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THE PROSPECTS  
FOR PEACE  
IN CYPRUS:  
THE IMPACT OF  
ELECTIONS  
IN THE NORTH

DR. CİHAN DİZDAROĞLU

SEPTEMBER 2020 - 015

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# INTRODUCTION

Turkish Cypriots are preparing to elect their fifth president – the next community leader<sup>1</sup> – to guide the peace negotiations. The presidential election in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC),<sup>2</sup> originally scheduled for 26 April, was postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic and will soon be held on 11 October 2020.

According to Article 99 of the Constitution, if no candidate obtains an absolute majority during the first round of voting, a run-off election will be held between the top two candidates on 18 October 2020. Alongside the presidential election, a concurrent vote will be held on a constitutional amendment regarding the number of judges in the Supreme Court.

Eleven male candidates, aged between 37 and 73, have already filed applications with the Supreme Election Council to run in the election.<sup>3</sup> The main topics of their election campaigns are the fate of peace negotiations, the relationship between Turkey and the TRNC, the lifting of prolonged international embargos – specifically on the economy and sports – enhancing dialogue between Turkish Cypriots and the rest of the world, and the opening of the ghost town, Varosha (Maraş). Due to the ongoing impact of the pandemic on almost every aspect of life in Northern Cyprus, arduous domestic issues such as the economy, education, health and tourism, the disputes among coalition partners as well as tension between the president and government are also key issues on the candidates' agendas. These circumstances are inescapable, especially considering the candidates comprise the incumbent president, prime minister, deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs, opposition party leaders and a slew of others. Rather than detailing their visions for peace negotiations, candidates continue to criticize one another

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over domestic problems. However, the president, who is elected for a five-year term, has limited powers as executive authority lies with the Council of Ministers, which the prime minister leads. It is thus conceivable that focus has shifted towards individual election campaigns due to pressing issues in domestic politics.

**TABLE 1: PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES**

Mustafa Akıncı, President*
Ersin Tatar, Prime Minister and the leader of the National Unity Party (Ulusal Birlik Partisi – UBP)
Tufan Erhürman, the leader of the Republican Turkish Party (Cumhuriyetçi Türk Partisi – CTP)
Kudret Özersay, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, the former leader of the People’s Party (Halkın Partisi – HP)*
Serdar Denktaş, the former leader of the Democrat Party (Demokrat Parti - DP)*
Erhan Arıklı, the leader of the Rebirth Party (Yeniden Doğuş Partisi - YDP)
Fuat Türköz Ciner, the leader of the Nationalist Democracy Party (Milliyetçi Demokrasi Partisi – MDP)
Alphan Uz*
Arif Salih Kırdag*
Mustafa Ulaş*
Ahmet Boran*

\* These figures will campaign as independent candidates.

There are currently no polls that reliably signal which candidates are in the lead, and the growing number of candidates complicates predictions. Discussions at the domestic level indicate the main competition will likely be between two left-wing and two right-wing candidates, who are listed atop the table 1. However, there is still long way to go until the election and the current rankings may change suddenly. This is particularly relevant considering the failures of some candidates to adequately respond to the pandemic and its repercussions on the economy, education and health as well as the involvement of Serdar Denktaş, a senior politician and the son of founding President Rauf Raif Denktaş. Moreover, the possibility of lower turnout, considering the worsening impact of the pandemic on Northern Cyprus, might change all calculations.

It is worth mentioning that the goal of this paper is not to predict who will win the presidential election in the North but, rather, to discuss the extent to which the election affects the prospects for a solution in Cyprus. Accordingly, the paper begins by offering a brief outline of the current state of negotiations, followed by a discussion of the top candidates’ political orientations. The third section focuses on the possible impact of the election on peace negotiations, and the paper concludes with some important points going forward. Rather than relying on leadership changes on both sides, this paper argues for the need to adjust mentalities in favor of a more inclusive negotiation process to foster an atmosphere suitable for a possible solution in Cyprus.

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# THE CURRENT STATE OF PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

It has been more than five decades since peace negotiations started in Beirut in 1968 between the leaders of the two communities. Both sides have spent significant time and effort under the auspices of the UN to find a comprehensive settlement for the long-lasting Cyprus problem. The latest attempt in Crans Montana Switzerland in 2017 also ended in failure.

While UN Secretary-General António Guterres was hesitant to point out the reasons for failure, the most apparent reason were disagreements over security and guarantees, as reflected afterwards to the media.<sup>4</sup> Since then, UN Secretary-General António Guterres convened the parties on one occasion at an informal meeting in Berlin, on 25 November 2019. But the parties have yet to agree to the “terms of reference” for the resumption of negotiations. In his latest report, UN Secretary-General Guterres urged both community leaders to coordinate in preparation for “meaningful and results-oriented negotiations” and to re-committed to exploring five-plus-United Nations, which refers to the meeting of the two communities and three guarantor powers – Turkey, Greece and the United Kingdom.<sup>5</sup>

The negotiations have continued to be on standby due to the elections in the North and the ongoing pandemic, which has also disrupted engagements between the two sides of the island.<sup>6</sup> The issue of offshore energy resources and recent tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean have added an additional layer of complexity to the existing problems. Nevertheless, these have long been the main, superficial causes for the delay, but the underlying problems are fuelled by unwillingness and mistrust. The process will endure in a state of limbo as this stubbornness and suspicion persist on both sides.

The history of negotiations for the Cyprus problem has been dominated by missed opportunities and disappointments. Each attempt has caused hopes throughout the island to flourish and wane in

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tandem with negotiation process between leaders. As a survey revealed last year, more than seven out of 10 respondents (67 percent of Greek Cypriots and 78 percent of Turkish Cypriots) still desire a solution.<sup>7</sup> But, as another survey that focuses particularly on youth reported, the overwhelming majority of Greek Cypriot youth and most Turkish Cypriot youth believe negotiations are futile and cannot produce a viable solution.<sup>8</sup> The lack of political will and mistrust are the main reasons behind this pessimistic stance. Therefore, even the election of the most solution-oriented Cypriot leaders would not necessarily correspond to a comprehensive solution but instead implies continual trust-building, a necessary element in conflict-affected societies such as Cyprus. The inverse result could further deteriorate solution attempts and di-

minish prospects for any degree of success. Moreover, it would also provide either side a concrete reason to blame following a potential failure.

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The Cyprus problem is, in a sense, an equation filled with multiple variables. The involvement of an array of diverse actors, including the guarantor powers, the UN and the EU, further complicates the situation, but the main obstacles before a solution are still mistrust between the two sides and an unwillingness to compromise. This is why insistent attempts by third parties – primarily the UN – to facilitate dialogue are needed to keep the process on track at the elite-level. However, this should be supported by individual and collective contribu-

tions to build bridges between the two communities that will constitute a bottom up pressure mechanism.

# NEGOTIATIONS AFTER ELECTIONS: DO CANDIDATES' POLITICAL ORIENTATIONS TRULY MATTER?

The election will take place between right-wing and left-wing candidates. As domestic-level discussions in Northern Cyprus demonstrate, candidates can be separated according to political leanings, with left-wing individuals who support a bi-communal and bi-zonal federation (BBF) and right-wing individuals who support a two-state solution featuring two internationally recognized Cypriot nations.

But the issue is more complicated than such a simple and sharp classification, especially considering that even a former right-wing and conservative candidate Derviş Eroğlu, who had served as the TRNC's third president between 2010 and 2015 and formerly led the conservative UBP, signed a seven-point joint declaration with his counterpart, Greek President Nicos Anastasiades, on 11 February 2014 based on the notion of a politically equal BFF. Moreover, the

idea of a BFF dates back to the 1977 and 1979 Summit Agreements, which subsequently became the primary UN parameter for a comprehensive settlement when Rauf R. Denktaş led negotiations.<sup>9</sup>

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*Since all candidates are cognizant of the fact that negotiations are a two-player game, leadership changes in the North would, by themselves, be insufficient to break the deadlock.*

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This is one reason why neither left-wing nor right-wing candidates have articulated clear visions for peace negotiations, instead clouding the issue with emphasis on vague terms. Except for the explicit statement of far-right Rebirth Party candidate Erhan Arıklı opposing a BFF,<sup>10</sup> none of the candidates have eliminated the BFF option from potential peace negotiations. And none of the candidates, as seen from their statements below, have built a ground-breaking

election campaign in order to appeal to Turkish Cypriots regarding how they will prepare the negotiation table and reach a comprehensive solution. Since all candidates are cognizant of the fact that negotiations



are a two-player game, leadership changes in the North would, by themselves, be insufficient to break the deadlock. Accordingly, there is also a dire need for change in the South. But waiting for the alignment of the best combination of political influences that would pave the way for a solution is an endless process, as the past decades have shown. Before delving into the reasons of a mentality change, the paper first presents a brief overview of the top candidates' political orientations.

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### MUSTAFA AKINCI

When the incumbent president, 73-year-old Mustafa Akinci, won elections in April 2015, he raised hopes for a solution. Speaking at his victory rally, he promised to focus on a peace settlement and argued, "This country cannot tolerate any more wasted time ... Mr. Anastasiades and I are the same generation ... If we can't solve this now, it will be a tremendous burden on future generations."<sup>11</sup> He did his best to reach a solution, as seen during the Crans Montana process, but his demarche remained inconclusive due to strong objections by Anastasiades.<sup>12</sup> Following his latest failed attempt, Akinci spent three years laboring, unsuccessfully, to resume talks with his Greek Cypriot counterpart. The Turkish Cypriot community strongly criticized his performance after the Crans Montana process, because he was unable to achieve any tangible change, offered compromises by presenting the Greek Cypriot side a territorial adjustment map, failed to resume negotiations, did not strive to represent Turkish Cypriots in international politics and, especially, made statements that damaged his relationship with the Turkish government.<sup>13</sup> However, he notably made progress on several confidence-building measures (CBMs) despite the deadlock in negotiations.<sup>14</sup>

He is still one of the most popular candidates and is expected to survive the first round with his strong support for the BBF envisaged in the UN parameters and stipulated in the Joint Statement on 11 February 2014. As an independent candidate, Akinci believes that alternatives outside the federation will foster the status quo and fasten complete division. His stance on the issue is evident in one of his latest statements: "What is possible in Cyprus is apparent. I see no way

other than the UN parameters. Some friends argue that there can be two sovereign states within the EU or a confederation, suggesting that the prospects for a federal settlement had been exhausted. There is no option like that."<sup>15</sup> His new campaign is shaped around four dimensional policies: "solution-oriented policies", "responding to social issues", "a relationship with Turkey based on mutual-respect" and an "independent and impartial president."<sup>16</sup> If Mustafa Akinci is elected, his priority would most probably be to prepare for the resumption of negotiations – if, of course, his counterpart is also willing to do so. It is worth mentioning that Mustafa Akinci has not provided any details about what will be different this time around or about how he will convince his counterpart to reach a settlement if he is re-elected for a second term.

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### ERSIN TATAR

Ersin Tatar is 60 years old and became prime minister of the TRNC on 22 May 2019 after his National Unity Party (UBP) formed a coalition with the People's Party (HP). Although he did not publicized plans to campaign in the elections,<sup>17</sup> he ultimately decided to do so with the support of his party. News reports circulated, even as he was forming the coalition with the HP, regarding his promise to support the nomination of Kudret Özersay, the former leader of the HP, as a joint candidate.<sup>18</sup>

Ersin Tatar and his right-wing, conservative UBP party are known for supporting a solution based on sovereign equality, preferably in the EU. He strongly opposed the notion that "there are no other alternatives than the federation" and argues for the consideration of a range of solution alternatives, especially those including two sovereign states.<sup>19</sup> He believes the idea of a federal settlement has, since 1977, been exhausted without any potential for resolution, and he placed several conditions on an agreement with Greek Cypriots. These include establishing a temporary special committee on hydrocarbons to observe potential changes in Greek Cypriot mentalities regarding cooperation, and he believes it is possible to initiate a new, predictable, realistic and results-oriented process that would not be open-ended, even if there were to be concrete

progress in the affairs of the committee. In short, he thinks that a solution can only be achieved on the basis of two equal states.<sup>20</sup> Thus, he pledges to endeavor for the increase of the TRNC's status and recognition in international politics.

Ersin Tatar's position reflects the ideal stance many Turkish Cypriots have held for years,<sup>21</sup> but this has been impossible to achieve since the TRNC was founded in 1983. Consequently, his campaign has neither clarified how he would succeed without the support of the international community nor outlined his roadmap for joining the EU. His campaign is shaped around four main themes, reflecting his "new vision for a new future": "the Cyprus problem", "serving as a model president", "actively responding to issues other than the Cyprus problem" and an "open-door policy to the public and rewarding." However, his promises under these themes are ambiguous, as he also points out this issue by saying "more detailed statements about these issues will be made and a detailed election bulletin will be shared with the public" during the campaign period.<sup>22</sup>

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## TUFAN ERHÜRMAN

Tufan Erhürman is 50 years old and, since 2016, has served as the leader of the oldest political party, the leftist Republican Turkish Party (CTP). He previously served as the prime minister of a four-party coalition government between February 2018 and May 2019. As a promising candidate for the election, he favors a settlement based on a politically equal bi-communal and bi-zonal federation. The CTP has been committed to reaching a federal settlement in line with the UN parameters, and it played an active role in the "yes" campaign during the Annan Plan referendum in April 2004. With his academic and legal background, Erhürman amassed experience in Cyprus peace negotiations during his time on the negotiation team of Mehmet Ali Talat, the second president, between 2008 and 2010.

Tufan Erhürman has pledged to work hard inside and outside the country with an expanded team in order to achieve a comprehensive settlement. He argues the president, "who will be the chief negotiator, does not

have the luxury to sit and wait if negotiations are suspended. The president should work continuously to reach a solution, address domestic issues and lead the country outside."<sup>23</sup> He also refers to the points in the UN Secretary-General's reports for a "results-oriented" negotiations process that will not be open-ended.

Stressing the necessity of a presidential leadership in domestic politics that is in harmony with the Council of Ministers, he conveys the need for dedication and perseverance in order to open up the country's economy, sports, culture and arts to the world.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, he argues for the importance of continuous diplomatic relations with Turkey, the EU and the rest of world in almost every international domain. As a relatively young politician, Tufan Erhürman appears energetic, but, like other candidates, his statements revolve around overarching themes rather than delving into more concrete matters. Ironically, he does not clearly emphasize why voters should choose him over Mustafa Akıncı.

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## KUDRET ÖZERSAY

Kudret Özersay, at 47-years old, has been serving as the deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs since February 2018. He ran in the previous presidential election in 2015 as an independent candidate and performed considerably well, receiving 21.2 percent of the vote. With an academic background in international relations and international law, Özersay has presided on peace negotiation teams since 2002 and has worked with almost all presidents, except Mustafa Akıncı. He was also appointed special representative of Derviş Eroğlu, the third president, between 2010 and 2012, and he served as chief negotiator between 2014 and 2015 for the Turkish Cypriot community. His popularity among Turkish Cypriots is growing, particularly with his anti-corruption civil society movement (*Toplanıyoruz* – 'Getting Together') and campaigns to support transparent and accountable politics, which paved the way for the establishment of the People's Party (HP) in 2016. The HP became the third most popular party, receiving 17.8 percent of the vote and gained nine seats in the 2018 parliamentary elections to take part in the four-party coalition government.

However, the HP's withdrawal from the coalition government in May 2019 and the formation of a new government with the UBP prompted significant criticism of Özersay's sincerity about transparency. Stark disputes among the new coalition partners on numerous issues have also significantly damaged his reputation.<sup>25</sup> Özersay, who resigned from party leadership to become an independent candidate, offers a solution model based on cooperation by emphasizing he does not, in principle, oppose a federal settlement but instead the conditions are not yet suitable for such a solution.<sup>26</sup> The idea behind this new vision of the Cyprus problem stems from his vigorous criticism of the prolonged negotiation process over the BFF.

His campaign is shaped around four main themes: "multi-dimensional and proactive foreign policy", "cooperation for a solution", "communal peace" and "new structure in the presidency."<sup>27</sup> In response to the lukewarm stance of Greek Cypriots on the sharing of power and natural resources, Özersay suggests increasing attempts to cooperate bilaterally to achieve progress on several issues, including tourism, energy and trade.<sup>28</sup> Accordingly, these small attempts at cooperation will increase interdependency, leading to a comprehensive settlement between the two sides. However, if the parties cannot effectively coordinate on these issues, then it is unrealistic to focus efforts on the BFF, a model that requires sharing. In short, this idea implicitly refers to a gradual two-state solution. He has pledged to develop this idea by clearly explaining his consistent stance to the international community.

A relatively young candidate, Özersay's vision does not provide details about his roadmap to convince his counterparts to cooperate on these issues, as the Republic of Cyprus does not recognize any existing ministries, institutions or political bodies in the North. This was one of the main reasons why 12 bi-communal technical committees<sup>29</sup> were formed under the remit of the chief negotiator's office on a range of issues, including education, health, gender equality, humanitarian affairs and the environment. Although these committees cannot be considered equivalent to constitutionally formed

political institutions, their work displays the degree of cooperation between the two sides.

## SERDAR DENKTAŞ

Serdar Denktaş is 61 years old and is a senior politician who has served in various political positions since 1990, when he was first elected MP and became the minister of the interior, rural affairs and environment. He most recently served as the minister of finance and the leader of the right-wing Democratic Party (DP) in the four-party coalition between February 2018 and May 2019. Though he was not nominated for the first round of elections in April, he reversed course and launched a campaign as an independent candidate. Apart from his political career, he is popular and respected among Turkish Cypriots due to his father Rauf R. Denktaş, the founding president of the TRNC. He also has first-hand experience in the Cyprus peace negotiations, as he was foreign minister between 2003 and 2007 during the Annan Plan negotiations.

He argues the president should negotiate to pursue another path towards a solution. "If I show up with a new track – the recognition of the TRNC," he said, "It is obvious that we cannot achieve this within five years. But I will try to sell it to Anastasiades, who once proposed but then withdrew his own statement on a decentralized federation that grants less power to a central state but more power to individual states."<sup>30</sup> He also promises not to confine the public to a federal solution. Denktaş would be a game-changer among right-wing candidates due to his public reputation, the failures of Ersin Tatar and Kudret Özersay to handle the pandemic and internal disputes in Tatar's UBP. His candidacy provides a strong alternative for supporters of the UBP, which has been dealing with a slew of internal problems. However, it is not clear from his campaign how he will convince his counterpart for an option Greek Cypriots strongly oppose. As observed among left-wing candidates, none of the right-wing candidates provide any details regarding why voters should choose them over other right-wing candidates.

# THE PROSPECTS FOR PEACE AND THE NEED FOR A MENTALITY CHANGE

The Cyprus problem and the peace negotiations between Greek and Turkish Cypriot community leaders would aptly be described as a never-ending story. As long as the mentality of a “closed-door”, “elite-level” and “nothing is agreed until everything is agreed” format of negotiations prevails in Cyprus, changes in community leaders on both sides will have a limited impact on prospects for peace.

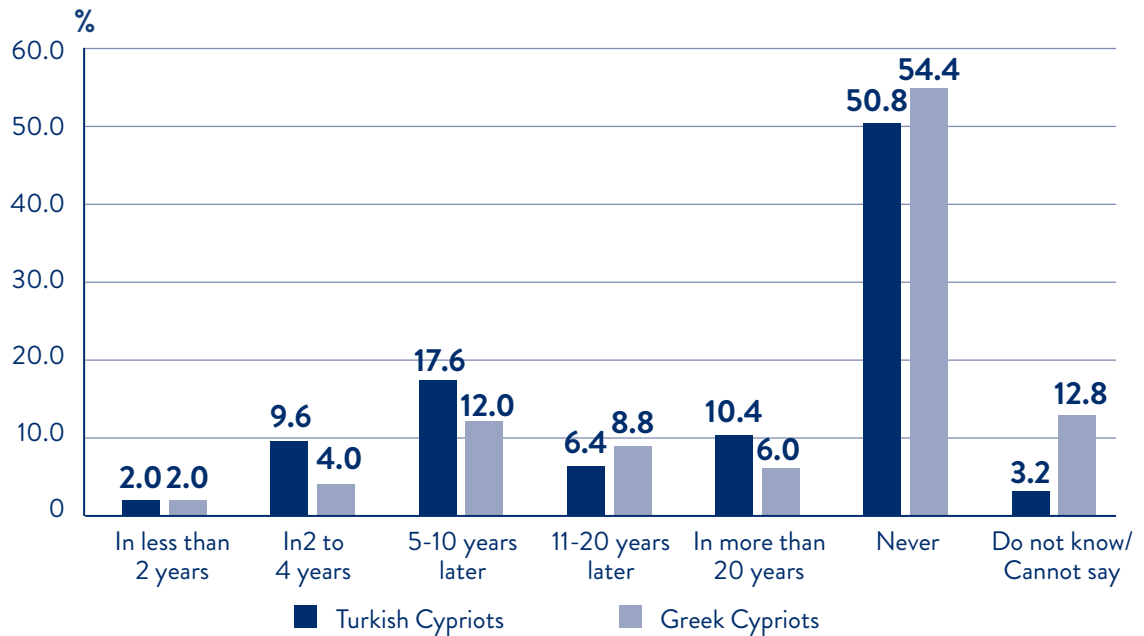
This format has persisted for years, aiming to produce a federal state based on a bi-communal and bi-zonal federation arrangement – a tenet of the 1977 and 1979 Summit Agreements. The problem is not the UN parameters but the community leaders’ extensive and continuous lack of “trust and determination.”<sup>31</sup> As reflected in the latest UN Secretary-General’s report on missions in Cyprus, both parties still need to “reaffirm their commitment and determination to achieve a settlement based on a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation with political equality, as set out in the relevant Security Council resolutions, including paragraph 4 of resolution 716 (1991).”<sup>32</sup> Considering this option does not reflect the positions that the two sides favor, the parties understandably insist on launching negotiations from a highly desired option. It is well-known that Greek and Turkish Cypriots have been at odds, with Greek Cypriots mainly supporting a unitary state and Turkish Cypriots favoring two separate, internationally recognized states. But there remains a need for determination to “seek common ground through mutual accommodation,”<sup>33</sup> as UN Secretary-General António Guterres suggested, in order to reach a solution.

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Within the past two decades, Greek Cypriots rejected the Annan Plan, the most comprehensive plan to date, with a 76 percent majority in April 2004, and the final

**FIGURE 1: TIME WHEN EXPECT CYPRUS PROBLEM WILL BE SOLVED<sup>35</sup>**

*In addition to the pessimism of Cypriot youth, the unwillingness of parties to reach a settlement also triggers a more nationalist discourse in the political structures and media institutions on both sides.*

negotiations in Crans Montana later collapsed in July 2017.<sup>34</sup> These failures have damaged the hopes of all Cypriots for an eventual solution. The figure 1 depicts the expectations of Cypriot youth about when the Cyprus problem will be solved. More than half of all Cypriot youth respondents expressed doubts that it would ever be solved.

In addition to the pessimism of Cypriot youth, the unwillingness of parties to reach a settlement also triggers a more nationalist discourse in the political structures and media institutions on both sides. A growing number of statements in Turkish Cypriot politics and media for the last couple of years about the two-state solution, discus-

sions over the opening of Varosha, robust criticism of the Turkish Cypriot presidential candidates who support BFF, and the tension over offshore resources near Cyprus represent the culmination of such disappointments.

Generations of adults have tried and failed to reunite the island. This might mean it is necessary to adjust the format of negotiations in order to adopt a more inclusive structure, thus cultivating a supportive environment in both communities for a settlement. Leaders from both communities have acted with the assumption that reaching a settlement at the elite level will respond the needs of their communities and will be automatically accepted. However, in order to reach

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a settlement and create a suitable atmosphere, a bottom-up transformation must occur in both communities. Numerous scholarly studies already propose a more inclusive peace process<sup>36</sup> – including one involving women<sup>37</sup> and youth – as well as a gradualist approach,<sup>38</sup> which submits incremental progress over time, and simulations<sup>39</sup> that would be acceptable for both communities. This paper also proposes key actors move beyond traditional and routine attempts in order to expect different end results. Otherwise, one side will continue waiting to see whether the new Turkish Cypriot community leader will trigger changes before the tenure of Greek Cypriot community leader Nicos Anastasiades ends, whether the upcoming Greek Cypriot community leader will be eager to reach a settlement, whether current or future UN Secretaries-General will encourage leaders to meet and whether the interests of relevant parties will be aligned in order to reach a settlement. Achieving sustainable peace requires long-term determination, significant daily efforts and courageous moves by political leadership. The continuous links between elite-level and wider society will ease this process for leaders. As Cypriots often say, if there is will, there is always a way.

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*Since all candidates are cognizant of the fact that negotiations are a two-player game, leadership changes in the North would, by themselves, be insufficient to break the deadlock.*

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er Nicos Anastasiades ends, whether the upcoming Greek Cypriot community leader will be eager to reach a settlement, whether current or future UN Secretaries-General will encourage leaders to meet and whether the interests of relevant parties will be aligned in order to reach a settlement. Achieving sustainable peace requires long-term determination, significant daily efforts and courageous moves by political leadership. The continuous links between elite-level and wider society will ease this process for leaders. As Cypriots often say, if there is will, there is

# CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The presidential election in the North provides a timely discussion for those eager to critically question the prospects for peace in Cyprus. The discussions at the domestic level signal an impasse on politics and the necessity of change. The following points constitute an initial package for parties to contemplate the current situation and potential developments:

- It is apparent from the statements of the candidates, all of whom are male, that none offer a ground-breaking approach to the current status of negotiations. They all reiterate cliché solution options, focused particularly around the BFF and two-state solution with minor differences. None have shared a detailed road map with the public. It seems the candidates believe in the unconditional support of voters, but youth, specifically, have no confidence in the ability of politicians and political parties' abilities to effect change in Cyprus.<sup>40</sup>

- The leadership change in the North alone will not be enough to break the deadlock. Turkish Cypriots have already shown their willingness, in both the Annan and Crans Montana processes, to find

a solution, thus demonstrating the need for change on the Greek Cypriot side. President Nicos Anastasiades has underscored his lack of desire for finding common ground to reach a settlement, and he will likely not be remembered as a leader who compromised for a solution before his tenure ends.

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- The solution to the Cyprus problem has long been dependent on the willingness of community leaders. Prospects for peace seem to rely closely on the alignment of several factors that involve all the relevant actors. To break this pattern, a change in mentality must occur in the process to adopt a more inclusive tone. Otherwise, the parties will continue to offer excuses – the pandemic, election cycles, island-wide tensions – in order to delay negotiations and postpone an outcome to the problem.

- An inclusive peace process that engages women and youth will trigger a bottom-up transformation in both communities and open up the elite-level, closed-door negotiations to contributions from the wider public. As this process requires determination and dedication on a daily basis, creating a constant linkage between elites and the rest of society will increase the public's impact and pressure on the process.
- The main barriers to a solution are mistrust between the two sides and the unwillingness of parties to compromise. In particular, the election of a hardliner candidate may further deteriorate solution attempts and diminish already fragile hopes. This is why the continuous attempts of third parties – primarily the UN – to facilitate the negotiation process are imperative to propel the process forward and encourage leaders to meet. However, community leaders on both sides should keep in their mind these attempts may not be eternal.



## ENDNOTES

- 1 In line with the UN Security Council Resolution 649 (1990), both Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities have participated in negotiations on “an equal footing”, without reference to the political structures on both sides. Thus, UN documents address the two communities and “leaders of the communities” rather than the presidents. See, “UNSC Resolution 649 (1990),” 1990; Also see, Birol A. Yeşilada and Ahmet Sözen, “Negotiating a Resolution to the Cyprus Problem: Is Potential European Union Membership a Blessing or a Curse?,” *International Negotiation* 7, no. 2 (2002): 261–85.
- 2 The Republic of Turkey is the sole country that recognises the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Mustafa Akinci serves as President of the TRNC, and foreign countries and international institutions consider him the communal leader of the Turkish Cypriots. As the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) is internationally recognized as the political institution governing the whole island, all of Cyprus is deemed an EU member state. However, the *acquis communautaire* is suspended in Northern Cyprus pending a political settlement regarding the Cyprus problem (see Protocol no. 10 of the Accession Treaty).
- 3 “Adaylar Başvurdu, Seçim Süreci Resmen Başladı” [Candidates Have Applied, the Election Process Has Officially Started], *Yeni Düzen*, September 4, 2020, <http://www.yeniduzen.com/adaylar-basvurdu-secim-sureci-resmen-basladi-131084h.htm>
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