens of an unrecognised state, as did one Kyrenia-based businessperson:

They have to show respect for us. Turkish Cypriots are the only living Turkish island community in the world. Islanders always have cultures that are more introverted and specific to themselves. We see this in England, in Thailand, in Singapore.

Others remarked or implied that respect would entail the recognition in practice of north Cyprus as a separate political entity. One union leader insisted:

Turkey has to show respect for the community here. Turkey says that it’s our big brother, that it protects us, that it’s helping us, but this is not a relationship

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*“Today the relationship between Greece and south Cyprus depends on mutual respect, and that relationship today is a good one. Our relationship should be like that.”*

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based on political equality, it's a relationship of disrespect, of interfering in our domestic affairs, and of insulting us. . . . Today the relationship between Greece and south Cyprus depends on mutual respect, and that relationship today is a good one. Our relationship should be like that.

Many interviewees observed that the relationship between Turkey and north Cyprus had degenerated in recent years primarily because of this perceived lack of respect. One EU advisor observed that this development might be attributed in large part to the effects of globalisation, which had caused Turkey and north Cyprus to drift apart:

Until the 2000's there was an incredible amount of respect in Turkey for Cyprus. For Turkey, Cyprus was an important national cause. It used to be the case that there was a real respect for Cypriot Turks, from the [Turkish] president down to the least bureaucrat, but that respect has been eroded. The Cypriot Turkish people were seen as a society that was cultured, tolerant, and knew foreign languages. And because this relationship was founded on respect, it always seemed to be one of equality. As this respect was diminished, the current relationship began to be less and less equal.

I think this situation is also related to globalisation. With globalisation, countries became more politically and economically integrated with each other, and Turkish Cypriots were left out. . . . When Turkey began to be more integrated with the process of globalisation on every subject from human rights to patent agreements to international law on competition and copyright, Turkish Cypriots began to drift away from Turkey. Even if they want to, Turkish Cypriots can't be part of this process. For instance, in higher education there's the Bologna process, and here everybody wants to do what's necessary to become part of it, but they can't. So because Turkish Cypriots have been left out of this globalisation process, it affects other relationships.

The notion of 'respect' expressed by all interviewees refers, in turn, to the perceived problems noted in the previous section. The population influx from Turkey and developments such as funding for new mosques

and imam-hatip schools are seen as disrespectful of Turkish Cypriot culture and an attempt to 'Turkify' them or make them fuller adherents of Sunni Islam. The austerity measures attached to recent aid packages, on the other hand, are seen as disrespectful of Turkish Cypriots' political will. One union leader, for example, listed a number of recommendations, most of which boiled down to a relationship that was respectful of Turkish Cypriots' state and political will:

First of all, we want the AKP to show respect for Turkish Cypriots' political will. Second, we want an end to uncontrolled migration. Third, if we're a separate state, we expect Turkey to have respect for the decisions and will of our elected representatives. In addition, we want Turkish Cypriots to stand on their own two feet and be masters of their own country (kendi ülkesinin efendisi olmasını isteriz). And I want Turkey to show an effort towards creating a federal solution of the Cyprus problem.

A number of interviewees agreed with one researcher who remarked, "This relationship should certainly be a relationship between two states." A former head of the chamber of commerce, for instance, asserted that size should not be the most important criterion in the relationship:

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*"Whatever kind of relationship Turkey has with Luxembourg, it should have the same relationship with us."*

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It should be like the relationship between two states. That is, whatever kind of relationship Turkey has with Luxembourg, it should have the same relationship with us. In other words, Luxembourg has a population of less than a million, and it's an EU member. When Luxembourg's head of state comes to Turkey he's met by the President of the Republic of Turkey as the head of state of an EU country. Malta is the same. What I want to say is that size is not the important thing.

There was also, among some interviewees, a reluctance to insist on the separate nature of a state

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*“The Turkish government doesn’t understand Turkish Cypriots and doesn’t make any effort to do so.”*

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in which many had lost faith. However, all insisted that respect should entail knowledge and recognition of Turkish Cypriots’ culture and their political will, which may not be in line with the Turkish government’s wishes.

Many attributed the current attitude of the Turkish government to lack of knowledge about Cyprus and Turkish Cypriots, echoing one researcher who remarked, “The Turkish government doesn’t understand Turkish Cypriots and doesn’t make any effort to do so.” One journalist recommended that the Turkish representation in Cyprus make more of an effort to get to know Turkish Cypriot society:

I would say that they have to give up the idea that they can run Cyprus like Diyarbakır or Kırşehir. Turkey approaches this place with the idea that we don’t understand what we’re doing so they should do what has to be done. Turkey’s ‘help’ and influence have actually resulted in this society seeing itself as a separate entity. And the AKP approaches this society in ways that aren’t at all convincing. My advice to them would be to keep their doors open to everyone and to try to understand everything. That is, the AKP has all these undersecretaries and security forces here, but I haven’t met a single anthropologist, psychologist, or sociologist working for them. They don’t have a single employee who goes to the coffeeshop and says, ‘Hey friends, how are you today?’ They don’t invite journalists for a breakfast or dinner. This kind of relationship opens the door for an overconfident attitude that says, ‘I’ll do what I want and no one can question me.’ They have to give this up. I would recommend that they abandon this position and bring in people who understand social relations better.

Indeed, one concrete recommendation made by several interviewees was that ‘the Turkish ambassador should behave more like an ambassador.’ One tourism association head commented:

The day the [Turkish] ambassador here really behaves like an ambassador, this country will be able to stand on its own feet. But as long as the ambassador is here as a saviour, a director, an administrator, people will continue to say that this place is under occupation. This is not a pleasant situation. Starting from the British period, the consuls and ambassadors that Turkey sends to the island have always remained distant from the community. You could not say that any of the ambassadors here had made family friends in Cyprus. They sit in their fortress and address you in a very formal way, with just a few agents, a few informants around them. They don’t want to be your friend, they just want to run the place. This situation has to change.

A number of interviewees unfavourably compared the Turkish Embassy in Cyprus to other embassies, which have political attaches that keep in touch with the Cypriot public, and which sponsor events, such as dinners and garden parties, to which local politicians, academics, and journalists are regularly invited. One journalist remarked:

The current Turkish Embassy works with a more mathematical mentality. If we compare it to the other embassies, which try to establish relationships with Cypriots and develop projects with them, the Turkish Embassy is definitely introverted and seems to be establishing cooperation only with those elements that they think will implement its policies. For instance, while the British High Commission makes an effort to bring together Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot veterans of World War II, the Turkish Embassy doesn’t engage in such activities. But people living here follow Turkish football teams, they read Turkish writers, and it’s actually easier to

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*“If we compare it to the other embassies, which try to establish relationships with Cypriots and develop projects with them, the Turkish Embassy is definitely introverted and seems to be establishing cooperation only with those elements that they think will implement its policies.”*

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establish contact with such a public. For instance, I'm a Beşiktaş fan, and if the Embassy were to bring the president of the Beşiktaş football club here and give a garden party, I would gladly go and establish relationships with people there. The same thing if they bring someone like Yaşar Kemal. But the Embassy doesn't work this way. It seems like they're living in a fortress.

One EU expert had concrete institutional suggestions for the sorts of changes that could be implemented:

In our relationship, Turkey could take measures that are more based on equality. For instance, despite the EU, Turkey could sign a commerce agreement with the TRNC. Or the Turkish Aid Commission could be turned over to TİKA.<sup>31</sup> That is, however they work in Bosnia, they should work here. They could close down the Aid Commission's Social-Cultural division and open a Yunus Emre Culture Institute.<sup>32</sup> That is, they should work here however they work in Bosnia, Belgium, or Germany. Right now people see the AKP's education policies, cultural policies and capital as threats. These aren't problems emanating from the AKP, though. The world is like this now, but because for us the world is Turkey and the AKP is now in power, this is how people perceive it.

One law professor and public intellectual suggested that the AKP might engage in a form of self-criticism regarding the historical role of Turkey in Cyprus:

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- 31 The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (*Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı*) is an entity that was established after the collapse of the Soviet Union to provide infrastructural support to Central Asian states. With the growing economic power of Turkey, the agency has grown in scope and depth, now working in parts of Eastern Europe and the Balkans, as well as Africa, the Caucasus, and certain Middle Eastern states such as Afghanistan. They provide infrastructural support such as road building and water treatment, as well as in other areas such as education and health.
- 32 The Yunus Emre Cultural Institutes or Cultural Centres are supported by the Yunus Emre Foundation, a non-profit, governmental foundation established by special law in 2007 to promote Turkish culture, history, and language abroad. There are Yunus Emre Cultural Centres in approximately twenty countries, and although a protocol was signed in January 2012 to open such a centre in Nicosia, plans are still underway.

For instance, the AKP could say, 'A number of undesirable things occurred in the past between the Turkish governments and Turkish Cypriots or the Turkish Cypriot government but from now on we're going to correct this relationship and our relations will be the equal relationship between two states.' This wouldn't exactly be an apology, but it would be a promise for the future. I think this could change a lot of things. We all know that Turkish Cypriots are very quick to anger and just as quick to make peace. A gesture like that could be very meaningful for Turkish Cypriots. In any case, everyone knows that economically and politically we can never be equal. But such an announcement could put the relationship between the two sides on the right course. Turkey needs to know that the Turkish Cypriot institutions would never avoid consulting with Turkey while making decisions. But consulting is one thing, and having it imposed is another.

All interviewees, then, recommended a more sustained diplomatic effort to engage with Turkish Cypriots socially and to understand them sociologically, while they interpreted the current disinterest in understanding the Turkish Cypriot public as an arrogance born of treating the island's north as a province to be indifferently administered. It should be noted that in a small community in which access to persons in the highest offices is relatively easy and in which equality is emphasised, the distant and hierarchical attitude of Turkish Embassy officials in the island attains significance and may be interpreted as arrogance and disrespect.<sup>33</sup>

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- 33 On an ethnographic note, it may be remarked there is often misunderstanding between Turkish Cypriots and officials and bureaucrats from Turkey on the issue of hierarchy. Turkish Cypriots, in their daily interactions, tend to deplore hierarchy of the sort that pervades most personal interactions in Turkey. Most Turkish Cypriots will address even their high officials, even their president, in the first person singular (*sen*) rather than using the formal plural (*siz*). This behavior, in turn, is often disconcerting to Turkish administrators and other officials, who tend to interpret it as a sign of disrespect. For instance, a Turkish university administrator remarked to one of the authors, in reference to a security guard's failure to rise when he entered the building, "You know, we had a hard time adjusting to this when we first arrived. It seems very disrespectful to us."

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## B. Consulting and communicating with Turkish Cypriots

A related recommendation given by a number of interviewees was that Turkish officials in Cyprus, when planning expenditures associated with the aid package, should consult with Turkish Cypriots who work in relevant fields. One businessperson suggested:

I would have moved towards including more Turkish Cypriots who know what they're doing in the defining of these policies. If these decisions had been implemented not as sanctions but as something coming from us, it could have straightened out the relationship. At the moment there's the impression that there's somebody sitting in Ankara writing out these policies at his table and saying they should be implemented in Cyprus. These policies should be explained better to us and should be implemented by discussing with us and taking ideas from us. At the moment what's really missing is that we can't identify with these decisions, these changes. For us to be able to identify with them we have to be consulted, we have to be talked to. At the moment it's as though we have no part in the process.

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*“Policies should be explained better to us and should be implemented by discussing with us and taking ideas from us.”*

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A law professor who often appears in the local media commented that among the younger, educated generation, the failure to consult those with knowledge in appropriate fields leads to the perception of arrogance and indifferent imposition of policies:

Turkey's insistence that the police be tied to the military, or its stand on the Central Bank and the fire brigade are especially troubling to the young generation that has been educated abroad. For instance, a Turkish Cypriot economy professor who has worked in America or Canada comes here and finds that the director of the Central Bank has half his

knowledge and was appointed from Turkey. . . . For example, when I was on the negotiating team they sent us to Ankara to discuss a particular subject with legal experts from the Foreign Ministry. They know better than us, you know [sarcastically]. I entered the room and saw that the two legal experts were my students. In other words, I was going to seek advice about a problem in my country from them!

Efforts are currently underway, through meetings with stakeholders in various north Cyprus cities, to develop a program proposal for the upcoming several years. A leader of one of the trade associations noted:

The programmes coming from Ankara have been perceived in the past as an imposition. For this reason, we've begun various studies that will allow us to prepare the 2013-15 economic package here. Maybe if we prepare our own programme, our sensitivities on this issue will be diminished.

However, others suggested that Turkish Cypriots should be included, as well, in the aid commission itself. A former high-level TRNC administrator observed that including the voices of Turkish Cypriot experts from civil society within the aid commission would ensure that aid packages addressed Cypriot needs and also reduce the perception that aid package programmes were being imposed:

I think that Turkey needs to engage civil society and professional associations more in its aid efforts. In addition, the aid commission needs to be expanded in the name of good governance, and they need to include Turkish Cypriots, not from the government but from civil society. In other words, there shouldn't only be technocrats from Turkey in the aid commission. There are Turkish Cypriots who studied abroad and have degrees from Oxford, the London School of Business, Harvard. The Aid Commission needs to make an effort to include these bright Turkish Cypriots. This sort of effort would make civil society and professional organisations directly involved in decisions. It would ensure that investments are made according to the needs of Cyprus, and it would make resolving problems much easier.

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One former head of the chamber of commerce agreed, remarking that collaboration with Turkish Cypriots in developing aid packages was essential:

I would tell Turkey, come on, let's determine these projects together, let's bring our companies together. If they were to consult us in this way, the people here wouldn't see Turkey as a master, they would see Turkey as a brother, and a more positive atmosphere would be created.

In addition, the manager of one of the north's main media outlets suggested that a media strategy to explain projects associated with the aid package would be helpful:

The representatives of the Republic of Turkey need to use the media to explain their projects and ideas in a way that is reasonable and realistic, and in a language that the Cypriot people can understand.

As a whole, then, interviewees were in agreement that various forms of consultation with Turkish Cypriots and the inclusion of Turkish Cypriot experts in formulating projects associated with the aid package would reduce the sense of disrespect, as well as the sense that such packages are imposed, and would greatly improve the currently prevailing atmosphere.

### C. Regulation of the relationship

Along with the issue of consultation, most interviewees touched upon a desire for a more formal legal definition of their relationship with Turkey. Suggestions in this regard included a security agreement of the sort that one often finds in a protectorate relationship; a commercial agreement that would allow free trade of Turkish Cypriot goods with Turkey; fair investment and trade regulations; and immigration control.

One journalist remarked that he would want to see a security agreement that would ensure a more controlled relationship between the two states:

What I desire is a north Cyprus administration that has been brought into a more modern state. I would want a modern structure in which we have a security

agreement between the two states and measurable, friendly relations.

The security cooperation agreement mentioned by this journalist is the sort of agreement signed by states that engage in formal protectorate relationships, when the duties of the two partners to each other are outlined. This would, in other words, be a more entrenched recognition of the TRNC's status as a separate state.

At issue here is again the question of equality, which a number of interviewees asserted needed to be secured by legal agreements. One law professor summed up the problem:

We need to have strong ties of cooperation with Turkey. Of course, in this cooperation the two sides need to be seen as equal. At least there needs to be legal equality, because there cannot be political or economic equality, or equality as a regional power. At least we could establish a legal equality of the sort that we find between the Vatican and Italy, or between Luxembourg and England. In other words, when England and Luxembourg sit at the table to discuss an economic agreement the difference between them is enormous, but at least when they sit at the table they do so as two equal states, and they behave that way.

While the issue of equality came up in almost all interviews, most interviewees explicitly focused on the issue of trade and investment between north Cyprus and Turkey. As mentioned at the beginning of this report, the past several years have seen increased investment by large Turkish firms, primarily in the tourism and construction sectors. Because of advantages and guarantees given to these corporations, columnists in local newspapers have often interpreted this as a new form of occupation, one that is intended to take away Turkish Cypriots' remaining local resources. Although interviewees were cautious in interpreting this investment, they did emphasise that there were certain guarantees that secured it. One legal expert said:

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When Sabancı was asked why he did not invest in Cyprus, he replied, 'I don't write on ice.' But right now it's being written on. Turkish capital is coming here and investing. That means that some kind of guarantee, some kind of security was given to encourage them to come. In any case, we see this because the prime minister of Turkey comes for the opening of these investments. If the Turkish prime minister is inaugurating these investments, the capital in the prime minister's circle understands that this is not writing on ice and that there's security.

One civil society representative commented that these investments could certainly not be attributed only to Turkey's economic growth and must be the result of a political strategy:

I think that there's the aim of creating an atmosphere that will increase investment. It's desired to give the appearance that this is not a country at war, that it's a normal country. However, normally a smart investor would not invest in a place like this. Everyone in the world knows this. We know that if there weren't special incentives, investment groups would not come here. In other words, this has nothing to do with Turkey's economic growth.

Most interviewees were ambivalent about these large investments, some deploring their destruction of the environment and others claiming that they made little contribution to the Turkish Cypriot economy. One businessman who exports his goods to Turkey remarked:

We try to develop our tourism sector, but at the same time we're destroying our environment and dirtying our seas. The number of tourists is obvious, but we've started to open hotels with ten times that capacity. In the meantime, we've destroyed the local tourist industry that wasn't based on casinos. . . . I think we've implemented the wrong plans for the tourism industry, and if we formulate a proper plan we can convince Turkey about it. If we rethink our tourism policy and present ourselves well, both the newly opened hotels and our own smaller hotels can function.

Interviewees also asserted that the advantages given to these foreign investors were unfair to smaller, less

competitive Turkish Cypriot firms and that similar advantages should be given to them. The head of one trade association used the example of the Bafra region, one of the most pristine areas of the Karpassia Peninsula that was opened several years ago to large hotel tourism and has been touted as a new 'Las Vegas on the beach':

First of all, in that region [Bafra] state land is given to investors for free. In addition, the investments made there are given credit up to sixty percent from Turkey, and they don't have to pay tax on their investment. Of course, it's natural to give these advantages to foreign investors. But Turkish Cypriot investors should have the same advantages.

In addition, in recent years Turkish Cypriot producers have often encountered difficulties in importing their goods into Turkish ports, since Turkey became an EU Customs Union member in 1995. As a result of that agreement, goods arriving in Turkish ports are subject to EU regulations, including health inspections. While one exporter whose largest market is Turkey claimed that these were not insurmountable obstacles and that Turkish Cypriots simply needed to "do their homework," most others desired a change in Turkey's policies toward the import of Turkish Cypriot goods and a free trade agreement. One former high-level administrator remarked:

If the EU is not going to make Turkey a member, then Turkey should change its policies. Or at least it could sign an agreement with the EU so that Cypriot small enterprises can trade with Turkey. . . . There needs to be free trade between Turkey and north Cyprus and an economic integration that is to our advantage. Because if you leave everything to the free market, the larger economy will swallow you. Turkey needs to say that the Cypriot Turk is under embargo and wants to live like a regular human being, wants to produce and sell his potatoes, and so Turkey should sign a free trade agreement with us. We need to have a stronger agreement with Turkey that will help us overcome the effect of the embargoes.

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*“Right now there’s a huge employment problem. Every family is worried about how its child will find work. If you put a serious tourism or university project on the table and tell Turkish Cypriots that there’s going to be a need for 8-10 thousand university professors or tourism experts, the situation would be different.”*

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Others thought that this problem could be overcome by Turkey aiding Turkish Cypriots in fulfilling the regulations. One small olive oil producer said:

If you’re going to help me economically, why can’t you put a machine here so that you can give me a health report for my potatoes and oil? Of course there could be unhealthy potatoes or bad oil, I’m not saying there couldn’t be. But from an economic perspective I would want Turkey to establish a health laboratory here so that our goods can be given a health certificate.

Finally, almost all interviewees stressed the need for population planning, both regarding the future of the north Cyprus economy and the number and type of migrant workers who would be needed for it. The director of one of the largest local media outlets observed:

Right now there’s a huge employment problem. Every family is worried about how its child will find work. If you put a serious tourism or university project on the table and tell Turkish Cypriots that there’s going to be a need for 8-10 thousand university professors or tourism experts, the situation would be different. In addition, one result of these kinds of investments is that we’ll need people to work as waiters, rubbish men, to wash dishes, and we’ll need people for that. But we should be able to control that migration.

As noted earlier, almost all interviewees asserted that there were concrete steps that Turkey could make in the direction both of controlling immigration into the island and of reducing Turkish Cypriots’ fears in that regard.

## **D. A ‘fraternal’ relationship**

Persons interviewed from all political persuasions emphasised that there were ties between Turkish Cypriots and Turkey, or persons from Turkey, that go far beyond the relationships that they could have with any other country. Some called this relationship that of ‘one people and two states,’ while most used more familial expressions and emphasised ties of language, religion, and often kinship. Some referred to relatives in Turkey or marriages with persons from Turkey, while others mentioned the fact that Turkish Cypriots follow Turkey’s music, films, and football teams. While most, then, remarked that there could never be a separation between Turkish Cypriots and the Turkish people, almost all said that they no longer believed in the rhetoric of ‘motherland-babyland.’ Rather, they preferred the language of brotherhood, which at an emotional level implied the willingness to make sacrifices, including those of one’s own interests. One right-wing media corporation manager commented:

I think that this is a fraternal relationship. It can’t be evaluated just as an economic, strategic, or social relationship. It’s a fraternal relationship. I say it’s a fraternal relationship because one doesn’t consider one’s own interests when it’s a relationship between siblings. You’re my brother, and if you want me to give my life, I’ll even give my life. It’s not possible to reduce this to some economic cost or any other dimension.

For most, fraternal language was used to emphasise that they no longer wished to be cast in the role of ‘children.’ One trade association leader remarked:

For a long time this relationship has been called a motherland-babyland relationship. And yes, of course Turkey is our motherland, because our ancestors came here from Turkey in 1571 in the Ottoman times. This mother-child relationship continued for a period. The mother always helped the child and gave it money and wasn’t too concerned about what the child did. But with the AKP this became more like a father-small boy relationship. And this time the father began to say, I’ll give you this and this, but in return you’re going to do certain things. And the father began to say, if you spend your

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money elsewhere I'll reprimand you, or I want to see where you've spent it. What this relation should be is one between an older brother and a younger brother. The relationship between two brothers is more intimate, sincere. The father can reprimand or even beat the child, but an older brother doesn't really reprimand the younger one. He'll give advice to his brother, or take him by the arm and try to help him.

The switch from a maternal or paternal language to a fraternal one, then, referred to the previously mentioned perception of paternalism and desire for respect and legal equality. Several interviewees also echoed the trade association leader's assessment that Turkey should act as a 'big brother,' guiding the younger brother and helping him to stand on his own feet. Indeed, this idea that Turkey should 'act like a big brother' [ağabeylik yapsın] encapsulates many of the previous descriptions of what Turkey should do, in that it implies the equality of brotherhood while recognising that one is stronger and could provide guidance. One popular columnist asserted:

Before anything else, I would say that Turkey should be patient with us and trust us, and contribute to our developing a self-sufficient administration. Instead of sending us money, help us create a self-sustaining democracy and economy. In spite of all the difficulties, I would say that Turkey should act like a big brother [ağabeylik yapsın] and contribute to developing the Cypriot Turk's production capabilities.

In various ways, interviewees expressed that Turkey's political maturity and economic growth, as well as recent experience of bureaucratic reforms, could be used to guide and inspire Turkish Cypriots in their own reform process. The manager of one media outlet suggested:

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*“Turkey should be patient with us and trust us, and contribute to our developing a self-sufficient administration. Instead of sending us money, help us create a self-sustaining democracy and economy.”*

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This country needs to be established on a firm and healthy foundation. You can't build a country on informal, unjust gains. Today we have a state, but on certain subjects we have a lot of deficiencies. For instance, we're in need of a new constitution and a new law regulating political parties. As a brother, Turkey ought to be in the lead of realising such reforms, not by meddling in our business but by providing inspiration. There are a lot of things that need to be changed in our constitution, but somehow they don't get changed. The Republic of Turkey could provide a real contribution and motivation for us to make the necessary democratic and economic changes.

Even when not using the language of fraternity, many interviewees suggested that Turkey's recent experiences of bureaucratic and legal reforms should provide Turkey with the means to assist Turkish Cypriots without imposing change. One local bank manager observed:

Twenty years ago Cyprus was ten steps ahead of Turkey, but today it's ten steps behind. Turkey is experiencing serious changes, and these changes affect people's daily lives. For instance, today in Turkey you can go to the land registry office and get a title deed in one day. They can determine which apartment building you live in by satellite by using your identity card number. These things were beyond the realm of imagination, and people are aware of these changes. . . . In north Cyprus there's an incredible amateurishness to all the administrative institutions. . . . The society here doesn't believe in change anymore, they think nothing can change here. I think that we need to make changes that will affect people's daily lives.

One of the persistent themes of the interviews, then, was the idea that ties that could be analogised to or are perceived as a type of "kinship" make Turkish Cypriots' relationship with Turkey something that goes beyond the bond that they could have with any other state. It also leads to expectations, including that Turkey will assist and advise Turkish Cypriots as they attempt to reform their own state and its bureaucratic apparatus, although the language of 'brotherhood' suggests that this should be done without imposing.

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#### IV. CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS AND A POTENTIAL 'PLAN B'

As mentioned in the introduction, interviews for this report took place within the context of ongoing negotiations intended to reach a political settlement to the island's division. With the beginning of the Republic of Cyprus' EU presidency, it is expected that this process will slow down or even be halted, although technical committee meetings may continue during this six-month period and the RoC presidential election period that will follow. When asked if they were hopeful about the negotiations, interviewees unanimously said that they were not.

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*When asked if they were hopeful about the negotiations, interviewees unanimously said that they were not. In addition, when asked if there was anything that Turkey might do to move the negotiations into a more productive mode, all said that while Turkey could take certain steps, the real impediment was with the Greek Cypriot side.*

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In addition, when asked if there was anything that Turkey might do to move the negotiations into a more productive mode, all said that while Turkey could take certain steps, the real impediment was with the Greek Cypriot side. This was an answer received from across the political spectrum and appears to represent a current widespread belief in the Turkish Cypriot community that the Greek Cypriot community does not wish to share power with them.<sup>34</sup> For instance, one left-wing teachers' union leader who has been extremely critical of Turkey remarked:

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**34** While the Cyprus 2015 poll did not include a question specifically on reasons for the slow pace of talks, 78% of Turkish Cypriots strongly disagreed with the statement, "The Greek Cypriot leadership is sincere in working towards a mutually acceptable solution." On the other hand, 86% of Greek Cypriot respondents replied negatively to the equivalent question regarding Turkish Cypriot negotiators.

Greek Cypriots have this stubborn and insistent attitude that they don't want to share power with Turks, and so I think they're happy with the current situation. After all, they have a Grecified Republic of Cyprus. They have a terrific argument and toy in being able to say that the Cyprus Problem hasn't been able to be solved.

All interviewees held similar opinions. A former director of the chamber of commerce expressed the view that Greek Cypriots have no motivation to share power, and additionally that Greek Cypriot youth were one of the obstacles in the way of a solution:

The talks are proceeding in order to establish a bicomunal, bizonal federation based on equality. But the Greek Cypriot side says, I'm already an EU member, so why should I establish a partnership with the Turks, or share what I've got with them? . . . In addition, the young generation of Greek Cypriots is brought up to be anti-Turkish, and they don't want to live with Turks.

Others expressed a more critical attitude towards the negotiation process itself, claiming that the negotiations were being undertaken simply for the sake of continuing to negotiate. One journalist observed:

Right now the negotiations aren't aimed at reaching a settlement, they're just being done for the sake of negotiating. In other words, they're acting like they're negotiating. Both leaderships don't want a negotiating process aimed at reaching a settlement. Each side takes a position against the other. Each side says things that they know the other side will reject. There's a vicious circle of this sort. The chance of anything resulting from these negotiations is very small.

This same journalist observed that building peace required efforts of the sort that are not being made at the moment:

People are not being shown how to imagine a federation. In other words, what will it be like when there's a federation? What will a united Cyprus be like? These sorts of questions aren't being taken into account. At the moment, all the pronouncements and explanations are building separation, not peace.

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He was not the only interviewee to remark that the current negotiations were a type of horse-trading but not a real peace process. A peace process, they note, would require facing the past and reconciling with it, but the current process does not appear to have such an aim. The leader of one left-wing youth organisation remarked:

A real peace process is not about two men and their advisors sitting around a table and talking about how I'll give you this, and you'll give me that, as though it's a mathematical problem. The division in Cyprus is not one in which some power came and drew a line and separated people, and the people weren't able to interfere. Turkish and Greek Cypriots came to a point where they lost their trust towards each other. Of course, there were those who didn't do this and in fact fought against it. But if a person has only three or four black hairs, we don't say that person has black hair, we say he has white hair. And Turkish Cypriots and Greeks fought against each other, they killed each other, and they created a distrust that now has to be solved by a peace process. The current talks are not aimed at solving this problem.

Some interviewees believed that the expected failure of negotiations implied a need to have better relations with their patron state. One businessperson observed:

It's obvious that there's not going to be any agreement with the Greek side. For them everything is going well, the economy is going well, all they want is their old territory and homes. If you're not ready to give this, or if you're only going to give it partially, that partnership isn't going to work. In any case, they always behave toward you as a second-class citizen. In other words, if the two sides can't accept each other's differences, if they can't reconcile with the mistakes of the past, nothing's going to happen. It won't matter if we do something unilaterally, or if we try to appear in the right. In any case the other side isn't ready for this. So if there's no possibility of a solution, we have to learn to live happily with Turkey.

Although several left-wing interviewees stressed that talks should continue and that the only possibility for Turkish Cypriots was a negotiated solution of the

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*“I don't believe that my neighbours want to share power with me.”*

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island's division, most interviewees said that after the Annan Plan experience they had given up hope. One businessperson who heads a tourism association asserted:

At this point I'm not interested in a solution. I really wanted a solution very badly, but at this point I think that there can't be a solution with our neighbours. At this point, I've written off my neighbours. I don't believe that my neighbours want to share power with me. Of course there are people in my own community who don't want a partnership, but the real problem is Greek Cypriots not wanting it. . . . I established an investment agency here and then became a member of a world investment agency, and after six months they changed their regulations and kicked me out. I went to the hotel owners, and the hotel owners were members of booking.com, but the Greek Cypriots saw this and had them thrown out. . . . We spend a significant part of our time just figuring out how to overcome these obstacles. . . . I can even say that after what the Greek Cypriots have done I've become really nationalistic.

The leader of a socialist youth association also suggested that it was Greek Cypriots' inability to criticise their own chauvinist elements and their tendency only to blame Turkey, and thereby to co-opt Turkish Cypriots critical of Turkey, that made it difficult for persons like him to develop a coherent stance of resistance:

South Cyprus says that there's only one nationality in the island, it's Cypriot, and those in the north are also Cypriot. But when they're realising their policies they never do anything that suggests they count Turkish Cypriots as Cypriot. They're constantly saying, you're a minority, you're leftovers from the Ottomans, you're this, you're that. There's an incredible amount of chauvinism in the south. One of the reasons that Turkish Cypriots can't adopt a serious anti-Turkey attitude, even in a period when

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*“South Cyprus says that there’s only one nationality in the island, it’s Cypriot, and those in the north are also Cypriot. But when they’re realising their policies they never do anything that suggests they count Turkish Cypriots as Cypriot.”*

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they’re this discouraged, is because of the way Greek Cypriots behave. That is, we’re between a rock and a hard place [‘Yukarı tükürsen bıyık aşağı tükürsen sakal’ durumu vardır]. Because our political stance is that we should first stand against our own chauvinists and those who try to dominate us, we concentrate on Turkey. If I were to stand up and criticise the south or Greece, I wouldn’t be any different from politicians on the right. Our friends in the south should do that, and they should leave talking about Turkey to us.

This same youth association leader also summarised the observations of quite a number of interviewees regarding Cyprus’ new natural resources race and how this might affect the negotiations:

In the south, AKEL [the Progressive Party of Working People] says that they want peace but also that if they find petrol Turkish Cypriots will want to share the wealth and so will accept an agreement. And our side says it wants peace but is looking for oil. In the same way, they’re bringing water, in other words, there’s a kind of cold war politics being played out here. They do the exact opposite of peace and call it peace. To me this resembles nuclear war and cold war politics.

Although none of the interviewees expected an agreement to result from the current negotiations, when asked what they thought should happen if these talks fail, many interviewees had difficulty answering. This inability to see the future appears to be one result of the failure of the two ‘projects’ mentioned earlier, as well as uncertainties produced by the upcoming elections in the RoC. Although most still saw federation as the only legitimate resolution of their plight, most had also given up hope that negotiations

would achieve this. This may also be related to the observation of a number of interviewees that they would never get closer to a solution than the Annan Plan, and an inability to understand where further negotiations might be leading. For instance, one legal expert who had worked under Talat in technical committees in the negotiations asserted:

I think what should have happened is that there should have been another referendum on an agreed text, and if again the Greek Cypriots said no and Turkish Cypriots yes, then it should have been finished. This is what should have happened, but I don’t believe anymore that it will.

A high-level administrator agreed:

I think the Annan Plan was the last point on this subject. I think with the Annan Plan everything came out in the open, and after that restarting the negotiations was absurd. After the Annan Plan, Turkish Cypriots and Turkey should have said to the world, ‘You presented us with a peace plan, thank you very much. We put forward our views on it, and the result is clear. At this point, we’re going to take our own path.’

One businessman who is a member of the currently ruling right-wing UBP insisted that declaring an end to the negotiations would be the only way to resolve the uncertainty under which Turkish Cypriots have lived for so many decades:

I was born in 1972. After 1974 we became refugees.<sup>35</sup> We stayed two years in Güzelyurt (Morphou) and afterwards moved to Nicosia. At the moment I’m forty years old and for as long as I can remember

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**35** In 1974, approximately 215,000 Cypriots were or had been displaced by conflict. Some of these were displaced during inter-communal disruptions in 1958 and 1963–4, but the majority were displaced during the island’s division. Almost 65,000 of these were Turkish Cypriots who had been displaced at various points during the conflict. For an overview of Turkish Cypriot displacement, see the introduction to Rebecca Bryant, *Displacement in Cyprus—Consequences of Civil and Military Strife, Report No. 2, Life Stories: Turkish Cypriot Community* (Oslo/Nicosia: PRIO Cyprus Centre, 2012).

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people have been saying that negotiations to resolve the Cyprus Problem are ending. They're always saying that this time they've agreed, this time there will be a solution. We need to end all this already. Until this comes to an end, we're going to remain on pins and needles [diken üstünde durmaya devam edeceğiz], not really knowing our country, not really allowing ourselves to get used to the places where we've settled.

Similarly, a local bank manager expressed frustration with the way in which Turkish Cypriots enthusiastically embraced the previous negotiation process, only to find that it had given them no rewards:

Actually, we've seen a lot of 'last chances.' Before the Annan Plan referendum an EU representative gave a talk in which he said, 'The train is leaving the station, and Turkish Cypriots should jump aboard that train by saying yes.' We jumped aboard the train, and then we looked and saw that the train had no locomotive. They took off and left us behind, and the train was still in the same place.

Most, however, were resigned to the idea that talks would continue because this was what the international community wanted, and also because there appeared to be no other choices. One popular local columnist observed that abandoning the negotiations now would be a return to previous policies, as well as the equivalent of 'leaving the field to the Greek Cypriots':

If we say no to the negotiations, Greek Cypriots will be very happy, and for that reason we have to force ourselves to continue. If a solution isn't going to happen, we have to reduce our dependency on Turkey and try to restructure ourselves. In any case, the Greek Cypriots never defeated us on the field. We just didn't enter the field, because we didn't like the referees, or we didn't like the field itself, or we didn't like the goalkeepers. When we finally started a process for real with Talat, for the first time in years the Greek Cypriots had to bring proposals to the table.

So although many interviewees believed that negotiations would lead nowhere, it was nevertheless difficult for them to imagine what would happen should they end. A high-level administrator remarked that Turkish Cypriots would not know how to live without negotiations:

I think we have a lot of weaknesses on subjects where we should do something, and in the event that there's no solution, I think that because of these weaknesses Turkey is going to have to annex this place. Today even among ourselves we don't talk about a Plan B. . . . In other words, we're not at all prepared even amongst ourselves for what will happen without a solution. We can't think of our lives without the negotiating table. I think that if the negotiating table is taken out of the picture, we'll all find ourselves in crisis. We've gotten used to the negotiating table and as a community, we think we have no other choice. We discuss a Plan B in a shy way, as though we're ashamed.

The same tourism association head who above said that she had no hope in a solution at the same time expressed the belief that negotiations would continue, because there is no other choice:

I don't think the negotiations will collapse. This situation will continue. If they do collapse, Turkey can't do much in Cyprus. Maybe they'll make this a province, or change the name and try to get it recognised by countries on which they're on good terms, I can't say. But I don't think Turkey will want to take that risk. Right now Turkey is a rising star, why should it take a risk like that?

A small number of interviewees in the business community expressed impatience with negotiations and thought that overall it would make more sense for north Cyprus to be more closely integrated with Turkey, especially economically. One businessperson said:

I think at this point we have to forget about it. If the problem hasn't been solved in forty years, it's not going to be solved. At least we'd be relieved of the current uncertainty. At the moment we're in a

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*“I had to order the same product three times from Germany. One time it went to the Greek side, and one time it got stuck in Turkey and then sent back to Germany. Eventually it gets to the TRNC, but when and how you never know. It irritates me not even to have a postal code.”*

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situation in which everything is uncertain. You have an identity card, but it's not recognised, and you can't do much with it. When you do business, the product that you want to buy is imported here [from Turkey], and there are expenses. Right now there are disadvantages of that sort. If this place had been a part of Turkey the way everyone thinks it is, everything would work much better. It would make our lives much simpler. If you ask if we'd lose our identity, I can't say, because it's something I haven't thought about much. From a business perspective, it would make my life a lot easier. I sometimes wondered if we should press to get the TRNC recognised, but I think people don't have that fighting spirit anymore. People seem like they're tired of struggling. Since we don't have a leader who can motivate people and inspire them, it seems this isn't going to work. If I were to give an example from the business world, I could tell you that I had to order the same product three times from Germany. One time it went to the Greek side, and one time it got stuck in Turkey and then sent back to Germany. Eventually it gets to the TRNC, but when and how you never know. It irritates me not even to have a postal code.

Certain interviewees expressed a desire for a recently discussed 'Plan B' to be put into action, though only members of the ruling right-wing party believed that north Cyprus might be recognised as a consequence of this. In fact, a media firm manager who is a member of the UBP said that because Greek Cypriots no longer have any motivation to reach an agreement, this was the only way that they might be enticed to accept a federal arrangement:

Turkey needs to let the world know that starting with the Islamic Conference and the Turkic republics and extending to all those countries in its sphere of

influence, it's going to elevate the level of relations with north Cyprus. After this, it needs to work to get the TRNC recognised. I believe that the TRNC is going to be recognised and accepted by the world, and on that day Greek Cypriots will say, 'Come, let's reach an agreement.'

For most interviewees this was a remote possibility, though almost all agreed that negotiations had heretofore distracted Turkish Cypriots from concentrating on strengthening their own political system and economy. One economist and former high-level administrator commented that it was time for Turkish Cypriots to stop focusing their attention on negotiations and to focus it instead on strengthening their own governance:

I think that it's a mistake to put too much hope in the negotiations, because until now the Cypriot Turk has always concentrated on a solution and postponed everything else until then. The Cypriot Turk has always kidded himself, saying, 'If there's a solution tomorrow, or the next day. . .' I think we can develop by establishing good relations with Turkey. We're experiencing these problems because we haven't channelled our energies in this direction. We kept hoping for a solution and chasing after fairytales. We should have spent our time on good governance rather than wasting it on negotiations.

And a former head of the chamber of commerce noted that while the negotiations had to continue in order for Turkish Cypriots to demonstrate that they had not abandoned the EU, this would be an extended process during which time they should attempt to strengthen their hand:

I think that even if the talks are put on hold for some time, or if they are weakened, the process will continue, and I think it must continue. We aren't angry at the EU, and Turkey hasn't abandoned an EU perspective, and in fact Erdoğan recently said that their aim is the EU, and it's already ours. But this process will be a long one, and we have to know how to take advantage of that period of time. We have to put our economy in order, give up taking what's handed to us and start producing. We really have to

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*“We have to build our self-confidence at the negotiating table in order to strike a balance.”*

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take advantage of this period. You know, it's not enough to win a war, you see the Greek Cypriots managed to become members of the EU and the UN, and that changed the balance. So we have to build our self-confidence at the negotiating table in order to strike a balance.

Indeed, in this regard interviewees had several concrete suggestions of what Turkish Cypriots, in cooperation with Turkey, may be able to accomplish, whether negotiations continue or fail.

## A. Good governance

At the time of the writing of this report, at least two initiatives had begun in north Cyprus with the aid of social media that are aimed at democratising the Turkish Cypriot state and instituting a system of good governance.<sup>36</sup> Both of these movements are aimed to address the hopelessness and helplessness that currently pervades the Turkish Cypriot community by channelling desires for change into self-criticism and a restructuring of the administrative and bureaucratic apparatuses of north Cyprus.

In a recent article in the local press, the leader of one of these movements, Tufan Erhürman, remarked on the new plurality of aims that has emerged recently in the community. In an analysis that echoes the above

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<sup>36</sup> One movement, *Toparlanıyoruz (We're getting it together)*, is led by Kudret Özersay, who resigned his post as Derviş Eroğlu's special representative in the negotiations in order to continue his work in this movement. The second is the *Constitution Movement (Anayasa Hareketi)*, led by Tufan Erhürman, who had worked on the negotiating teams under Mehmet Ali Talat. The leaders of these two movements are both on the academic staff of Eastern Mediterranean University, Özersay an associate professor of international relations and Erhürman an associate professor in the law faculty. Both are known for their academic work on legal and political issues related to the Cyprus Problem, while Erhürman also regularly writes and appears in the popular media.

claim that Turkish Cypriots' two political 'projects' have failed, Erhürman refers to one of these, namely the excitement surrounding Turkish Cypriots' bid for reunification and EU entry in the early 2000's:

The 2000's were like an arena. Those that we thought couldn't be toppled were, even if nothing new came in their place. But in the wake of that revolution, the accumulated energy was completely lost. In the wake of that toppling, no one was able to channel the community in a new course. . . . Now we're like drunks in a meyhane [tavern]. We're all mixed up, and furore is affecting our brains. But who or what is this anger directed at? It's not possible to show a concrete person or place or position or thing! . . . Maybe the whole problem arises from our belief all these years that there was one goal, one opponent that we were struggling against, one problem that we were trying to solve. . . . Maybe it's time for Turkish Cypriots to realise that they should struggle at the same time on different fronts, with different opponents, with different problems, and to multiply their goals. Maybe it is because we are looking for a single object for our anger that we cannot find that imaginary object.<sup>37</sup>

The desire for change came out in all the interviews, which took place immediately before the establishment of the new movements. One right-wing businessperson who engages in trade with Turkey commented:

If we don't change our politics, our political life, the structure of our state, I see that we're going to be in a very bad place in ten years. In that case, we'll have a very high crime rate, an unfair income distribution, and because of this Cyprus will have become unliveable. Right now the education sector has collapsed, and the health sector is in about the same situation. If the current form of administration continues, I don't see this situation changing in the next ten years.

Cyprus is a place with a lot of potential. If our politics changes, with Turkey's help we can pull ourselves

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<sup>37</sup> Tufan Erhürman, 'Kıbrıslı Türklerin Nesnesini Bulamayan Öfkesi,' *Adres/Yenidüzen*, 17-23 June 2012, p. 11.

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*“If we don’t change our politics, our political life, the structure of our state, I see that we’re going to be in a very bad place in ten years. In that case, we’ll have a very high crime rate, an unfair income distribution, and because of this Cyprus will have become unliveable.”*

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together quickly, and Cyprus can develop quickly in ten years. On the other hand, if there’s a solution I see that the Cypriot Turk’s position will be much worse than today, and if we continue with the same mentality we can only be administered. And so we’ll have to be satisfied with being a minority.

Another former administrator remarked:

If in the next year or two the Cypriot Turk does not establish a system of good governance, it will become a ghetto despite all of Turkey’s support and the EU’s help. In other words, everything depends on our establishing good governance.

And one popular columnist in a centre-left newspaper claimed:

If we can establish a system that allows us to be self-sufficient, we can behave more freely, in the same way that as the Greek Cypriots grew economically they distanced themselves from Greece and Enosis.

The belief that Turkish Cypriots must restructure their political system and democratise their state whether federation happens or not is one that has been expressed over the past few months by many commentators in the local media. Indeed, a consensus has been developing in north Cyprus that because of the expectation that current negotiations will fail, it is necessary to concentrate on improving Turkish Cypriots’ daily lives. Many also agree with the former chamber of commerce head quoted previously who suggested that a stronger Turkish Cypriot state and economy would strengthen their hand at the negotiating table. And if, by chance, a solution to the island’s division is reached, Turkish Cypriots will be in a stronger position and will not, as the businessperson above expressed it, “have to be satisfied with being a minority.”

In other words, the new movements, as well as a flurry of recent writing in the Turkish Cypriot press, intend to address the almost unanimous complaints among the Turkish Cypriot public of vote-trading, bribery, irregular and political appointments, and what Turkish Cypriots have generally begun to view as a corrupt political system that neither represents nor serves them. As noted above, a number of interviewees also believed that Turkey should aid in this process and give advice from its own process of bureaucratic modernisation, while others saw this as the key to improving the relationship with Turkey. One educator and columnist remarked:

If we look at those leaders that have gone down in history, we see that none of them is remembered because they made particular investments or built a bridge somewhere. These leaders are remembered more for their attitude and position on the Cyprus Problem. Some are remembered because they fought tooth and nail for a solution, they even were willing to die for it, and they maintained this fight with honour to the end of their lives. Others are remembered because they insisted on partition and worked for Turkish nationalism. But none of them are remembered because of some development attempt that they initiated. This actually shows the inadequacies of Turkish Cypriot politics. In order to establish a balance with Turkey, we have to change this situation very quickly.

This change in attitude is today growing quickly in the community, as various factions begin movements aimed at correcting what they see as the inadequacies of the system in which they live, inadequacies that many claim have been hitherto ignored because of a singular focus on the Cyprus Problem.

## **B. Democratisation**

Related to the issue of good governance is the more comprehensive term democratisation, used by many Turkish Cypriots to encapsulate both the issue of good governance and certain other changes that could only be made in cooperation with Turkey. In other words, a large part of the process of democratisation, as

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imagined especially by left-wing Turkish Cypriots, involves measures that would make the Turkish Cypriot political system more fully independent of Turkey and more representative of their own political will. Such measures include rewriting the constitution, especially to eliminate the article that ties the police to the Turkish military; allowing Greek Cypriots to settle in the north; and making the political structure more inclusive, for instance by including parliamentary seats for Maronite and Greek Cypriot residents of the Turkish Cypriot state. While left-wing interviewees were especially vocal about this issue, most interviewees appeared to agree that steps should be taken to make the political system of the north more independent. One commentator also remarked that Turkey's assistance in democratisation would greatly improve relations between Turkey and Turkish Cypriots by strengthening their political and economic institutions:

Lately a reciprocal antipathy has emerged between Turks in Turkey and north Cyprus. Among the reasons for this is the fact that Turkey is changing quickly, while north Cyprus has not been able to change, or at least not at the same pace. Especially in the 2000's, while Turkey was undergoing rapid change, we have been insistent on a public service oriented regime, and when our economy was improving a bit, we didn't make the necessary reforms and instead insisted on Turkey providing funds to the public service, in fact on that subject we've even threatened Turkey and tried to hold it hostage. . . . If in the upcoming period Turkey can aid us in democratisation, the relations between Turkey and north Cyprus, and between the people of Turkey and north Cyprus, will be more equal than they've ever been.

What democratisation encapsulates varied from interviewee to interviewee. For many, it was imagined as a unilateral implementation of the Annan Plan, which would have ensured many of the changes that interviewees envision and which had also already been approved by a majority of the Turkish Cypriot public. One law professor claimed:

If we establish the state that would have been established in the Annan Plan, then we can say to the Greek Cypriots, 'Look, we wanted federation very much but it didn't happen, so we established a state that can be part of a federation,' and in that way we could apply pressure. . . . Unfortunately, as long as we can't be a democracy living by its own political will we're going in the direction of extinction.

A union leader echoed this, saying:

I think Turkey should impose the Annan Plan framework here and convince the international authorities and especially the EU that it wants a solution.

Yet another union leader argued that this should already have been done, and that now even more steps should be taken:

If I had been in Turkey's position, I wouldn't have taken the stance that we supported the Annan Plan but the Greek Cypriots said no. I would have brought to life all this Annan Plan that I supported and believed in, and this would have been an element that would have forced Greek Cypriots' hand. For instance, in the Annan Plan there was an article that said that in the first years fourteen percent of Greek Cypriot refugees could come live in the north, and I would have implemented this and lost nothing. . . . The same thing was the case for the return of Islamic foundation and church properties. . . . But this wasn't done and so the process stalled. . . . Today we could put Varosha on the agenda. Troops could be withdrawn. What we should have done in 2004 might not be enough now, we might have to do more. . . . These kinds of steps won't weaken you, they'll make you stronger.

One EU expert also expressed the view that these measures would significantly improve the relationship between Turkey and north Cyprus:

If certain symbolic things are done between Turkey and north Cyprus, it could really change the atmosphere, and reactions against Turkey would be reduced. For instance, putting the police under the civilian authority, and modernizing the laws and making them more in line with human rights conventions would also help, because no matter how

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much Turkey has democratised, it's as though nothing has happened here.

Hence, while all interviewees were concerned with how to restructure their political system, eliminate corruption, and make it more effective, others tied the ineffectiveness of the political system to over-dependence on Turkey and called for democratisation measures that they believed would simultaneously strengthen their position and standing in the international community and motivate Greek Cypriots at the negotiating table.

### C. Demilitarisation and Varosha

Recently, there has been significant public discussion in both north and south Cyprus of a proposed 'Plan B,' a plan put forward by the current ruling party in north Cyprus to be potentially implemented in the event negotiations fail. According to various reports, that 'Plan B' could include a change in the name of the Turkish Cypriot state and a request for recognition from countries close to Turkey; the opening of the closed city of Varosha; the withdrawal of certain numbers of troops; and democratisation measures of the sort mentioned above.

Demilitarisation was an issue on which almost all interviewees seemed to agree, arguing that the number of troops currently in the island is unnecessary. Not all tied this directly to the negotiations. For instance, one former head of the chamber of commerce thought that it might be undertaken in any case, without regard for how it would be viewed by Greek Cypriots:

If troops are withdrawn, that would open up the civilian space, and it could be good for us. For instance, I left a lot of property in the south and didn't get anything in exchange for it. There are about 1000-2000 people in my situation. Those people who didn't get anything could use their points to get land in the areas from which the troops would be withdrawing. Now, if withdrawing troops is going to be done in order to send a positive message to the EU and Greek Cypriots, Greek Cypriots and the EU are not going to understand this. Actually, they'll understand, but they'll pretend not to understand. In

other words, whatever you give to the Greek Cypriots, whatever concession you make, they'll put it in their pocket, because in any case they see it as their right, and they won't make any positive steps in return.

Although some members of the ruling right-wing party believed that opening Varosha would be a mistake, as it is currently a negotiating tool, most interviewees viewed the issue in human and economic terms. The head of one business association commented:

I think Varosha should be opened. There's economic value there, but that economic value is disappearing day by day. It could be under Turkish control, and the owners who want to come back and settle could do so. In fact, we could give them low-interest loans so that they could rebuild. It staying closed like that is bad, I think it should open.

Many other interviewees tied demilitarisation and the potential opening of Varosha directly to the democratisation measures mentioned above. One editor and columnist of a centre-left newspaper remarked:

In parallel with UN decisions, Turkey should open Varosha. In return, Ercan airport or Famagusta port should be opened, or Turkish ports opened for Greek Cypriots. Turkey should say, '40,000 soldiers in the island is too many, so I'm reducing it to 5000.' Turkey should sign a security and cooperation agreement with the TRNC. The priority should be democratising the north. For instance, in our constitution Article 10 allows the Turkish army to intervene in democratic life, and this article should be lifted. In the same vein, the Turkish aid commission should be eliminated, and there should be a bilateral relationship at the ambassadorial level.

One columnist argued that demilitarisation was one of the ways in which Turkey could remove the stigma of north Cyprus being seen as its 'subordinate authority':

Turkey needs to take serious steps that will surprise the world and overturn this impression that this place is its subordinate authority. If necessary for this, it could remove troops. It's very important for these developments also to be related to

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*Although all interviewees agreed that the Turkish Cypriot public as a whole desires Turkish troops to remain in the island, most suggested that they did not need to stay at their current levels.*

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development and democracy. Turkish Cypriots need to sit down with Turkey at the table and say, 'Brother, we've entered a new era, we're friends, we're brothers, we're allies, we're strategic partners, and this impression of being a subordinate authority is harmful to you and to us, as well.' If the north Cyprus administration says, 'Come on, let's take steps to remove this impression,' Turkey is not going to say, 'no, I definitely want my troops there.' You know, in Turkey there have been many years of struggle between the civilian authority and the military, and I believe that the AKP will be strongly in favour of increasing civilian authority here. After all, Turkey isn't the old Turkey, and there are a lot of new balances. In the past we were thinking that Turkey came here militarily and conquered and wasn't going away. But we've reached the point where Turkey is actually going to come to us and beg us to reduce the influence of the military.

Hence, although all interviewees agreed that the Turkish Cypriot public as a whole desires Turkish troops to remain in the island,<sup>38</sup> most suggested that they did not need to stay at their current levels. In addition, most interviewees viewed positively the idea of the demilitarisation and opening of Varosha, especially under Turkish Cypriot civilian control.

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**38** As noted above, 85% of Turkish Cypriots who participated in the Cyprus 2015 poll supported having Turkey as guarantor of the new state of affairs in the event of a negotiated solution, while only 32% supported having the EU as a guarantor. In addition, in a previous poll from 2010, Cyprus 2015 found that 77% of Turkish Cypriots had either 'quite a lot' or 'a great deal' of trust in the armed forces but only 13% had trust in their political parties ('Investigating the Future: An in-depth study of Public Opinion in Cyprus,' available at [http://www.cyprus2015.org/index.php?option=com\\_phocadownload&view=category&id=1%3Apublic-opinion-poll&Itemid=34&lang=en](http://www.cyprus2015.org/index.php?option=com_phocadownload&view=category&id=1%3Apublic-opinion-poll&Itemid=34&lang=en), last accessed 17 July 2012.

## V. IMAGINING THE FUTURE

Despite these concrete suggestions, however, interviewees were almost uniformly pessimistic when asked how they imagined the future of the island in ten years' time. Most said that they had nothing to imagine anymore, while even strong supporters of a federal solution to the island's division remarked that the future was opaque to them. One teachers' union leader commented:

I don't want to see things in the same place ten years from now, but if you ask me where things are going, I can't see in front of me. I just can't imagine that we'll grasp the moment for a solution, and that in ten years we'll create a partnership, with economic cooperation and unproblematic freedom of movement, and a demilitarised Cyprus. And not being able to imagine that makes me anxious.

The leader of a leftist youth organisation was similarly pessimistic:

I think that ten years from now Cyprus will still be divided. It may be under another legal guise, there may be some other superstructure, it may be two states. Or that may not happen, and we may continue with the present situation, and this state's name may change to the Cypriot Turkish State. I think that in general we're heading for a state of confusion.

One law professor framed this within the larger context of globalisation, and Turkish Cypriots' inability to keep up with the process of change:

I think that Turkish Cypriots are in the process of being erased from the stage of history. I don't know about ten years, but in forty or fifty years I think we won't need to talk anymore about Turkish Cypriots' existence. There will be an economy here, and if we have children they may live here, but there won't be something called a Turkish Cypriot people. In any case, this is the way the world is going, and what we're experiencing in Cyprus is just speeding up this process. I don't think that ten years from now will be that much different from today. Probably some part of what I just said will come true, but people may not realise it. Probably this will be a more cosmopolitan

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place, one that businesspeople come to frequently, one that's busying itself with tourism and education. We'll probably be working for these people. If not in ten years, then in twenty or thirty years I see that this is what's going to happen. When I try to look at the situation objectively, this is the conclusion I reach.

It becomes clear that for most this pessimism is directly tied to lack of hope in negotiations when we compare the very different scenarios imagined by one teachers' union leader:

If things continue in this way, I don't see that this place will be any different from any Turkish province or district. It won't be any different from a district of Adana. The problem will continue and grow. This administration will come completely under Turkey's patronage, that's the way it seems to me. . . . If there's some opening, or a solution, or some kind of agreement, things could be different. For instance, if there's an agreement to ease movement restrictions, or open Varosha, or to open Ercan Airport to bicomunal use and international air traffic, or reduction of the number of soldiers, or Turkish Cypriots being represented in the EU, it will make life more normal, and things could change quickly. Or if Cyprus enters into a relationship with Turkey over petrol or natural gas, to trade it to Europe via Turkey, that could completely change the balance in the region. If these kinds of developments happen, we could arrive at a much better place than the negative picture we're expecting.

Hence, while all said that they wanted to maintain hope, and while almost all said that their main hope lay with a potential negotiated solution to the island's division, their inability to see the future was also tied to their loss of belief in such a solution. One owner of a small business remarked that she had trouble imagining:

It's hard to imagine Cyprus ten years from now. I think that ten years from now we won't be able to see Cyprus even as it is today. If you ask me where I want to see it, of course it's as two equal states in a federal system. But if you ask me where I see it, that's very opaque.

*"It's hard to imagine Cyprus ten years from now. I think that ten years from now we won't be able to see Cyprus even as it is today. If you ask me where I want to see it, of course it's as two equal states in a federal system. But if you ask me where I see it, that's very opaque."*

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Those who maintained hope tended to have other visions of the future that involved a realisation of the projects of good governance and democratisation previously mentioned. The leader of a socialist youth organisation remarked:

The belief that our culture is disappearing is really tied to hopelessness. If you can't see anything when you look in front of you, it's a human reflex to look behind. It's like when elderly people who've given up on life just live with their old photographs. When societies can't see anything in their future, they exalt the 'good old days' (how good they were is up for discussion). This is what we're doing right now, but history moves forward, not back. However bad the present is, wanting the past to return is reactionary. That's why missing the old, the past, the 'jasmine-scented Nicosia' doesn't get us anywhere. The only thing that can bring real motivation is a politics oriented towards the future.

Perhaps the most optimistic of the interviewees, a left-wing educator and columnist in the local press, put his hope in Turkish Cypriots 'pulling themselves together' and cooperating with Turkey to become economic leaders:

Ten years from now I see Cyprus in a situation in which the Cyprus Problem has been resolved, [north] Cyprus is an EU member, its relations with Turkey are very good, and it serves as a bridge for Turkey's water trade, and where probably natural gas and petrol have not been discovered, or it's been discovered that there isn't any. Even if the Cyprus Problem continues, I think that north Cyprus will progress. I think on this subject the arrow has already left the bow. North Cyprus is going to progress and develop, and Turkish

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Cypriots are either going to establish an existence here that relies on their abilities, or they're going to accept that Turkish Cypriot identity and culture will vanish. In other words, in ten years that political will may have completely disappeared. If Turkish Cypriots get hold of themselves and take the lead in Turkey's development efforts, in ten years Turkish Cypriots could even be ahead of Greek Cypriots, they could be the leaders in Cyprus. In other words, if we think of the prospect that it may take four or five years to overcome the current Euro crisis in which the EU finds itself, in ten years' time Turkish Cypriots could be the island's leaders. In ten years, that is in 2022, they could be the stronger economic community that could force Greek Cypriots to accept a solution.

And a leader of a civil servants' union remarked that while he had no obvious reasons to remain optimistic, he nevertheless believed in certain qualities of his own community that he hoped would maintain them:

I think that we'll get through these difficult times, and in the future we'll look back on this as a nightmare. I hope that in ten years Turkish Cypriots will be at a more modern level. I think that in ten years we'll be in a position to feel proud of ourselves, and not be ashamed before anyone. . . . Turkish Cypriots' greatest advantage is the respect they feel for other people's ways of life. The future of such a community definitely can't be dark and won't be.

In sum, then, while interviewees attempted to maintain hope for the future, most found that their current lack of faith in the possibility of a negotiated solution and the inability to imagine another 'project' prevented them from having a clear vision of Cyprus' future in ten years' time. Those who maintained hope tended to put their faith in Turkish Cypriots' 'pulling themselves together' and developing a regime of good governance that could improve their daily lives, with or without a negotiated solution.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Since the end of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Turkish Republic, Turkish Cypriots' relations with Turkey have been shaped by

imaginings of the nation as learned in textbooks, films, and novels, as well as by a fair share of fantasy. In the 1950's, Turkey was the 'motherland' at least to the extent that it was the cultural, educational, and political centre of the Turkish-speaking world. And in a period when anti-colonial nationalism, irredentism, and even partition were acceptable political possibilities, Turkish Cypriots' proposal to divide the island and unite part of it with Turkey seemed ordinary enough.

However, Turkey's failure to intervene in the island in the 1960's led to the sense that their 'mother' had abandoned them and left them to fend for themselves, while Turkish Cypriots' ten-year struggle to maintain their existence in the island gradually produced a new sense of community and the beginnings of a local nationalism.<sup>39</sup> After 1974 and the international condemnation of their self-proclaimed statelet, Turkish Cypriots again entered negotiations to establish a federal structure with their Greek Cypriot partners. When this again failed, they were left between two impossible futures: a federation that could not be worked out on paper, and annexation to Turkey, which was internationally unacceptable and at that point also undesirable. However, Turkish Cypriots' 1983 declaration of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and their acceptance of a new ideal, that of an independent state, changed little. The TRNC remained unrecognised by any state besides Turkey, and Turkey's 'recognition' of it was ambiguous, as Turkey maintained a military and economic dominance in the north that supported but did not fully acknowledge the emergence of a local democratic system.

The exceptional respect accorded in Turkey to former Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktaş in many ways mitigated this situation, as the now-deceased leader was revered there as a freedom fighter and in addition

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39 See Rebecca Bryant and Mete Hatay, 'Guns and Guitars: Simulating Sovereignty in a State of Siege,' *American Ethnologist* 38:4, pp. 631-649.

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had extensive ties to the military and deep state. But following on a 2000 banking crisis in north Cyprus and Turkey's 2001 economic collapse, Turkish Cypriots began to recognise that their limbo status as citizens of an unrecognised state was ultimately untenable and to search for new solutions. Hence, when the Annan Plan was put on the table at the end of 2002 and Turkish Cypriots called for federation and entry into the EU, this seemed a new direction for them that while tying them to Europe would paradoxically give them more independence. In the wake of its failure, however, Turkish Cypriots have been left floundering. Denktaş, who had opposed the plan, retired from public life, and while his successor, Mehmet Ali Talat, had significant cache with the international community, he was never able to gain a real standing in Turkey. Subsequent leadership has proven equally ineffective in filling the 'respect gap,' while Turkey has emerged as a growing economic and regional power that is self-assured to the point of often seeming cocky.

Moreover, the systems of patronage and nepotism in the form of political appointments, vote-buying, and distribution of citizenship that began while Denktaş was still in power are now beginning to show their corrupting effects in a period when Turkey is strong, Turkish Cypriot leadership is weak, and Turkish Cypriots find themselves unable to compete in a global economy from which they are in large part isolated. Turkey's growing self-confidence, and the weaknesses in the economic and political structure of

north Cyprus that are now seeping through, have led to a relationship that is more and more one of "the one who gives orders and the one who obeys," as one of our interviewees phrased it. As a result, a relationship that many Turkish Cypriots have long seen as 'familial' has begun to seem paternalistic, making their protectorate seem more and more like a province or colony.

While the opinion-shapers interviewed here all recognised the need for change in the political and economic structure of north Cyprus, they also expressed considerable disappointment that their closest 'kin' made so little effort to understand the constraints of their position in an isolated economy and internationally unrecognised state. This they saw as the 'paternal' aspect of the relationship, seeking discipline at all costs, 'for their own good.' And this is why they called for a more 'fraternal' relationship, one between 'brothers' who try to understand each other, in which the older one may advise the younger but also attempts to understand his constraints and circumstances.

In conclusion, then, almost all interviewees believed that better relations with Turkey would be to Turkish Cypriots' advantage, but also that both Turkey and Turkish Cypriots need to make concrete steps towards good governance, democratisation, and demonstrations of mutual respect that would improve the relationship and lead to the political and economic development of the Turkish Cypriot community.

# Viewing Turkey from south Cyprus today



# Viewing Turkey from south Cyprus today

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This section of the report aims to present Greek Cypriot assessments of current perceptions of Turkey, the challenges and opportunities, and what form that relationship should take in the future. The report outlines fears, concerns, hopes, and visions of the future distilled from twenty extended interviews conducted with Greek Cypriot opinion-shapers in April and May 2012. Interviewees were representatives of various sectors, including civil society, educators, public servants, businesspeople, and members of the media. They come from a variety of political positions and backgrounds and represent different age and gender groups.

Speaking about perceptions of Turkey within the Greek Cypriot community continues to be a challenge. There is still a great deal of reluctance among opinion-shapers in the Greek Cypriot community to speak openly about Turkey, and left-over tensions from the 2004 Annan Plan referendum were frequently brought up in the interviews, as well as some people commenting that too much liberalism in their perceptions of Turkey would lead to claims of being a 'traitor' to the Greek Cypriot side. People's caution was reflected in the fact that a condition for almost all interviews was complete participant anonymity.

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*There is still a great deal of reluctance among opinion-shapers in the Greek Cypriot community to speak openly about Turkey.*

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## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TURKEY AND GREEK CYPRIOTS – A BACKGROUND

The relationship between Greek Cypriots and Turkey has a number of characteristics: legal, psychological, historical, political. What is absent, for obvious reasons, is the personal. Today, Greek Cypriots predominantly interact with Turkey through the lens of the Cyprus conflict. For most Greek Cypriots, the relationship with Turkey is a mediated one, framed by both first-hand and reproduced memories of the 1974 war and subsequent occupation, by the education system in the Republic of Cyprus, by the Greek Cypriot media, and by the Greek Cypriot political and religious leadership. The people interviewed for this report gave a spectrum of responses to questions about what Turkey represented, to them, and about what they thought Turkey represented to Greek Cypriots more generally. A leading member of the business community commented on his knowledge of Turkey:

Like most Greek Cypriots we have a view that has been cultivated in the army and at school. And certainly the views we have are not very positive, as you would expect. I grew up in an era where we never met people from Turkey, not even Turkish Cypriots.

A representative of a prominent tourism organisation, when asked about how she learned about Turkey, answered that:

Through family experience because half my family are refugees. Even though I was young I can remember my parents' reactions and the fact they can't get over being out on the streets and having no communication with them [at the time], because we were abroad. I learned about Turkey through my

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*“I’ve been to Turkey twice, once in 2000 and again more recently. I remember the first trip shocked me, because I expected more aggression from people, but they were friendly.”*

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family’s stories, our relatives, going to the different villages. Everything first hand.

Since the restriction on movement between the two parts of Cyprus was eased in 2003 and Greek Cypriots have subsequently had more direct access to Turkey through Ercan airport in northern Nicosia, some Greek Cypriots have also begun travelling to parts of Turkey. About half of our participants had travelled to Turkey, either for professional or personal reasons. The participants themselves also recognised that there is therefore the beginning of a direct inter-cultural bridge being built: some Greek Cypriots are exploring the social, cultural, political terrain called Turkey for themselves, which has long been a subject of communal fear, myth, and fantasy, and this is something new. A senior employee of a government ministry narrates his experience:

I’ve been to Turkey twice, once in 2000 and again more recently. I remember the first trip shocked me, because I expected more aggression from people, but they were friendly. I would say ‘I’m from Cyprus’ and they’d reply, ‘great, welcome to Turkey’. And then I’d continue ‘but I’m Greek Cypriot.’ And they’d shrug their shoulders like it made no difference, and say again, ‘great, welcome to Turkey!’ Mostly they didn’t care. I mean a few people were more aggressive, but mostly they were indifferent to where I was from.

For many Greek Cypriots, ‘Turkey’ is a number of things all collapsed together. Turkey is viewed through a long lens, beginning with the Ottoman Empire - the coloniser which ‘enslaved’ Christian Cypriots for three hundred years. Though the Ottoman Empire ceded Cyprus to Britain in 1878, the Turkish government subsequently played a role in developing Turkish Cypriot counter-independence guerilla groups that opposed Greek Cypriot efforts to unite the island with

Greece.<sup>40</sup> As the efforts of Greek Cypriots to expel the British from Cyprus wore on, Turkey became, to Greek Cypriots, the enduring object that prevented Cyprus being ceded to Greece. In the face of calls for union between Cyprus and Greece, Turkey insisted on the justice of a division of the island between Greece and Turkey in the years leading immediately up to Cyprus’ independence in 1959.<sup>41</sup> In the Greek Cypriot historical narrative, Britain used Turkey as the ‘excuse’ to not meet Greek Cypriot demands for union with Greece.<sup>42</sup> The Republic of Cyprus, established in 1960, became a source of tension between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, leading to significant disagreements about governance. When, on the evening of 20 December 1963, violence broke out in the Nicosia suburb of Tahtakale and two Turkish Cypriots were killed, the tension spread throughout the island, resulting in the deaths of 364 Turkish Cypriots and 174 Greek Cypriots between December 1963 and January 1964.<sup>43</sup> Very quickly thereafter, Turkish Cypriots withdrew<sup>44</sup> from the shared government in protest at the events. After this point, the Republic of Cyprus’ governance structure was entirely Greek Cypriot.

Between 1964 and 1967, Turkey threatened to invade Cyprus a number of times. Tensions on the island flared and subsided between 1964 and 1974, but the

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40 Altay Nevzat, *Nationalism among the Turks of Cyprus: the First Wave*, University of Oulu PhD dissertation, 2005.

41 Christopher Hitchens, *Hostage to History: Cyprus from the Ottomans to Kissinger* (London: Verso, 1997), pp. 43-50; Evanthis Hatzivassiliou, *Britain and the International Status of Cyprus* (Minnesota: Minnesota Mediterranean and East European Monographs, 1997) pp.68-93.

42 See for example: [http://www.mfa.gov.cy/mfa/mfa2006.nsf/cyprus01\\_en/cyprus01\\_en?OpenDocument](http://www.mfa.gov.cy/mfa/mfa2006.nsf/cyprus01_en/cyprus01_en?OpenDocument) (accessed 17 July 2012).

43 Pierre Oberling, *The Road to Bellapais: The Turkish Exodus to Northern Cyprus* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p.120.

44 There is much disagreement between the two communities about whether this event. Greek Cypriots argue that the Turkish Cypriot representatives of government withdrew voluntarily from the consociational state, while Turkish Cypriots argue that while they withdrew in protest against the above events, they were actively prevented from returning to government.

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Turkish military's continuous watchfulness over the country for reasons that included violence directed towards the Turkish Cypriot community by Greek Cypriots and the protection of Turkish strategic interests during the Cold War placed Turkey in the position of the menacing shadow cast over Greek Cypriot ambitions. When, in July 1974, Greek Cypriot irredentists together with the Greek military junta attempted to overthrow the government, five days of island-wide intra-communal bloodshed between Greek Cypriots and attacks by Greek Cypriot paramilitary groups against Turkish Cypriots were ended by a Turkish military intervention. The Turkish army conducted a two-stage operation over July and August of 1974, which resulted in a forced population relocation that established the de facto boundaries that exist until today.

For Greek Cypriots, that event is remembered as a vicious invasion which caused vast destruction and death, tore one third of the Greek Cypriot population out of their ancestral homes and villages, and forced them into poverty and insecurity. While at the individual level refugees and families of the missing from 1974 do not always speak freely about their memories of the July and August 1974 events,<sup>45</sup> or about the hardship and humiliation that they subsequently endured as they rebuilt their lives in the southern part of the island, communal memories of the events are strong, and reinforced by the education system, the media, political parties, and other institutions of memory.<sup>46</sup>

'Turkey', then, is as much a concept as it is a neighbouring country, a harbinger and symbol of suffering and fear and the threat and promise of violence among the Greek Cypriot community. To the vast majority of Greek Cypriots, Turkey continues to be foremost characterised as occupier of the northern third of the country, and expeller of Greek Cypriots from their ancestral homes and villages; Erdoğan therefore leads a country with an overwhelming military force that is preventing return to those homes, and is the violator of Greek Cypriot human rights.

But nuances are being formed in this vision of what Turkey is. After the opening of checkpoints between the two parts of the country in 2003, Turkey also became individuals with faces and names residing in Greek Cypriot houses and villages, inviting Greek Cypriots in for coffee but still residing illegally in their houses. For the majority of Greek Cypriots, Turkey continued to be the destroyer of Greek Cypriot cultural heritage in those villages to which Greek Cypriots could now, temporarily, return. Interactions with Turkey have also, over the last two decades, been mediated by law. Greek Cypriot efforts in the European Court of Human Rights to force Turkey to return property in north Cyprus or provide information about loved ones still missing from 1974 became prominent proxy sites of battle, where Turkey has been forced into a kind of accounting for its actions.<sup>47</sup> But Turkey is beginning to have more than one face for

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45 Ayla Gürel, Mete Hatay and Christalla Yakinthou, *Displacement in Cyprus—Consequences of Civil and Military Strife, Report 5, An Overview of Events and Perceptions* (Nicosia, PRIO Cyprus Centre, 2012).

46 For more depth on this point, see Peter Loizos, *The Heart Grown Bitter: A Chronicle of Cypriot War Refugees*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Roger Zetter, 'We are Strangers Here - Continuity, Transition and the Impact of Protracted Exile on the Greek-Cypriot Refugees,' in V. Calotychos (ed.), *Cyprus and its People, New Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), Ch. 17; Roger Zetter, 'Rehousing Greek-Cypriot Refugees after 1974: Dependency, Assimilation and Politicization,' in J. Koumoulides (ed.), *Cyprus in*

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*Transition: 1960–1985* (London: Trigraph, 1985), pp., 106–125; and Umut Bozkurt and Christalla Yakinthou, 'Legacies of Violence and Overcoming Conflict in Cyprus: The Transitional Justice Landscape' (Nicosia, PRIO Cyprus Centre Report, 2012).

47 See Property claims: *Loizidou v. Turkey*, ECtHR application no. 15318/89 1996, judgement of 28 November 1996; *Xenides v. Turkey*, ECtHR application no. 46347/99 2005, judgement of 22 December 2005; *Demades v. Turkey*, ECtHR application no. 16219/90 2007, judgement of 22 April 2008; *Demopoulos v. Turkey* & 7 other cases, ECtHR application nos. 46113/99, 3843/02, 13751/02, 13466/03, 14163/04, 10200/04, 19993/04 and 21819/04 1999, judgement of 1 March 2010; *Missing Persons: Varnavas a.o. v. Turkey*, ECtHR application nos. 16064/90, 16065/90, 16066/90, 16068/90, 16069/90, 16070/90, 16071/90, 16072/90 and 16073/90 1990, judgement of 18 December 2009.

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*Turkey is beginning to have more than one face for Greek Cypriots. Slowly, it is also becoming seen as a country struggling with democratisation, and with its role somewhere between the Middle East and Europe.*

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Greek Cypriots. Slowly, it is also becoming seen as a country struggling with democratisation, and with its role somewhere between the Middle East and Europe. Erdoğan and his efforts at internal reform are issues that were raised by interviewees side by side with concerns about human rights violations that Turkey continues to ignore. These images of Turkey have been added to more immediately relevant images: divided perceptions about Greek Cypriots' next major historical interaction with Turkey in the failed 2004 Annan plan and the political fallout both within the Greek Cypriot community and with the European Union and United Nations. Adding to this palimpsest is the increasingly frequent experience of being a Greek Cypriot in Istanbul; an individual experience, but one being diffused across society.

Thus, Turkey is a country that has been the Greek Cypriot 'other' for more than half a century. A civil society actor explained the way Greek Cypriots see Turkey as follows:

I think the role of Turkey, for us, is something worth exploring psychologically also. We admire Turkey in the way that we admire our enemies. We admire their strength, their strategy, their army, their economy. There is a fantasy about Turkey. It is the admiration of something we are afraid of. Fear and desire together. I would say that at a psychological level if there is a solution this could develop into the admiration of someone with whom you want to work, rather than of someone of whom you are afraid.

This quote also highlights and points to the possibilities for a development in the perception of Turkey among Greek Cypriots, and for an evolution in the relationship between the parties. Looking to the future, many participants pointed out the different spectrum of opportunities for a positive relationship. A senior government ministry member noted that:

For me, Turkey will always be our neighbour. The important thing is to find working relationships and common interests so we avoid this enemy relationship. We have the usual possibilities of neighbourly relations, but we have the extra in that we, as Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots, are not simply two countries near each other, that we have more because this contact with Turkey has changed us both. So we have the opportunity to build a closer relationship. This commonality can be taken down a positive or negative path.

And very recently, in a climate of significant economic uncertainty, Turkey was also expressed during a number of interviews as a "stable relationship", the "unmoving other", the "known enemy" in the face of internal insecurity and changing relationships between Greek Cypriots and Greece. That is to say that in the framework of the legacy of Cyprus' division, some Greek Cypriots are also beginning to say that they have more pressing problems than the Cyprus conflict and their Turkish neighbour.

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*"For me, Turkey will always be our neighbour. The important thing is to find working relationships and common interests so we avoid this enemy relationship."*

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## **I. WHO IS TURKEY?**

When asked about how they perceived Turkey generally and the role that the AKP has played in shaping Turkish politics, our participants' answers focused on four primary themes: its human rights record; its economic development; its role in the recent gas explorations in the Eastern Mediterranean; and its role in the Middle East, North African, and Mediterranean neighbourhood.

### **A. Democratisation, human rights, and the military**

Turkey's struggles with its treatment of its Kurdish population, its Armenian legacy, its recent show of

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force in its relationship with Turkish Cypriots, and the legacy of conflict in Cyprus were brought up by almost all interviewees. Interviewees were divided between those who believed that there had been no real effort on the part of the current Turkish government to address human rights violations, and those who believed that changes were being made. Among those who believe that the current Turkish government was making efforts at reform, there was division over whether the last few years of Erdoğan's stewardship had seen a backwards slide.

Within those who saw no change was a senior researcher from a leading institute often dealing with inter-group relations and perceptions. He rejected the idea that the Turkish government was making efforts to create a more open society, calling the country's human rights record a 'joke':

They suppress whoever appears to be in opposition to the current government. Then you have the issues that...they're still refusing the Armenian genocide. That reflects very negatively on them. They haven't been able to come to terms with or acknowledge mistakes of the past. So I would say that they are not wanting or wishing to move towards an open society.

As mentioned above, a recurring theme among interviewees was the initial hope they had in the AKP, and especially in Erdoğan, and the gradual decline in hopes and positivity. The thoughts of a leading member of the business community are representative:

I had a different view of the party when they were first elected. And I had a different view of Erdoğan who appeared to be an...ok an Islamist...but a progressive Islamist with modern ideas. But like a lot of Greek Cypriots, we were happy to see him taking the fight to the generals and going against the normal politicians and the incumbent situation. Over the years he's...whether his success has affected his judgement...or whether he has grown different because of the European situation and because the Europeans as you know have not been very welcoming to Turkey...he has changed his plans...and he has

*“And the last actions that [Erdoğan] has taken...the actions he has taken regarding the gas finds and the platform...I don't know whether it was by design or not, but it certainly gave the view to the rest of the world that they are a very difficult neighbour to deal with.”*

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become much more...Turkish if you like, or not very positive, not very forward or progressive.

And the last actions that he has taken...the actions he has taken regarding the gas finds and the platform...I don't know whether it was by design or not, but it certainly gave the view to the rest of the world that they are a very difficult neighbour to deal with. Obviously to act the way they did they have a plan. But it's not very easy to mend fences when you act in this way.

The recent spike in imprisonment of intellectuals and journalists was a topic raised by a number of interviewees. The comments of the leader of the youth arm of a centre-right political party are representative of the responses in this regard: “The human rights record is bad for the intellectual class. They're acting like a totalitarian regime, limiting freedom of opinion. They've done unnecessary things for the Kurdish community. Not every Kurd is a terrorist.” A centre-left journalist highlighted the thinking of those who were trying to weigh the persecution of intellectuals against broader efforts at reform: “I have a lot of concern about the arrest of journalists. Not for what they've written but for their politics. But we are talking about Turkey here, and he has managed to bring the army into line...”

On Erdoğan's increasing domestic and international strength, a journalist noted that “he's been in power for a long time and it's more problematic in the sense that we're seeing a more military Turkey.” He also highlighted the seeming contradiction of the Turkish government's efforts to bring the military under civilian control, and the increasing independence of the Turkish military as a consequence of Turkey's economic strength. Turkey's increasing importance as

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*“Erdoğan’s been in power for a long time and it’s more problematic in the sense that we’re seeing a more military Turkey.”*

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a regional military power both serves to reinforce, and is reinforced by its positioning in the Middle Eastern revolutions.

The irony is that while he’s brought the military under civilian control, what’s happened at the same time is that the Turkish military has become increasingly independent. And I don’t mean politically, I mean in terms of hardware, in terms of what it’s capable of doing. In terms of the contracts it needs, the supplies it needs. You can see through Turkey’s foreign policy, it doesn’t need to appease the US all the time. Whereas before Erdoğan, when the US was mostly with the Turkish military and not with the Turkish government, the military ruled the roost. The military did pretty much what the US wanted. Now they’re not doing that, and part of the reason is Erdoğan’s policies, but also because they’re in a much stronger position that they were before. Their economy is much much stronger than it was before. They’re seen as a beacon of light in the Muslim world. They can be used as an example of how their actions in Turkey got things this way. I think people can take that like in a shopping cart and take the bits they like and say ‘well we can do that and we can do this. . .’

## **B. Turkish economic growth, the gas crisis, and the Greek decline**

Turkey’s rising economic star is also closely linked to Greece’s economic and regional decline, and obvious links are made with consequences for power balances in and regarding Cyprus.

Turkish economic growth was linked by some with a fall in Turkish Cypriot dependency on the Greek Cypriot community. According to the chief executive officer of a major import company:

Whereas before Turkish Cypriots were more dependent on the strength of the Greek Cypriot

community and they used to come over to the Greek Cypriot side to find jobs and to get income, that obviously is not the case now because our economy is in tatters as well, so yes I think it’s a very serious variable, the strength of the Turkish economy. Now whether the Turkish economy will last or whether it will also be affected by overheating, that will depend a lot on the whole state of the world economy. But at the moment I think it’s growing by something like 7 or 8 percent and that’s very very healthy.

Closely related to Turkey’s economic growth is the economic collapse of Greece and the resultant effect on Greek Cypriot-Turkish power relations. One NGO actor commented that “now it’s become David and Goliath, instead of David and friend and Goliath.” Another noted “it means that Turkey completely calls the shots. Not that we ever really thought that Greece would save us, but it was a useful counterbalance.”

A senior public servant articulated the Turkish win-Greek Cypriot lose in the following way:

Economic development removes the need to compromise, and the interest in compromising because you’re doing ok and so you’re less interested in the broader picture. It’s strengthening for them, which makes us weaker. It’s not that I don’t want them to live well, but if you think, they already have significant military strength, we’re not even in the ballpark, and now economic strength is added. And that affects their strength regarding the Cyprus problem and makes them more one-sided.

A subject of frequent interest was therefore also the triangle of tense relationships between the Republic of Cyprus, Israel, and Turkey, with regards both to Turkey’s emerging front role in the Middle East and the gas explorations in the eastern Mediterranean. Often the Turkey-Israel tension was linked directly to the emerging gas finds. A civil society actor commented on Erdoğan’s handling of the Israeli-Middle East nexus, saying that “I think Erdoğan is trying to be a tough guy vis-à-vis dealing with Israel and lead the Arab world and it shows a bit of an arrogance and a bit of . . . someone that is not really fully aware of what he has to do. It’s just a bit of

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showing off, it's not the wisest way to go about things.”

A number of people supported the Republic of Cyprus' rapid alliance with Israel as a strategic move that cushioned the Republic of Cyprus against Turkish fallout related to the gas finds. This thinking is reflected by a researcher: “We sense that this balance of power is shifting, and Israel was a willing ally to counterbalance this. We're trying to improve our geopolitical position and power to counterbalance Turkey's rising power.” However, some also reflected on potential tensions with Turkey as a result. A business leader reflected that:

At the moment it seems to be all about the gas and the closeness that we've developed with Israel and the benefits that the energy boom will give to Cyprus. But how will an alliance with Israel play out in the whole scheme of things, especially if the whole of the Middle East erupts after an Arab Spring? I don't think a lot of thought is given to that.

In addition, Turkish threats during recent gas explorations in early 2012 triggered Greek Cypriot mistrust. According to the editor of a large daily newspaper:

I think that Turkey has shown alarming interest and cheek in Cyprus' oil exploration. To set up maps of their own energy quarters, half of which overlap with the TRNC's areas of interest, and to have parts of Cyprus' southern exclusive economic zone, and to claim that they overlap with Turkey's maritime waters, I mean, you look at the map, there's Turkey, there's Cyprus, and Turkey is claiming stuff underneath Cyprus even. West and east of Paphos. They are extremely hostile in that regard, so I don't see how that could be considered attractive by the Greek Cypriots.

Even with all of this, more than one interviewee highlighted that positive change could come with one or two actions by the Turkish government. At the same time, doubt is also often expressed that there is willingness to show such goodwill. This is reflected in the further comments made by the above journalist,

who continued that tension could be allayed with “one change, one thing. Giving back Varosha under UN control, [that] would be a massive step, but they would never do it, and even if they did it might still not be enough, because of the level of mistrust.”

### **C. But what do they think of us? Interpreting Turkish perceptions of Greek Cypriots**

Most people interviewed believed that Cyprus was low on the Turkish government's priorities; that it was only one amongst a number of burning issues. Opinions about whether the Turkish government understood Greek Cypriot fears varied between interviewees, but in general the consensus was that it would pursue a strategy favourable to its own goals, regardless of whether or not it understood Greek Cypriot concerns. As one researcher put it, “even though they know what both communities want, they do what is in the interests of Turkey.”

For a human rights lawyer, Cyprus was no longer “a conflict for them anymore. We are low on their priorities.” Specifically regarding Greek Cypriot fears, a civil society actor said, “I don't think the Turkish government really cares about the fears of the Greek Cypriots. It might even be a game at the end of the day, that they want to win.” This cynicism was expressed by more than one actor. According to a researcher, Turkey “doesn't understand either community and doesn't need to, we're too insignificant. They probably think we should be grateful that we still have two-thirds of the island.”

A young diplomat insisted that the Turkish government should put itself in Greek Cypriot shoes:

I don't think they understand the Greek Cypriot concerns at all. What they have to realise is that, yes, it's only 200,000 refugees, and yes it's only however many square miles of occupied territory, so to Turkey it's only a dot, but to Greek Cypriots it's a third of their country, a third of their population, beaches, churches, ancient sites. It's one of the most important archaeological sites. I think Turkey

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*“I don’t think they understand the Greek Cypriot concerns at all. What they have to realise is that, yes, it’s only 200,000 refugees, and yes it’s only however many square miles of occupied territory, so to Turkey it’s only a dot, but to Greek Cypriots it’s a third of their country, a third of their population, beaches, churches, ancient sites.”*

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doesn’t factor in how important it is to Greek Cypriots.

In terms of how people believed that Erdoğan perceives Greek Cypriots, the comments of a business person are representative when he said that “I think he regards Cyprus as a thorn in his side. . . I think he is frustrated that we still exist.”

It was frequently mentioned that the Turkish government perceives Greek Cypriots to be “annoying,” “irritating,” or an impediment. A journalist put it as follows:

Turks see the Greek Cypriots as these annoying little parasites who are just trying to play David and Goliath all the time, and are really really cocky and do not know their place. And they find that really frustrating. But they also have to deal with issues like the Kurds and Armenia and Iraq and Syria and somewhere down the line are these Greek Cypriots we’re just annoying little insects.

On the other hand, a human rights activist believed that recent trips of Greek Cypriots to speak with members of the Turkish leadership indicated their willingness to learn. At the same time, however, he closed with the thought that though solving the issue would be the Turkish preference, it would always be on Turkish terms. This underlines the feeling expressed by many interviewees that even if the Turkish government understands Greek Cypriot feelings, that understanding would not be a driving factor in decision-making.

I was beginning to feel some time back when there were these meetings being organised with Greek

Cypriots visiting Erdoğan and other visits in Turkey, that it seems that the Turkish government was beginning to understand what our problems are. I don’t know what conclusions they came to. You begin to feel they are trying to understand the problem, to solve it. And I am sure that generally speaking about the current government, even if their priorities have changed, if there is an opportunity to solve the problem. . . . it would be their preference to solve it. But they can live without solving it. They can leave it for later on when they manage to get something better out of the deal.

When asked whether the Turkish leadership understood the Cyprus conflict from the Greek Cypriot perspective, many people highlighted a tension. A hotelier highlighted this tension, and also brought up the difference between Turkish and Turkish Cypriot interests: “I do think they understand, and I think they are very knowledgeable people. But I think they are doing what is best for Turkey. So it’s not a matter of them not understanding, it’s a matter of them doing what they have to do to protect their interests. And often that means not protecting Turkish Cypriot interests.”

This perspective was shared by a senior member of a government ministry, who reflected, “I don’t know how much it’s interested in understanding the elements of the conflict or the way we perceive the conflict in the case where it’s not useful to their interests. For example, the human rights situation. They’re not likely to go and sit down and think about human rights from our perspective, there is no incentive for them to.” The president of the youth arm of a political party reiterated this position, when he

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*“I think they are doing what is best for Turkey. So it’s not a matter of them not understanding, it’s a matter of them doing what they have to do to protect their interests. And often that means not protecting Turkish Cypriot interests.”*

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said that, “I think they understand it but they don’t care or don’t put it into account.” In a deviation from the frequently expressed opinion that Turkey was also using the Turkish Cypriots for its own strategic purposes, this person continued that “their position was always to protect the Turkish Cypriot community. Their jurisdiction in 1974 was to protect the Turkish Cypriot community.”

A member of a leading tourism organisation echoed the above opinions, but her comment serves also to highlight the continuing gap between perceptions of acceptable solutions to the conflict.

Even if they understand the Greek Cypriot perspective, they will see things from their side. And I don’t think they want reunification, the way we do. One republic, one government. They want a federal republic, a bicomunal one. They want to give that power to the Turkish Cypriots that they used to have in the 60s, and since they didn’t get that back then and they tried to change it, they split it into land. Electoral power has turned into geographical power now.

What she touches on is also the ongoing issue over what ‘reunification’ means to each of the communities (as well as within the communities). What is positioned here is that the giving of power to Turkish Cypriots along territorial and ethnic bases is something that is not ideal for Greek Cypriots, and that what Turkey wants is at loggerheads with what Greek Cypriots want. The vast gulf that exists between definitions of words like ‘federation,’ ‘bicomunal,’ and ‘one government’ has been explored in other reports,<sup>48</sup> and so will not be elaborated here. However, it was a theme that recurred.

Perceptions about Turkey and especially the consequences of its recent actions in Cyprus are not clear-cut. A lawyer stressed that by and large, the

average Turk cared little about Cyprus. He then moved on to talk about the role of economics in relationships between Turkey and Greek Cypriots. The layering of his comment is indicative of a number of the interview responses. Here he transitions from perceptions among average Turks of Greek Cypriots, to the importance of economics as a reconciliatory factor, to the hinting (but not full articulation) of the idea that Turkey’s economic bolstering of north Cyprus may not be a positive thing, to being the factor that ultimately makes them immovable:

I honestly think the Turks don’t care, on average. We think they care, but they don’t care, on the whole. You go to Istanbul, into the Grand Bazaar. Do they say to you ‘you killed our Turkish Cypriot brothers?’ No, they don’t care. They talk to you in Greek. It’s economics that wins. It will flatten out the animosity. But then again the Turks are pushing more and more money into the occupied area. They’re doing things. And they’re here for good. I don’t know how we’re going to get rid of them, if at all.

#### **D. Will Turkish Cypriots ever be independent of Turkey?**

The issue of whether ‘we’re going to get rid of them’ is one that was addressed in almost all interviews, and while people’s answers have overlap with other sections of this report, there is value on concentrating specifically on the question of whether Greek Cypriot interviewees perceive that Turkish Cypriots will ever be truly independent of Turkey.

There was a spectrum of opinions among those interviewed regarding the relationship between Turkey and Turkish Cypriots, and whether Turkish Cypriots will ever be independent of Turkey. Thoughts ranged from emphatically stating that Turkey will never release its hold on Turkish Cypriots, to cautiously stating that Turkey’s recent efforts to pour money into the north indicated efforts to create a fully independent state. One youth representative characterised the relationship as “a father-son relationship. Whatever the father says the son does,

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<sup>48</sup> Derya Beyatli, Katerina Papadopoulou, Erol Kaymak, ‘Solving the Cyprus Problem: Hopes and Fears’, *Cyprus 2015 Initiative*, Interpeace and Cyprus 2015 Initiative, 2011.

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and if the son rebels, the father cuts his allowance, literally speaking, until he complies.”

Turkish government influence is not entirely perceived as negative; especially in the case where Turkey is identified as bringing the Turkish Cypriot leadership to the negotiating table. A youth political representative said that the “AKP’s power has also been positive for us. When Eroğlu didn’t want to negotiate with Christofias, Erdoğan put a lot of pressure on the government in the north, and because of that pressure he came back to the table.”

Turkey’s ability to stick to a long-term strategy regarding Cyprus was contrasted by more than one interviewee with Greece. The comments of a manager of a series of seaside restaurants are representative: “It’s not like Greece, Greece is chaos, they don’t even know what is going on in their own country, but Turkey is not like that. Turkey holds things and doesn’t let go.” One researcher used the strong Turkish role in the northern part of Cyprus to extend into the future, highlighting that Greek Cypriots will also never be free of Turkey, even in a federal state. “We understand how ingrained Turkey is in their community and we believe that it will constantly cause problems for governance, rendering our government ineffective.”

A senior public servant did not believe that independence was in the interests of Turkish Cypriots:

In reality it is in the interest of Turkish Cypriots to throw their lot in with Turkey. And will continue to be that way, because, well it’s logical, Turkey is a growing power. Only the EU factor in 2004 pushed them a little bit our way, made them different, towards us. The thing that they want is security and recognition, and the EU gave them some support and ease because they didn’t have those opportunities before the EU. Now they don’t have any other need from us.

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*“The EU factor in 2004 pushed them a little bit our way, made them different, towards us.”*

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In contrast, one civil society actor argued that a solution would empower Turkish Cypriots to become independent of Turkey, but that Turkey would remain an influential actor on the island in both communities. For him, this was not necessarily a bad thing: “Because it’s been signed and delivered and they would have that clout. They could say they are in the EU and part of [a federal Cyprus] so back off. It’ll take time, but it will happen. Turkey will be a strong influence on the island, on both sides. Even on the Greek Cypriots, economically and culturally.”

Another civil society actor linked Turkey’s current economic monopoly over north Cyprus and the perception of its intention of retaining its influence in Cyprus, but indirectly:

I think that Turkey would like to keep a strong political influence in Cyprus. They know that at some point they will have to move out, but I think this is what they’re trying to build now. How to keep their strong influence in Cyprus while planning for pulling out? They wouldn’t like to let Cyprus go. They know they have to find some kind of a solution. They somehow want to be able to control the north to the extent that it could be acceptable to us, the EU, and they know this can’t be a direct influence, so I think they’re trying to build an indirect influence, through their economic role in Cyprus.

A youth political representative who was discontented at the close ties between Greek Cypriots and Greece made the point that “well, we’re not fully independent of Greece, are we? So. . .it’s the same there. Why should it be different?”

Issues of Turkish Cypriot safety were also raised by some actors. A developer pointed out that “if Turkey leaves Cyprus alone and says to the Turkish Cypriots ‘do whatever you want’, then the Greeks would take advantage of them. So they are trying to protect them in a way. It’s not an easy issue to resolve. It’s almost an impossible mission for everyone.” A civil society actor reflected that “Turkish Cypriots feel real fear of Greek Cypriots, and they have a right to, after what we did to them.”

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## E. Greek Cypriot fears and the perceptions of Turkish motivations for Cyprus

As highlighted by the civil society actor who expressed Greek Cypriot feelings about Turkey as a combination of fear and admiration, Greek Cypriot feelings about Turkey are most frequently perceived through the lens of domination, violence, and resistance. When asked directly what he thought Greek Cypriots feared most, a civil society actor had the following fairly radical perspective:

Intervention. A repeat of '74. I don't think they've realised that those days are over. I don't think they've realised that we're living in a different world, in a different club, we're not in the non-aligned movement, we're in the EU. And I think the extremists are afraid of the Turkification of the island. But then you say 'wake up fools, the north has been Turkified.' It's only going to come back to being more Cypriot. We may pick up a few Turkish words or whatever in the south, but come on. We've already had 500 years of Ottoman culture. It's already done the damage. If anything was going to happen, it's already been done. We're already drinking Turkish coffee, we're already smoking nargile, we're already dressing the same way. We already have Turkish words in our vocabulary, it's done. The only more Turkish thing that could happen is if Mavi starts selling in Lemesos.

Interviewees gave a range of answers about what kept Turkey in Cyprus. Many cited the importance of the island as a military base, or a training ground for young soldiers. Others pointed to more recent gas interests. Still others pointed to the psychological or cultural importance of retaining Cyprus.

A tourist guide who leads tours on both sides of the island said that "they don't care about the Turkish Cypriot position. All they want and need is ground – part of Cyprus if not all of it, if they could. Especially now with the gas."

The idea that Turkey already has what it needs in Cyprus is reiterated by a civil servant: "I think they have let Cyprus go a little. I don't know whether it's

because of Europe. . .I don't think so, I don't think they care about Europe that much. Maybe it's that they have what they want now. I don't think they want all of Cyprus. They have the part they want, they have the control, they don't need to do more. I think this was the plan from the beginning."

For others, Cyprus is a liability for Turkey, but not so much that it would trade it away at any cost. According to one lawyer, "They want to get rid of it [Cyprus]. On their own terms, and if not on their own terms, they're willing to rough it out because they've been making huge gains. What's the problem? They have their own state, the TRNC. No one is telling them that their state is illegal. Ok, there is Strasbourg, but a few billion here and there is what? Nothing."

The feeling that Cyprus is regionally strategic was expressed by some. A hotelier brought together ethnic and strategic reasons: "Cyprus is important not only for psychological reasons. For that as well, but also, gas, it's close to the Middle East. It's important in many ways. Why would they give Cyprus to the Greeks? They feel that part of Cyprus is Turkish, so they are protecting their land, in a way. That's how we feel, and it's how they feel too."

A developer tied the above reasons to the feeling that Turkey would not let Cyprus become "fully independent," linking it also to feelings of doubt about the country's future. "I think their policy is that they should always have one hand in Cyprus. For psychological, geopolitical, economic reasons. I don't know what their policy is in reality and how they go about it. But what I know is that their long-term vision is not to let Cyprus become an independent country. And this makes me feel, as a Greek Cypriot, not very confident about the future of Cyprus."

## II. WHAT ARE THE MOST PRESSING GREEK CYPRIOT CONCERNS?

As highlighted, Greek Cypriot perceptions of Turkey are filtered through the current reality of increasing economic instability within the Republic of Cyprus and the social, cultural, and economic ramifications of the

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*“The economic crisis in the south is a big problem. Our economy cannot hold out for much longer. The banking system cannot support itself, unless the government bails it out. Unemployment is at a record high. I talk to many friends, and most businesses are not doing well. Most of the businesses have cash flow problems.”*

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Greek economic crisis, the perception of increasing migration from third countries and a resultant feeling of loss of traditional ‘Cypriot’ culture, and the broader context of EU economic uncertainty. Greek Cypriot society seems to be entering into a period of introspectiveness and profound insecurity. Perhaps paradoxically, one of the consequences of the current Greek Cypriot reality is that the relationship with Turkey was frequently expressed to be one of comparative stability. At the same time, however, other interviewees expressed concern at the possibility of a recurrence of Turkish aggression during the awarding of contracts in the second phase of licensing for gas explorations due in October 2012 and as a result of the Republic of Cyprus’ recent alliance with Israel. An industry leader in Paphos put it thus:

We don’t know what Turkey’s going to do in the next round. We had half the world’s navy in the Mediterranean last time, and Turkey was playing war games off our shores. Now they’re drilling in the north, but they’re always watching. . .they’re always watching. . .and I don’t know if Turkey would actually start something over the gas but what if they use it as an excuse to attack Israel? I mean, thank God we have the Americans. In this case.

### **A. The economic crisis**

A developer highlighted the economic crisis as a priority for most Greek Cypriots. “The economic crisis in the south is a big problem. Our economy cannot hold out for much longer. The banking system cannot support itself, unless the government bails it out. Unemployment is at a record high. I talk to many friends, and most businesses are not doing well. Most of the businesses have cash flow problems.”

This was a theme reiterated by almost every interviewee, and has also been considered in sections above as one of the primary current concerns in the Greek Cypriot community.

### **B. The rise of nationalism**

A topic frequently raised by interviewees as a pressing concern was the rising level of nationalism in the Greek Cypriot community, and questions surrounding Cypriot Greek identity. In 2010 and 2011 a number of violent incidents against migrants and Turkish Cypriots were reported on in the press, and linked with the far right.<sup>49</sup> At the same time, struggles over what version of history to teach in schools has also taken on an ethnic perspective, and there have been deep divisions over reform of the education system, especially regarding the element of ‘Greekness’ taught to children in schools.<sup>50</sup> With the increasing visibility of far right youth groups in the south, the visual landscape of south Cyprus is also changing. Graffiti against migrants and Turks, or with Greek nationalist slogans litter the urban landscape, though counter-graffiti by the far-left is also beginning to be seen, marking streetsides as the sites of struggle over inclusion and exclusion in Cyprus’ identity.

This was explained by one researcher thus:

In the Greek Cypriot community, nationalism is on the rise. By that I mean the sense of Orthodox Greek Cypriots versus others. There have been

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- 49 ‘KISA calls for the condemnation and the isolation of the nationalist-racists’, KISA (Movement for Equality, Support, Antiracism), 22 July 2010; Stefanos Evripidou, ‘Protestors storm palace gates’, Cyprus Mail, July 13, 2011; George Psyllides and Poly Pantelides, ‘ELAM members attack lottery seller’, Cyprus Mail, 20 March 2011; <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/aug/03/cyprus-problem-fuelling-racism>.
- 50 For a background see Yiannis Papadakis, ‘History Education in Divided Cyprus: A Comparison of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot Schoolbooks on the “History of Cyprus”’ (Nicosia: PRIO Cyprus Centre Report 2/2008); and Chara Makriyianni, ‘Teaching Methods in History School Education in Cyprus: Present-day Situations and Future Developments,’ Multiperspectivity in Teaching and Learning Conference, Nicosia, 24-27 November 2004.

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*“In the Greek Cypriot community, nationalism is on the rise. By that I mean the sense of Orthodox Greek Cypriots versus others. There have been demonstrations against asylum seekers and foreign workers.”*

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demonstrations against asylum seekers and foreign workers. ELAM [The National Popular Front]<sup>51</sup> got 2%<sup>52</sup> [of the vote] in the last elections, [and] in the next elections they’ll probably get an MP.

A senior civil servant elaborated on this concern from a very personal perspective:

The nationalism is being transferred between generations, and it’s just getting stronger. I mean, we’re living in 2012 and I feel like Cyprus is 100 years behind the rest of Europe. My children are complaining about the pressure they’re under at school to adhere to this notion of Greekness. They complain about this superiority that is transferred to the kids about being Greek, and the pressure they put the other kids under who are not ‘so Greek’. At all the levels it’s the thing that’s most disturbing because despite how much we progress, how far forward we come, this sense still exists. We took the kids to the parades the other day, and there were like a thousand kids marching in black clothes, and with so much anger. How can they be raised like that? They are ready to go to war. Those kids have not been given a single opportunity to see any other kind of reality, society and their family units have completely brainwashed them. Everything in this society is designed to create these non-thinking people who follow party lines. It’s from the schools, from the families, from the society.

She went on to compare the above right-wing attitudes to the positioning of the left: “This is the

right. On the other hand, the left are just as single-minded and unrelenting.” Her frustration, comparing the Turkish threat to internal Greek Cypriot tensions, was representative of a number of interviewees. “So where are we? We have no future here. And then we’re worried about the damage Turkey is doing to us. We’re doing it to ourselves. Turkey is a country that is looking after its own interests, that is all.”

The researcher cited above went on to link rising nationalism and increasing unemployment in the Republic of Cyprus to the way Greek Cypriots perceive Turkish Cypriots. He pointed to increasing bitterness:

Our nationalism is directed a lot towards the Turkish Cypriots. There is a lot of discontent in the Greek Cypriot community about Turkish Cypriots because they see the Turkish Cypriots as benefiting from our services. They can go to the hospitals for free, they enjoy all the privileges of a citizen of the Republic of Cyprus without the obligations. They don’t pay taxes. At the end of the day, they come here, they go to hospitals, and the Greek Cypriots in our focus groups express that they do all that ‘and then they go and stay in our houses.’ So there is this sense that they have the best of both worlds. Free services here, Greek Cypriot properties in the north. So that is not very well received, especially in a time of economic crisis when people’s wages are being cut and they go to social services and they see that Turkish Cypriots are being fast-tracked. It’s negative. . . .

There is always friction when we think that we are paying for the other community. Even though ‘we are the ones that lost, that we are the ones who are paying’. That’s the perception. There is a lot of failure on our part to see the failure of the other community though. We do not try to see things the way Turkish Cypriots see them, in reverse. . . . If at this point the

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*“So where are we? We have no future here. And then we’re worried about the damage Turkey is doing to us. We’re doing it to ourselves. Turkey is a country that is looking after its own interests, that is all.”*

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51 **Εθνικό Λαϊκό Μέτωπο.** An extreme right-wing party promoting Greek nationalism that has been frequently linked to violence against migrants and Turkish Cypriots. For ELAM’s perspective, see <http://www.elamcy.com/>.

52 They received 1.1% of the vote in the May 2011 parliamentary elections.

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Greek Cypriot community feels that the Turkish Cypriot community is not willing to give anything, then we want to cut off their access to those things they have over here.

### III. THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS AND PERCEPTIONS OF TURKEY

#### A. The peace process is going nowhere

The overall feeling among people interviewed regarding the negotiations for resolution of the Cyprus conflict was one of apathy, disengagement, and pessimism. A number of factors were cited as contributing and/or causes of significant concern. This included the comparative stability experienced in Cyprus as a comfortable conflict which produced no pressing need for peace, growing nationalism in the Greek Cypriot community, increasing intransigence by the Turkish and Turkish Cypriot negotiators, poor leadership, and the lack of incentive for compromise.

Tied up with the issue of poor leadership within the Greek Cypriot community is the July 2011 explosion of 98 containers of ammunition at the Evangelos Florakis naval base, killing 13 people and injuring 62 more. The explosives, seized by the US Navy in 2009 on a Russian-owned ship travelling from Iran to Syria, were confiscated by the Republic of Cyprus government and stored in the open and exposed to the elements on the naval base for more than two years. The explosion was felt in villages five kilometres from the site, and caused significant damage to the surrounding residential areas, as well as destroying the recently-completed Vassilikos power station, which provided half the Republic's power. The cost of restoring the power plant was estimated at close to one billion US dollars, and the overall cost of the explosion on the economy of the already-declining state was estimated at almost three billion US dollars.<sup>53</sup> There were

significant political repercussions from the event, as Greek Cypriots protested against the government's failure to remove the explosives. Very quickly, people began to blame president Christofias directly for the tragedy.<sup>54</sup> The event led to the resignation of the minister of defence, the head of the national guard, and the minister of foreign affairs. A report based on an official inquiry was later released, asking the attorney-general to investigate the possibility of manslaughter and other crimes, and laid the blame for the event largely at the feet of President Christofias.<sup>55</sup> Christofias himself consistently denied responsibility for the event as his popularity plummeted.<sup>56</sup> One of the significant backlashes from the Republic of Cyprus government's handling of the event was the strongly negative popular perception of the president's capacity to be a strong leader. This has spilled over into people's willingness to support Christofias' efforts in the negotiation process.

Regarding the distance people felt from any solution, a prominent developer who had supported the Annan plan said:

I don't talk much with my friends about the Cyprus problem anymore. We used to talk a lot about it during the Annan period. Now we don't talk much about the problem. We don't see a solution coming, and it is a waste of time even talking about it. If someone in our circle talks about it, we ask whether

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53 'Cyprus ruling coalition partner drops out,' *Al Jazeera*, 3 August 2011. Available at <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2011/08/20118313262573244.html>. Last accessed 17 July 2012.

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54 Richard Spencer, 'Anger grows in Cyprus over "criminal errors" behind explosion,' *The Daily Telegraph*, 12 July 2011. Available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/cyprus/8632718/Anger-grows-in-Cyprus-over-criminal-errors-behind-explosion.html>. Last accessed 17 July 2012; 'Cyprus protest over deadly blast at navy base,' *BBC News*, 12 July 2011. Available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-14132130>. Last accessed 17 July 2012.

55 Michael Kambalas, 'Independent probe blames Cyprus leader for blast,' *Reuters*, 3 October 2011. Available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/10/03/us-cyprus-blast-inquiry-idUSTRE79214520111003>. Last accessed 15 July 2012.

56 'Cyprus President Christofias rejects blame for blast,' *BBC News*, 3 October 2011. Available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-15159826>. Last accessed 12 July 2012.

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he's talking alone to the stars. There is no chance, so why bother. That's the level it's reached for us all.

A civil society actor pointed out that "without success, it is a failure." He argued that "whether the talks get labelled as a failure, or are characterised as they are now [a stalemate], nothing changes. They failed in the 70s, they failed in the 80s, they failed in the 90s, and they'll fail in the 10s. They already are a failure."

He continued, highlighting the disconnect between the negotiating teams and the broader public as an important issue:

I think that the negotiations have already failed. The issue is if they succeed in the future. Why have they failed so far? First, it is a discussion between two men, representing a small circle, two parties essentially. They're in an opaque process. When Christofias says he represents everyone at the table, he means himself with five or six more people, and another five or six more people on the other side. It's not all Cypriots, as Cypriots, sitting at the table. This is a problem, and I think it's contributed to this failure. Because there are two separate logics running concurrently. The logic of the negotiating table, and the logic of the rest of the world outside of the negotiating table. So the negotiators live three lives. One at the table, one that they share with the people as part of their political maneuvering, and another that they report to the UN. For the negotiations to succeed, these lives need to coalesce.

In addition, people questioned the purpose of the negotiations. The head of a large company put it as follows, also questioning the value of the UN's ongoing mediation/facilitation role: "I don't understand why they're doing these negotiations. You say the sky is black, I say no, the sky is white, and we agree that we disagree, and then they keep doing it! I don't know why. What are they trying to do? We're all trying to avoid being blamed. But why is the UN still here?"

A feeling of resignation was repeatedly reflected in the interviews. A civil society actor put it thus, linking it also to internal tensions within the Greek Cypriot

community, and also picking up on the situation's comparative stability as an incentive to keep things as they are:

I don't believe that there are negotiations. . . I am so tired of hearing them all talk about the Cyprus problem. We are not progressing.

I am pessimistic. I don't see us as ready for a solution. Our mentality is. . . we're full of nationalism, fanaticism, illusion. We are not ready to share. Even the people who are invested in a solution are disengaged now. We're all fine. And disengaged. Here we don't have the fear of war. We've gotten used to our borders.

As highlighted above, the theme of growing nationalism in the Greek Cypriot community was articulated by more than one actor and linked to the peace process. A senior manager of a telecommunications company phrased it thus:

Nothing is going to happen. Turkey has nothing to gain. I think the solution has been achieved. They have no interest in giving us something back, what would we give them in exchange? We are living the solution. I have felt this from the beginning. We're all quiet. The differences between us are too large. I notice that, even if I'm not religious, there is such a massive religious difference between the two communities in terms of fervor. We're almost fanatical here. We are one of the most religious countries in the EU, and our nationalism is growing here. This scares me a great deal.

Linked to the growing disappointment with the AKP is a corresponding level of blame being apportioned to Turkey for the failed negotiations among staunch supporters of the Annan plan and people who previously solely blamed the Greek Cypriot leadership for the negotiations stalling. The perspective of a civil society actor is representative: "I think it's humiliating that there have been no breakthroughs. I used to put the blame on the Greek Cypriots for not wanting to compromise. But I think it's high time that Turkey offers some confidence building measures."

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A journalist also expressed some thinking behind the mutual intransigence, pointing out that the Greek Cypriot leadership had very little incentive to meet the Turkish and Turkish Cypriot negotiators half way:

But Christofias in that respect, all his other issues of re-election, of Mari,<sup>57</sup> of the economy doing really badly, put all that to one side, he is looking at Eroğlu and thinking ‘these guys aren’t getting even close to giving me what I need to take a solution to the electorate.’ What is the point of him conceding more if he sees that they’re not going to give him the minimum he needs to get support? So you’ve got each side calling the other intransigent.

This idea was expressed in an alternative form by a business leader, who said: “We need the momentum now to find other reasons for Turkey to be positive towards a solution. They say they are and that they’re ready for a solution. But what Greek Cypriots would like to see is concrete proposals that don’t appear to be linked to any sort of trade-off which is something that is always blocking any advance.”

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*“We need the momentum now to find other reasons for Turkey to be positive towards a solution. They say they are and that they’re ready for a solution. But what Greek Cypriots would like to see is concrete proposals that don’t appear to be linked to any sort of trade-off which is something that is always blocking any advance.”*

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## **B. Recommendations to move forward**

Recommendations for how to push the situation out of its current stalemate varied from very specific micro-level suggestions to more sweeping conceptual issues. They largely revolved around six main themes: the building of Greek Cypriot trust in Turkish goodwill; creating direct lines of communication with Greek Cypriots to facilitate a two-way dialogue; the

preservation of cultural heritage; the reduction in military presence on the island; and the return of some territory.

### **(1) The importance of building trust**

The most important impediment to peace identified by a number of interviewees was the inability of Greek Cypriots to trust the Turkish government to keep its word. This lack of trust was a pervading aspect in many interviews and cut across a number of themes. More than one interviewee pointed to Turkey’s strained relationship with other neighbours as evidence that trust was not a prevalent aspect in Turkish foreign relations. According to one researcher, “when you try to consider which countries around it Turkey has a good relationship with, there are none. There is tension everywhere.” Regarding Cyprus specifically, a journalist put it thus:

Erdoğan came here last year and they put posters and banners up everywhere, they took Turkish Cypriot opposition, kettled them and beat them up, you saw the videos in Youtube. . . They silence the opposition, he [Erdoğan] comes as the great saviour, and he makes statements about Varosha and Morphou. Which are deal breakers. Is this more of the continuously hardline version? If it is, it is certainly widening the disconnect between Greek Cypriots and Turkey, where the biggest issue is trust. A lack of trust and suspicion of motive. That’s always going to be a wedge between a solution. The Greek Cypriot-Turkish disconnect. And suspicion over motive.

On the subject of trust, a businessperson highlighted that while it would take a long time to build, it was the only way that peace would be attained:

If they tried to be more flexible with the negotiations, and give the feeling to the Greek Cypriot side that they have a softer approach to the Cyprus issue, that would help. By having this very hard stance on everything, the immediate reaction they get from us is the same. By building up relations, it would help. If we do this for 10 years, and then there is more trust between sides, then maybe it would be easier to get

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57 The explosion at Evangelos Florakis naval base, outlined previously.

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*“If they tried to be more flexible with the negotiations, and give the feeling to the Greek Cypriot side that they have a softer approach to the Cyprus issue, that would help. By having this very hard stance on everything, the immediate reaction they get from us is the same.”*

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approval for a plan similar to the Annan plan, with Turkey being sort of a guarantor, something to make them feel good, but something that would also . . . because of the cooperation and building of trust over a long period, maybe would help Greek Cypriots to accept. . . .

However, he reflected that this would be a long process, which was unlikely to take place. “But it’s not realistic. . . trust cannot be built over a day. And what incentive does Turkey have to build trust with the bloody Cypriots?”

The idea of building trust in the region was a recurrent theme. A member of the business community said:

Everything has to do with the building of trust, in reality. A long-term strategy of building trust is the best way. It has to be the same not only in Cyprus, but with all its neighbours. If I see Turkey building better relations with Greece, Armenia, the Kurds over a long period, then yes you can trust more, but if you don’t see this, because of our history with Turkey it will take many years to build trust. So it is not very easy.

The importance of building trust was also expressed by a civil society actor, who also suggested means of doing so.

They can think of a way to make us all feel safe, with a different formula. There could build relationships between the people that build trust. Even the basic nature of capitalism requires trust between people in order for them to be trade. So build trust. At a basic level for economic cooperation at least. . . .

It could support people who want to work together, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. It could also

promote cooperation between Cyprus and Turkey. In trade, for example, x corporation to support Turkish Cypriot or Greek Cypriot enterprises that co-operate. Just support, without pressure. Like our education packs, for example, why not send them to Turkish schools in Turkey? So the product of intercommunal cooperation in Cyprus could be promoted in Turkey.

He also highlighted that efforts were already underway at the track-two level: “we have contact with Turkish schools, and we’re thinking about how to do this.”

A comment was also made that small efforts had the potential to go far, and that “what may not be much to them is a great deal to Greek Cypriots. Understand the Cypriot scale.” This was reiterated by a human rights activist, who said: “It puzzles me. Why do they create so many difficulties when it costs them nothing to promote goodwill?”

A researcher contextualised it within Turkey’s Ottoman legacy, saying: “I would say they need to consider how to be a better partner with their neighbours rather than trying to be a master of their neighbours. [They need to consider] how you can build synergies, how you can benefit together, grow together. A more forward-thinking mentality rather than how to exert more power.”

## **(2) Direct communication**

There were a number of different recommendations by our interviewees for how the Turkish government might try to bridge the gap with Greek Cypriots. There were many convergences among interviewees, particularly regarding withdrawal of parts or all of the Turkish military from Cyprus. However, less expectedly, many also recommended the opening of direct channels of communication between the Turkish government and Greek Cypriots.

A lawyer suggested that the Turkish Minister for EU Affairs Egemen Bağış speak directly, and frequently, to Greek Cypriot television audiences: “Get Bağış on TV. Get him to talk weekly. Turkey for the average Greek

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*“Turkey for the average Greek Cypriot is the invader. It’s the oppressor for the last 35 years. It has no other image, [and while] there are areas where it is, there are [also] areas where it is not. But they are not putting this across.”*

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Cypriot is the invader. It’s the oppressor for the last 35 years. It has no other image, [and while] there are areas where it is, there are [also] areas where it is not. But they are not putting this across.”

A civil society actor made a similar recommendation: “I think they don’t realise that a direct line of communication with Greek Cypriots would help both ends, and it wouldn’t mean anything to them. It’s possible, it can be done. With the people directly at the public level or at the second- or third-track level.”

A member of a government ministry suggested that the Turkish government “make efforts so that the discussions happening at the [negotiating] table become explained and understood by people outside.”

For a journalist, the need to improve public diplomacy sat alongside the lack of Turkish government concern for Greek Cypriot goodwill towards Turkey:

I think they need to look at public diplomacy. . . .If you look at any quotes, any comments by a Turkish official about Cyprus, it’s so insulting. They try to be insulting, they try to be degrading, they try to be offensive. How do you expect to increase trust when you just need to look at your own public diplomacy

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*“If you look at any quotes, any comments by a Turkish official about Cyprus, it’s so insulting. They try to be insulting, they try to be degrading, they try to be offensive. How do you expect to increase trust when you just need to look at your own public diplomacy that you make about Greek Cypriots and ask whether anyone in their right minds would trust you.”*

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that you make about Greek Cypriots and ask whether anyone in their right minds would trust you.

But the thing is they don’t consider us important enough to make those changes. And they have their own public opinion. And by maintaining this kind of ‘these dastardly Greek Cypriots,’ and ‘don’t worry we will protect the Turkish Cypriots’ narrative, that helps them maintain their hold over the north as well.

### **(3) Confidence building measures: preservation of cultural heritage, return of territory, and reduction in military presence**

For a civil society actor, the implementation of confidence building measures (CBMs), and restoration of cultural heritage sites were important aspects of improving relations:

I think they have to look at the bigger picture, and what they can get out of the relations with a united Cyprus. . . .I think they could make some moves, like they have, but to some extent they have been badly publicised in the Greek Cypriot community. But some moves to show they understand what the Greek Cypriots are feeling. Open up some new avenues like accepting some of these CBMs. That could be a possibility....

Every refugee going back to their village looks at their church, looks at their school, looks at the cemetery, looks at their house. So to spend some time making sure these things are kept in good condition, it changes the mood of the people. I don’t think it would affect negatively anybody if they give a boosting to the technical committee that deals with restoration of heritage.

Decreasing or withdrawing the Turkish army was regularly suggested as a confidence building measure, and characterised by many as “a massive symbolic move.” A young member of the diplomatic community made a number of suggestions, including reduction of troops:

Withdraw 10 or 20 thousand troops. You don’t need one troop for every four people in the north. Open up Varosha under EU or UN control and say to the Greek

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Cypriots ‘we’ll give it back to you tomorrow, as long as you open up Famagusta port under EU control.’ It’s in their interest. . .

Then they should start making demands for Ercan to be open to EU flights and offer something in return, like Morphou or withdraw more troops. That’s the only way it’s going to be solved, like the checkpoints, one by one measure.

Freedom of movement is another confidence-building measure. They need to start saying that we can travel over the island without being checked. At the end of the day, what’s going to happen? It’s not like you need to protect the border. Keep the checkpoints, but no stopping or handing over ID. It’ll make Greek Cypriots say that they can cross without showing IDs. If they don’t want to drink a coffee or tea, so be it, they’ll just go over and see their home and come back. It’ll help the island feel as one. They say the moment they have to check everyone for safety, but the same people living on the island now will be the people living on the island then. Why won’t there be a safety issue then? They’ve got 40 thousand troops to protect themselves. So then it becomes a confidence-building measure for them to offer.

For a journalist, withdrawal of the Turkish military in Cyprus was a prerequisite for independence: “If you really want to create an independent regime in the north you can’t do it with the army sitting there controlling the police, controlling the so-called borders.”

A young business leader suggested the reduction in numbers of troops on both sides of the island, but also pointed out that if the Turkish army keeps troops, then so must the Greek Cypriots, though he seemed uncertain about their value:

Ideally who needs the army in Cyprus? For me, I would be the first to say that I don’t need a Greek Cypriot army in Cyprus. To do what? To protect us against the one million strong army of Turkey? It’s not logical. On the other hand, if you see that they have thirty six thousand soldiers in the north, then we need to have at least fifteen thousand, or whatever it’s worth. In reality we don’t need the

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army, and the money we’re spending on them is a waste of money, and if there was no army and if there was cooperation between the two sides, then the island would do very well. As a business centre. It would be something very special. But I don’t see this happening.

However, it was also pointed out that reducing the Turkish military presence in north Cyprus may also trigger increased tension between the Turkish government and military, which could be ultimately destabilising for Cyprus, and for the broader region.

A business community leader suggested unilateral Turkish action on multiple fronts:

Give up Varosha, give it back to the rightful owners as a gesture of goodwill and let’s see how that would stir the pot. Ok, it’s probably not done in politics, but if Turkey really wants to solve this issue, then this would be a very visible and quite a dramatic gesture which would immediately prompt a reaction by the Greek Cypriots. That’s what I would propose.

Maybe also other less dramatic moves like allowing free trade, or perhaps doing away with the need to ask for IDs or passports for the Greek Cypriots, relax some of the rules and regulations that are creating this feeling of two separate states. Even smaller actions like the whole rhetoric of these two states, every time they talk about the Cyprus problem they have to put in that it’s two states, it’s two religions, it’s two this, two that.

If they really want people to believe that they are really serious about having their federation, then they should start talking as if they mean a federation, and not two states. So it’s little things and big things at the same time, but whatever they do, they. . .and I think it’s not just one sided, I think the Greek Cypriot side should also do things, but it seems that no one wants to go out there and become exposed to

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something which is a little bit different to what has been done so far.

He continued, highlighting that the Turkish government had more room for manoeuvre, and more moral and political strength to make compromises as the larger power in the game. This perspective was emphasised by a number of interviewees.

Both sides are playing within the very narrow rules that have been selected and agreed upon over the years. And because of various reasons, because of the rules and the pressures and the extremes on both sides would react very violently if Christofias comes up with something that is a bit more provocative, and the same would probably be true of the AK party. Although if you ask me the AK party has much more clout. And being the majority, they have the authority to change the game.

A hospitality industry manager put this position in more stark terms, saying: “let the people get their land. Let the people from Turkey go back to their country. If they’re staying in people’s houses, then they should rent them.”

Two prominent members of the business community also spoke about their interest in trading with Turkey. One of the two was actively involved in trade with Turkish Cypriot businesses under the Green Line Agreement. However, he also highlighted the numerous disincentives and impediments to cross-island trade, including laborious and convoluted bureaucracy, the taboo of importing Turkish Cypriot goods, and high levels of taxation. The other spoke directly about people who were already importing Turkish products via Israel and Greece, but added that this was not always cost-effective, and was politically risky for the company. Both actors suggested that developing economic incentives for co-operation

might bypass the political level of deadlock and add more dynamism to the current stalemate.

#### IV. IMAGINING THE FUTURE

Almost uniformly, the future in Cyprus was not seen with great hope or optimism. When asked to paint a portrait of Cyprus in ten years’ time, interviewees focused on the damage that will have been done by the economic crisis, the broader future of Europe, and a de facto acceptance of the current status quo on the island. That is, most saw the future as not shifting significantly from how they perceived the present to be. At the same time though, some members of the business community perceived the current economic crisis as an opportunity to reform unsustainable institutional and political conditions. Conditions surrounding the gas find were also cited as a means of creating incentives to resolve the Cyprus conflict.

Reflective of developing debates,<sup>58</sup> a significant portion of people interviewed expressed the opinion that ‘option one’ for the solution of the conflict may be some kind of formalisation of the island’s division. This represents a significant shift from traditional support of a unitary state, and is reflective of current feelings about the peace process and relations between the two main communities on the island. It should be noted, however, that the feeling that accompanies the below quotes outlining various forms of a two-state solution is one of resignation.

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<sup>58</sup> See for example ‘Do Greek Cypriots want reunification? A critical response to Yiannis Papadakis,’ and the original article in Greek by Yiannis Papadakis, ‘Μήπως η ελληνοκυπριακή πλευρά διαπραγματεύεται για πράγματα που δεν θέλει τελικά;’ both available at: <http://www.epanenosi.com/index.php/archives/1061> (accessed 2 July 2012); CYBC opinion poll telecast 13 April 2006 comparing percentage of Greek Cypriots willing to live with Turkish Cypriots in 2003 and 2006; ‘Cyprus: Reunification or Partition?’, *International Crisis Group Report*, 30 September 2009.

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## A. Heading towards partition?

A young diplomat stressed the need for Greek Cypriots to compromise, and for the adoption of a historical perspective:

We need to learn how to compromise, as Greek Cypriots, and to remember that we lost a war. And that just because Kyrenia or whatever is in the north, doesn't mean that it's not part of Cypriot history anymore. It hasn't been knocked down and rebuilt. And even if it is, that becomes Cypriot history too. It's all history. It's also valuable. It's not a positive way of changing things, but it's done, it's part of our history also.

He also stressed Turkish responsibility in what he saw to be the island's dismal future, and made space for the involvement of Turkish civil society to push for revision of the Turkish government's current position on the conflict: "I don't think Turkey realises that it's killing an island. And Turkish grassroots needs to be more active, and to campaign its leadership to let go. Just like Australians did for Vietnam and so on. They can play a role in assisting reunification."

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As her preferred option, a senior civil servant put the situation in unambiguous terms:

Give some land back so we can have some of the territory, some of the refugees can go back, but so that they [Turkish Cypriots] can also have their own space, and then two separate states. Them over there, us over here. I believe that we'd kill each other with a bicomunal solution. We can't agree over the basic things, how are we going to agree over the more complex things?

Versions of this position were also articulated by a business community leader, and one journalist, who each respectively commented in the two paragraphs below that:

Probably the best realistic solution for the Greek Cypriots would be partition after ten years or so, in my opinion. It is sad, but I think it's realistic. Partition but with good cooperation between the two sides would be a good solution, long term. The Greek Cypriots would never accept Turkey as their umbrella, the Turkish Cypriots, I think they would accept the EU. . .which would be what we want. . .but I'm not sure. . .but I think the influence of Turkey in that regard is a very negative one. For everyone. It pushes us away from reunification.

In the Greek Cypriot community these days there are a lot of people saying that partition is option one. A hell of a lot of people are saying that, which in the past was a total taboo. Because they're looking at the options now and saying, 'well. . .[shrugs shoulders]'. I think the biggest reason is they don't trust Turkey or the Turkish Cypriots. They don't trust the Turkish Cypriots to keep Turkey out of our affairs. They don't trust Turkey to stay out of our affairs. So sharing power in a federal solution is going to be about sharing power with Turkey. Which is completely lopsided because Greece is a weak country which has had limited military/economic influence in Cyprus, and which has zero influence now, so it's completely Greek Cypriots against the neighbours. So that's why the partition thing is being talked about so much.

## B. Cyprus in 10 years...

The overwhelming response to where Cyprus might be in a decade was summed up by one journalist, who said: "In 10 years time we'll be closer to either a negotiated partition, or a real frozen stalemate whereby the chances of peace the way we have been envisioning it are negligible." A number of people expressed the belief that any changes that might happen to the political context between the two communities would be ad-hoc, rather than by political

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design. A civil society actor’s perspective was representative in this regard:

We will all continue and make changes here and there ad hoc, the same way the checkpoints opened. We’ll have a few changes, spontaneously, but not directed by people in the negotiations. We’ll continue to have this one state recognised, one state not recognised business, with everyone thinking different things.

This was echoed by numerous interviewees. Another civil society actor said: “In ten years I see Cyprus in the same place. With other names in the chairs of powers. But in the same place. More checkpoints will open. There will be a few more agreements regarding trade.” He continued, pointing out the passing of time: “Eight years have passed since the referendum and nothing has changed. I don’t see anything changing in the next ten. I am very pessimistic.”

The passing of time and its role as a disincentive in the conflict’s solution was a point raised by many interviewees. According to a researcher:

In ten years time, it will be fifty years since the invasion. A lot of the people who lived with Turkish Cypriots would have died. A lot of the people who wanted to go back and be buried in the north next to their family will be gone, and you’ll have a lot of people who have never been there and who are not attached to the land, and who are less interested in reaching a solution at any level. . . I think either we’ll have the existing status quo or two separate states.

A young diplomat saw the future within a broader context of increased inter-communal competition and its consequences: “I see it as being two sides competing against each other, draining resources on the island, wasting money on this competition. I don’t

see a drastic change in ten years. I think the changes we’ve seen in the last five years have happened and there hasn’t been much progress.”

He continued, touching on the perceived long-term impact of Turkish economic growth on Turkish Cypriots, and contrasting it with a projected economically weaker Greek Cypriot community. “Under the current circumstances what can change has already changed. I see the Greek Cypriots getting poorer and the north richer, I see them balancing out over the next ten years. Greek Cypriots will never understand that they need to solve this for economic reasons.”

The fear of Greek nationalism also appeared in some people’s vision of the future. The leader of the youth arm of a political party said:

I honestly don’t see good things for Cyprus. The neo-fascist party only failed to get elected in the last elections because most of their members are under 18. Once they become over 18, I mean if they don’t get any smarter after they are 18, they’ll vote for ELAM, and ELAM will get into parliament. There is a lot of brainwashing going on in the schools, about being Greek, and how great Greece is.

I don’t see my future here at all. I don’t feel like I fit here at all, politically and culturally. If you go to any other European state you feel the integration of other groups. But in Cyprus you are either a Greek Cypriot or you’re part of the others, and it really pisses me off, there is a lot of segregation. I think Cyprus is like the Mississippi of Europe. Very backwards.

A developer wondered whether it was in the interest of regional and international powers to solve the conflict, or to recognise the Turkish Cypriot community as a separate state:

We will have a similar situation today but with some countries having recognised the TRNC. Not a lot, it’s still in the interests of the EU and other countries not to recognise the north so as to keep both Turkey and Cyprus indebted to them. So as long as the bigger picture does not help, it is difficult to see a solution.

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If you think about it, why is it in the interest of our neighbours to have a solution of the Cyprus problem. Is it in the interests of France? France is selling a lot of weapons to Cyprus. Germany? I don't think so. They can use the problem to block Turkey's entry into the EU.

Of particular interest is also the turn in his thoughts. He follows the above with reflections on whether solution of the conflict was in the real interest of either Turkish or Greek Cypriots: "We don't even know if it's in the interests of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. Many people are not sure about that either. So I am pessimistic, probably."

At the same time, however, those in the business community had a slightly different perspective regarding the ability of the gas find to encourage compromise on all sides. More than one actor from across the spectrum wove together gas and resolution of the conflict - positive or negative. A human rights activist pointed out that "it will be very difficult to develop the hydrocarbon industry without a solution. We will spend the money for nothing. When you look around the world at conflict countries, that is what people do. It's never used for development, it's always used for arms instead. They use Norway as an example for us but we're not going to be Norway. We cannot."

The comments of a leading figure in the business community are representative of how the possibility is seen, as well as of the broader challenges of harnessing those possibilities to create momentum to resolve the conflict. His thoughts reflect both the broader uncertainty that the leadership has the capacity to carry the country forward, and the hope that if it happens, the future will be bright:

The big change will be with the access that we will have to natural gas and the benefits that will create to the whole of society. If we have the right politicians who will not abuse the newfound wealth, and if we use it wisely and cleverly, we shouldn't not expect Cyprus to relive a new boom of development and prosperity. Whether that will create the possibility of unifying Cyprus through this new found wealth and to

use the gas and possible oil to give something to obviously the Turkish Cypriots who are entitled to their share, but to use that benefit to drive that gas through Turkey, and therefore Turkey gets a cut of the action too, that would seem like a win for everyone.

But to do that you would need visionary people who do not see just the benefits just from one side but to see it in a more holistic way. I am not hopeful that this will be the case given the politicians we have in front of us. Our hope is that we will move towards more visionary type of politicians without nationalistic and religious criteria; for the benefit of all the people. So ten years from now, one way or the other I think the Cyprus problem will be solved. Hopefully it will be solved for the benefit of all the people who will enjoy the fruits of a much better economy and. . . as you know Cyprus is such a small country it is so easy to correct. And we're lucky enough to have the resources that will benefit less than a million people. We are a very small nation. Let's see.

## V. CONCLUSION

Greek Cypriot perceptions of the current Turkish government and its policies regarding Cyprus grow from a number of historically rooted fears. These fears, together with Turkey's perceived zero-sum and aggressive public and negotiation strategy in relation to Cyprus, continue to play the largest role in shaping how people view Turkey. The group of opinion-shapers interviewed for this report was also mindful of the capacity for Turkish economic development to impact the conflict's resolution. For some, this would play out negatively for Greek Cypriots, while for others, particularly business community representatives, Turkish economic growth had the potential to bridge the Greek Cypriot/Turkish divide. The same actors also linked the emerging hydrocarbon industry as combining to provide another element for possible cooperation.

A developer summarised the potential positive impact below, framing it within a context of compromise and the acceptance of certain facts on the ground:

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*“Turkey holds a big part of the key. As do Greek Cypriots. Turkish Cypriots not so much.”*

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The fact that so much money is coming in to both sides could be an incentive. I don't see a solution of everyone going back to their homes. It's been too many years since the invasion. If someone was born in Kyrenia 35 years ago, he is Turkish Cypriot, he lives there, it's his home, you cannot tell him 'no this is my house, get out.' So the only solution for many people will be financial settlement. Ok, maybe there will be Famagusta given back to the Greek Cypriot side. But I think financially the gas could help solve the problem.

For those participants who travelled north, they noticed and commented on a feeling of increasing 'foreignness.' That is to say that they felt more and more alienated from the northern part of Cyprus, which was beginning to feel like 'a little Istanbul.' They noted an increasing presence of large mosques (though some also brought up the large scale and number of churches in south Cyprus). What is also notable is that Greek Cypriots interviewees almost consistently did not see Turkish Cypriots as particularly strong agents in any of these processes. One participant commented that “Turkey holds a big part of the key. As do Greek Cypriots. Turkish Cypriots not so much.”

In contrast to those who thought the gas finds would place Turkey and the Republic of Cyprus under pressure to resolve the conflict, a number of others thought that Turkey's 'Plan B' was currently being implemented in Cyprus. Many commented on the lack of political leadership and vision on the part of Greek Cypriot politicians who are “too much involved in our own small wins to see the bigger picture, and that we've almost come to the edge now.”

Participants highlighted a number of major concerns and questions regarding the role of Turkey and its effect on them. Of particular note was the increased role of Turkey in the Middle East as a key power. This was especially important in the face of Greek economic and political collapse, which, people noted, definitely swung the balance of power in the Greek/Turkish/Greek Cypriot/Turkish Cypriot nexus toward Turkey. Correspondingly, the most urgent concern for all participants was the current state of the Greek Cypriot economy, rising unemployment, political bickering, and the deepening left-right tension. In light of this, some interviewees characterised the Greek Cypriot relationship with Turkey as a 'stable but unhappy' one, leading us to an interesting conclusion that for a number of people at this moment in the middle of 2012, perhaps Turkey and the Turkish threat has faded into the background of a broader patchwork of more pressing concerns.

# Conclusions and Policy Recommendations



# Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

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## CONCLUSIONS

While there has been some speculation among political commentators about the effect of the EU presidency transitioning to the Republic of Cyprus for the second half of 2012, this was not a point of great attention for the majority of our interviewees. Most people interviewed from both communities did not see the Republic of Cyprus' EU presidency as something that would impact the negotiations either positively or negatively. On the contrary, most considered that with July, August, and December being largely holiday months in Europe, the Republic of Cyprus' presidency would have little impact on Turkey-Cyprus relations overall. One Turkish Cypriot interviewee directly involved in EU affairs expressed concern for the effects of the presidency on the island's north:

North Cyprus will be affected badly. Greek Cypriots at this point see the international community as the EU. And the rotating presidency will give the opportunity to see the EU as Greek Cypriot. . . . The first European Commission meeting will take place in Cyprus on 6 July. There are going to be eighteen meetings at the ministry level, and it's clear that Greek Cypriots are going to use these meetings to improve their political networks. It may give Greek Cypriots some morale and motivation, but it will also be an excuse to postpone solving certain problems.

And a Turkish Cypriot union leader expressed the opinion that at least symbolically, the rotating presidency showed Turkish Cypriots' current weakness:

I think that after the Annan Plan, the entry of the Republic of Cyprus into the EU was the worst thing that could have happened to us. In some quarters the

entry of the Greek Cypriots into the EU wasn't given so much importance, but I think it was a very important development. When Greek Cypriots entered the EU, we said that they should give us two seats [in the EU parliament], but they didn't. We said at least leave those seats empty, but they didn't. Today, even if it's just symbolic, we're confronted with an element that will soon administer the entire EU. After this, is there anything else that could happen to show us that we've lost the game and that we need to look for other solutions? If Greek Cypriots take over the rotating presidency and we don't do anything, if we don't find a solution for ourselves, that means we're done for.

While other interviewees noted that the negotiations might be 'put in deep freeze' during the EU presidency period, the lack of hope or interest in the negotiations appeared to make this an issue of minimal concern.

One troubling result of the interviews is what appears to be a growing disconnect between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. While the 2003 opening of the checkpoints provided opportunities for Cypriots to interact, and while this has resulted in new friendships, new business enterprises, and new social groups, it also has provided Cypriots with increasing opportunity to see the quotidian ways in which their lives are separated by the two states in which they live. In the current conjuncture that is the context of this report, this means that while Greek Cypriots perceive the Greek economic crisis as a threat to their own stability, that crisis has little meaning for Turkish Cypriots. Turkish Cypriots instead are negotiating Turkey's increasing economic power and regional influence, about which they are ambivalent but which they believe Greek Cypriots have not fully

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comprehended. One former Turkish Cypriot chamber of commerce head remarked:

[Turkey] is using its power as soft power. And of course this situation gives us a certain power. If Greek Cypriots don't employ the next two or three years well, they're going to be very regretful about things they haven't done. Turkey isn't going to come and invade the Greek Cypriots, but by the time Greek Cypriots fully understand the power that's been created here and comprehend with whom they're neighbours, it's going to be too late. In other words, Greek Cypriots are going to live in our region as dependents, and neither Europe nor anyone else will be able to change that. If Greek Cypriots don't pull themselves together, Turkey is going to cast a huge shadow over the south.

Some Greek Cypriots showed concern about the positioning of Turkey in the coming years. When asked about how she saw the Republic of Cyprus' future in the context of Turkish economic growth, one interviewee remarked: "as a small corner of Europe that no one listens to. But it depends on what happens with Greece's collapse also, and on the gas situation." However, in contrast to the above comment by the former Turkish Cypriot chamber of commerce head, very few Greek Cypriots clearly articulated the future of the island's south as living in Turkey's shadow.

In turn, while Turkish Cypriots have perceived Greek Cypriots as the primary stumbling-block to federation and believe that they do not wish to share power, Greek Cypriots tend to see Turkey as the prime factor and often disregard Turkish Cypriots' capacity to act. Overall, Greek Cypriot interviewees perceive Turkish Cypriots as lacking agency in their relationship with Turkey, as well as regarding the Cyprus conflict. Two

Greek Cypriot interviewees also commented that while Turkey 'controls the north,' Turkish Cypriots 'don't try.' One of the two elaborated: "They have more opportunities to gain independence from Turkey, especially with the EU as a lever. I think they could have pushed for more independence if they wanted to, but I don't think the will is really, deeply there." A number of Turkish Cypriot participants, on the other hand, expressed disappointment with what they saw as Greek Cypriot cowardice with regard to their own extreme and nationalist elements and believed that their focus on Turkey was a distraction from forms of real reconciliation.

Regarding the negotiations themselves, the issue of sharing power was important for both Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot interviewees. For Turkish Cypriots, the essential issue was that of powersharing, while Greek Cypriots frequently linked it to their fears regarding both the lack of trust between communities, and of Greek Cypriots towards Turkey. One former Turkish Cypriot administrator commented:

I have zero hope for the negotiations! I graduated from the English School, where Turkish and Greek Cypriots studied together. I know Greek Cypriots well. Individually Greek Cypriots are pleasant, they love to eat and drink, but when they get together they change. . . . In individual relationships everything is great, they're good people, but when it comes to politics they become very orthodox. . . . They have a very different understanding of things. First of all, they don't want to share power with us. For that reason, I see zero chance of there being an agreement from these negotiations.

In contrast, many Greek Cypriots interviewees additionally focused on regaining properties and land in the north. A number of interviewees expressed understanding that 'most of the north won't be given back,' though there were mixed opinions regarding the justice of this. Among that group were people who believed that 'Turkish Cypriots deserve a space of their own, to feel safe in and to develop in,' and those who simply thought that 'they won't give it back. Why

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should they?’ On the other end of the spectrum, one interviewee believed that if Turkish Cypriots were provided the opportunity to rule in north Cyprus, “the Turkish Cypriot government would give us a large portion of our land and rights back. If a Turkish Cypriot government rules north Cyprus, then we’ll have a solution. But if Turkey keeps ruling, under the table, then we’ll not find a solution.” What this latter comment highlights is the lack of awareness among some of the deep sense of insecurity that exists in the Turkish Cypriot community regarding Greek Cypriots.

One point on which both sides appear to agree is a disappointment with their own relations with Turkey after various moments over the past decade in which those relations seem to be improving. While Turkish Cypriots pointed to Turkey’s support for a solution during the Annan Plan period and subsequent apparent cooling of enthusiasm, Greek Cypriots recalled efforts to engage with their own opinion-shapers that since appear to be contradicted by Turkish leaders’ provocative statements. When looking at the AKP, Cypriots on both sides of the divide expressed worry over the increasingly strong-arm tactics and the tone that relations have taken, which has been understood in the north as a lack of respect for their independence and political will and in the south as Turkey’s ‘bullying’ nature. And while some interviewees on both sides were concerned for what they perceived to be the increasing ‘Islamification’ of north Cyprus, this appeared to be less of an immediate concern for Turkish Cypriots.

In terms of how the country’s future is perceived, there is little hope on either side for resolution of the Cyprus conflict in the coming decade, and most people view some version of the current status quo as the most likely scenario. When asked how they saw their own future in ten years’ time, Turkish Cypriot participants tended to answer that they were unable to envision a future, or that most of the scenarios they could realistically imagine were dark ones. For their own future, Greek Cypriots tended to view an extended economic crisis as casting a dark shadow over their whole socio-cultural environment. A Greek

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Cypriot participant also noted that the increased flow of private Turkish capital into north Cyprus was very likely to change the dynamics in the north: “The way they want to run the economy, privatisation, awarding contracts to Turkish companies. . . in a few years most of the infrastructure will be run by Turkish companies and in that way reduce the public sector so they don’t need to put a lot of money into the economy, but at the same time affecting directly how the whole economy is operating, and in that way most likely it will affect it politically also.”

In this regard, Turkey’s economic growth was viewed from two different perspectives: how it would impact Cyprus in the case of a solution, and how it would impact Cyprus if the status quo continues. A Greek Cypriot interviewee reflected that:

If there is a solution, then the economic strength of Turkey has much more potential for us. Both in terms of the hydrocarbons, but also generally with developing the economy in terms of trade and tourism. There are so many opportunities for both countries. But people don’t want to understand it, or they don’t understand it. The moment you mention it, it triggers a negative attitude among Greek Cypriots. People don’t want to look at it that way. I think the Turks and the Turkish Cypriots look much more openly towards economic development. Look at the relations between Turkey and Greece. Generally the relations have been developing, and the main stumbling block has been Cyprus. But in Cyprus even thinking about relations with Turkey is taboo. I think this can of course change very quickly. I don’t think it is an immovable rock. But. . .

Turkish Cypriot interviewees, on the other hand, were more cautious about the effects on them of an improvement in economic relations between Turkey and the south. One journalist noted:

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Rich Greek Cypriots don't see north Cyprus as a market that will bring them profit. What they really want is Turkey. And Turkey is eyeing them. We see that their imports and exports with each other are growing. The wealthy Greek Cypriots only recently were looking at Turkey as a country they could make fun of. Some of them have changed, but some of them still see things that way. A Greek Cypriot journalist friend recently said to me regarding Turkey, 'Tayyip Erdoğan will be the sultan, Turkey will be in a very strong position in the Middle East, and by the time our idiots understand this it will be too late.' I don't see anything very positive in either the short or the long term.

Regarding their own future, both sides were preoccupied with domestic affairs, though in the island's north these affairs were directly related to their relationship with Turkey. Greek Cypriots saw themselves in ten years' time either recently recovering from what almost all characterised as a very deep systemic crisis, or still feeling its impact. While some pointed out that this would provide an opportunity for institutional reform, others emphasised a future shaped by an enduring economic crisis, growing nationalism and a lack of visionary leadership. Turkish Cypriots, on the other hand, almost unanimously emphasised the need for political and economic reform, though one that would take into account their special situation in a semi-isolated environment. Most echoed a former administrator, who remarked that without reform, the north risked losing its youth:

If the current system and politicians continue as they are, I don't see a bright future, because this isn't going to be an attractive country for young people and persons wanting to do business. For that reason, we're currently on the edge of a knife, but if we can realise certain changes, there are a lot of opportunities ahead of us.

On both sides of the Green Line, then, there is a sense that the present is an important moment in which certain political and economic reforms need to be made, and future relations with Turkey will depend on these.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

As would be expected, each community's concerns and suggestions for reform had, in many places, vastly different focuses. Turkish Cypriot interviewees' concerns centred primarily on suggestions for Turkey assisting or leading political, constitutional, administrative, and economic reform in north Cyprus as well as demonstrating respect for Turkish Cypriot independence.

Greek Cypriot interviewees focused more broadly on trust-building, economic development, the importance of creating direct lines of communication with Greek Cypriots, and the implementation of confidence-building measures. A number of Greek Cypriot interviewees believed that as the majority and the larger power, Turkey should take on the responsibility to lead by example and promote goodwill by showing goodwill. Interestingly, however, there were also themes of convergence. This section is therefore structured into three parts: recommendations from Turkish Cypriot participants, recommendations from Greek Cypriot participants, and areas of crossover.

Please note that what follows is a series of recommendations by individual interviewees. Not all recommendations are supported uniformly.

### I. Recommendations from Turkish Cypriot participants

Recommendations from Turkish Cypriot interviewees on how to improve their relationship with Turkey primarily addressed the concerns listed above. Interviewees unanimously said that Turkey should show respect for Turkish Cypriots' political will, though they were divided on what this should entail. For some, this meant respecting north Cyprus as a separate state, while for others it meant more involvement and consultation in decisions on economic aid, foreign policy, and negotiations. Almost all interviewees wished for a well-delineated regulation of the relationship, while others remarked

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that one form of respect would be to drop the rhetoric of ‘motherland-babyland’ and instead engage in a more ‘fraternal’ relationship, one between ‘brothers’ rather than ‘parent and child.’ Interviewees had specific suggestions for how the re-negotiation of this relationship might be realised:

### Political and policy reform

- Recognise the independence of elected representatives from the Turkish Cypriot community;
- Establish more formal protocols for relations between Turkish and Turkish Cypriot diplomats and government representatives that reinforce the independence of the Turkish Cypriot community;
- Increase direct communication between Turkish authorities in Cyprus with a broader range of actors in Turkish Cypriot society and listen to a greater variety of opinions;
- Create a more sustained diplomatic effort to engage with Turkish Cypriots socially and to understand them sociologically by including staff in the Turkish embassy who are trained in social sciences and can engage with the public;
- Create a more clearly ambassadorial role for the Turkish ambassador to Cyprus, including social gatherings and public cultural events of the sort that other embassies in the island sponsor;
- Discuss policy ideas with Turkish Cypriots who work in relevant fields, and implement in consultation with Turkish Cypriots;
- Develop a comprehensive media strategy to explain policies more clearly and carefully to the Turkish Cypriot public;
- Engage in self-reflection and self-criticism regarding the historical role of Turkey in Cyprus as a way of moving forward and stabilizing the relationship between the two parties;
- Support the creation of a federal solution in Cyprus.

### Constitutional and legal reform

- Aid in creating a strategy for constitutional reform, especially including removing Article 10, which ties the police to the Turkish military in the island;
- Reform should also include revising laws regarding political parties and bringing Turkish Cypriots laws in line with international human rights standards;
- A number of interviewees suggesting implementing the Annan Plan unilaterally, which would ensure many of the changes that interviewees envision and which has also already been approved by a majority of the Turkish Cypriot public;
- Some interviewees suggested making the political structure more inclusive, for instance by including parliamentary seats for Maronite and Greek Cypriot residents of the Turkish Cypriot state;
- Create a more formal legal definition of the relationship between Turkey and north Cyprus. This could include:
  - a security agreement of the sort that one would usually find in a protectorate relationship;
  - a commercial agreement that would allow free trade of Turkish Cypriot goods with Turkey;
  - fair investment and trade regulations;
  - increased immigration control.
- A number of interviewees were in favour of reducing Turkish troop numbers and ceding certain areas currently under military control to civilian control.

### Administrative reform

- Aid in creating strategies to contribute to the development of a self-sufficient administration;
- Utilise Turkey’s political maturity and economic growth, as well as recent experience of bureaucratic reforms to guide and inspire Turkish Cypriots in their own reform process;
- Create a clearer line of consultation between Turkish and Turkish Cypriot institutions to remove the culture of imposition;
- Clearer medium- and long-term population planning.

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### **Economic reform**

- Consult with and include Turkish Cypriots who work in relevant fields when Turkish officials in Cyprus plan expenditure associated with the aid package;
- Help Turkish Cypriot businesses meet Turkish import standards;
- Establish commerce agreements between Turkey and north Cyprus;
- Turn the Turkish Aid Commission over to TIKA (the Turkish International Cooperation and Coordination Agency) so that it becomes a clearer issue of support for an independent state;
- Include Turkish Cypriot representatives of civil society and professional organisations in the Aid Commission and involve them in decisions on economic aid.

### **Migration reform**

- Integration of non-ethnically Cypriot citizens and permanent residents through social planning, education, and other projects;
- Control of migration into north Cyprus through more careful documentation of incoming migrants and greater accountability by Turkey of the actions of its nationals in Cyprus;
- Control of migration may include the re-institution of a passport requirement for entry to the island.

### **Reform related to territory**

- Allow a certain number of Greek Cypriots to settle in the north;
- Open Varosha under Turkish control and allow owners to return and settle in exchange for opening of Ercan airport or Famagusta port;

## **II. Recommendations from Greek Cypriot participants**

### **Trust-building**

- Recognise that Greek Cypriots have historical fears of Turkey and create a long-term strategy to build trust;

- Improve foreign relations with neighbouring states and address human rights issues;
- Show flexibility in the negotiation process;
- Decrease rhetoric of existence of two states in Cyprus to show goodwill towards a federal solution;
- Reconsider and reform use of offensive and degrading language used in public sphere by Turkish government representatives towards Greek Cypriots;
- Promote cooperation between Turkish NGOs and Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot NGOs;
- Promote results of Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot cooperation in Turkey and Greece;
- Support exchange programmes of Greek Cypriot students to Turkey;
- Concentrate on building synergies of interests rather than techniques to exert power.

### **Economic development**

- Promote the products of economic cooperation between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots in Turkey;
- Encourage Turkish corporations or entities that support economic cooperation between Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot businesses;
- Promote trade between Turkish and Greek Cypriot businesses, using Turkish Cypriot businesses as the medium.
- Create channels of direct communication
- Have Turkish Minister for EU Affairs Egemen Bağış speak regularly to Greek Cypriot television audiences;
- Create a strategy to improve public diplomacy directed to Greek Cypriot community. This could be done through the following means:
  - Establish direct channels of communication with Greek Cypriots at track-two or track-three level;

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- Establish direct line of communication with Greek Cypriot public;
  - Make efforts to explain the discussions happening at the negotiating table to all audiences to increase understanding – break the negotiating silence.

### Confidence building measures

- Unilaterally implement confidence-building measures;
- Restore Greek Cypriot cultural heritage sites;
- Tangibly and visibly support the technical committee working on the restoration of heritage;
- Create and share a strategy to reduce numbers of Turkish military stationed in Cyprus;
- Eliminate Turkish military oversight of Turkish Cypriot police;
- Open Varosha under EU or UN control and request opening of Famagusta port under EU control;
- Offer to open Morphou to original owners in exchange for opening of Ercan airport to EU flights;
- Remove need to show identification at inter-communal checkpoints;
- Remove need for people to stop for examination at inter-communal checkpoints;
- Implement system of rent for current non-Cypriot residents of Greek Cypriot houses in north Cyprus;
- Allow Greek Cypriots in some regions to return to reside in their houses.

### III. Themes of potential convergence

**Dialogue.** Both communities mentioned increasing direct dialogue between representatives of the Turkish government and members of their own community as an important recommendation to improve relations between their community and Turkey.

**Language.** The way that Turkish government representatives speak to and about people offends both Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots. Perhaps a revision of public diplomacy across the board would be a useful show of goodwill.

**Exchange of territory in return for concessions on ports.** Interviewees from both communities suggested different versions of the basic formula of land for Greek Cypriots in exchange for access to international ports (air or sea) by Turkish Cypriots.

**Revision in the role of the Turkish military.** The oversight the Turkish military currently has over the Turkish Cypriot police was highlighted by people on both sides as something that could be reformed. In addition, some version of a reduction in Turkish troop numbers was also brought up, though it should be noted that this had different meanings for Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. For Turkish Cypriots this was primarily a means of democratisation, as well as potentially opening up to civilian administration areas now under military control. For Greek Cypriots, this was primarily a trust-building exercise and significant show of goodwill regarding both Greek Cypriot fears of the Turkish military, and the democratisation of the Turkish Cypriot community.



# Note on methods



# Note on methods

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The method used in this research is a qualitative one, the semi-structured interview. Qualitative methods are the preferred methods of particular social sciences, especially social anthropology and cultural sociology, because of the types of questions to which these disciplines generally seek answers. While quantitative methods such as surveys may give us general statistical information about populations and overviews of public opinion, these are methods that generally answer what rather than why questions.<sup>59</sup> Surveys provide both questions and answers, and in cases of public opinion, interviewees choose among a set of answers that usually will only approximate the answer that they would give if asked the same question in an open-ended fashion. In addition, these are sets of questions that normally may be answered with pen and paper or over the telephone and do not require the presence of an interviewer. They are most often anonymous and depend on random sampling, and there is often no opportunity for the interviewee to evaluate the questions or for the interviewer to contextualise the answers or interpret why particular respondents may have given the answers that they did.

In-depth, semi-structured interviews, on the other hand, are often used in policy research. This is because they cover both fact and meaning, allowing interviewees also to reflect on social, cultural, and political context, as well as to provide a more accurate reflection of actual opinion or impressions. A semi-structured interview is one in which a pre-determined set of questions is discussed during the interview, allowing for comparison among respondents. At the same time, such interviews provide flexibility, allowing interviewers to ask questions in more depth or to follow up on respondents' observations. They also allow interviewees to discuss the questions themselves and to have a conversation with the interviewer. As a result, semi-structured interviews are often used when the researcher wants a deeper understanding of a topic and a thorough grasp of the answers provided, or when the researcher wants to understand subjective issues such as perceptions.<sup>60</sup>

The primary difference, then, between quantitative methods such as surveys and qualitative methods such as structured interviews, life history interviews, and participant observation is that each of these methods is considered appropriate for answering particular types of research problems. What these methods share is that the researcher must be attentive to asking the right questions in order to address the research problem (question design);<sup>61</sup>

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59 For more on the differences between quantitative and qualitative social science research, see H. Russell Bernard, *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2000) and *Research Methods In Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, 3d ed. (Walnut Creek, Calif.: Alta Mira Press, 2002); Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research in Practice: Examples for Discussion and Analysis* (San Francisco, CA: JosseyBass, 2002); and W. Lawrence Neuman, *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, 6th ed. (Boston: Pearson Education, Inc., 2006).

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60 Hillary Arksey and Peter Knight, *Interviewing for Social Scientists* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1999); Steinar Kvale, *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996); and James P. Spradley, *The Ethnographic Interview* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979).

61 William Foddy, *Constructing Questions for Interviews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

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asking them to the right people (sampling);<sup>62</sup> and contextualizing these results using other research materials (triangulation).<sup>63</sup>

This particular research was conducted with a population that has been the subject of multiple surveys on related issues. Indeed, Cypriots on both sides of the Green Line are a highly studied population, and there are, therefore, numerous sources of data for triangulating the results of this research. The particular focus of this research, however, is perception, a topic that is highly subjective while at the same time highly malleable, shaped by education, media, and public discourse.

Those persons that in public policy are called ‘opinion shapers’ are the persons who are primarily responsible for shaping perception within those realms, and as a result these persons were the focus of this research. It is also usually the case that those persons who shape opinion are able to reflect on the historical and social dynamics that condition perceptions at any given time. In choosing our sample, then, we were attentive to the various spheres in which public perception is shaped, as well as to the variety of opinion across the political spectrum.

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62 See Arksey and Knight 1999 and Kvale 1996.

63 H. Russell Bernard and Gerry W. Ryan, *Analyzing Qualitative Data: Systematic Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2009).

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