The conflict in Cyprus and EU impact

Considerations for systems theory in the Cyprus conflict

Taking Stetter and Albert (2004) as the theoretical frame of this introduction, it could be said that the Cyprus conflict went through changes of both intensity (from issue conflict to identity conflict as Greek-Cypriots demanded unification of the island with Greece, *enosis*, in the first half of the 1900s, a goal which later, in 1955, became a call to arms against British colonists of the militant group EOKA), and structure (as the ‘communication’ system within which this conflict was expressed changed from one involving Greek-Cypriot nationalists and British colonists to one involving the various political groups in the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities –as *enosis* progressively proved an ethnocentric goal)¹. In this sense, this paper aims to identify the ways in which both the conflict and the EU’s involvement in it fit the particular theoretical framework used in the EUBORDERCONF project.

In order to understand the recent developments in the conflict, which is where EU involvement has played its most decisive role, it is necessary to begin the historical overview at the point of Cyprus’ independence in 1960. The constitution of 1960, which was agreed between the leaders of the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities (then Archbishop Makarios and Dr Küçük respectively) as well as the governments of Britain, Greece and Turkey who acted as guarantor powers, aimed at negotiating a middle position between the two extreme political goals of *enosis* and *taksim* (the division of the island into a part belonging to Greece and one belonging to Turkey, which was the goal of Turkish-Cypriot nationalists), by establishing a bi-communal state, where Turkish-Cypriots were recognised as a political community with special rights that exceeded their demographic proportion to the Greek-Cypriot community. This left Greek-Cypriot nationalists disappointed and friction between the two communities grew [Loizos, 1988]. On 30th November 1963 Makarios proposed amendments to the constitution that the Turkish-Cypriot members of parliament (MPs) found unacceptable and as a result, they withdrew from the parliament. Violence erupted on 21st December 1963, when a number of Turkish-Cypriots (around 200) were killed by Greek-Cypriots. The attacks were carried out by Greek-Cypriot extremist nationalist and some of the victims were also Greek-Cypriots. The UN intervened, and by the end of the month, the two communities had been

¹ Due to lack of space, I here refer to the history of the conflict in a rather shorthand way –fuller explanations are to be found in the literature review prepared for the EUBORDERCONF series (Demetriou, 2004).
physically separated—the period was thenceforth designated in Turkish as *kandı Noel* (bloody Christmas). The Turkish-Cypriots were driven into enclaves and the Green Line consolidated. Turkish-Cypriots continued to live in the enclaves intermittently until 1974 (violence subsided between 1964 and 1967, at which point there was another crisis in the conflict, lasting until 1968). This was one of the most turbulent periods in the conflict, territorially and politically the Greek-Cypriot community dominated the Turkish-Cypriot one. It could be said that what the 1960 constitution did in effect was to establish perceived ‘ethnic’ identity as the major determinant of civic and political practice—it is in this sense that the conflicts that erupted in this period can be characterised as spin-offs of this overriding ‘identity conflict’.

After the withdrawal of Turkish-Cypriot representatives from the parliament and other state institutions, the Republic of Cyprus continued to function as a legal entity much in the same manner it did before, but the administration of Turkish-Cypriot affairs was now conducted by the Turkish-Cypriot authorities in the enclaves. In 1974, following a nationalist coup instigated by the junta regime in Greece at the time, which called for unification of the island with Greece and a change of the Greek-Cypriot leadership, the Turkish military intervened and took control of the northern part of the island. The abundance of analyses of these events (Demetriou, 2004) make it clear that in order to properly appreciate the conjectures that brought about the events of 1974, a systems theoretical approach needs to be not only diachronic, but to refocus the understanding of ‘system’ beyond the local context to the international one as well as beyond the official level to the level of internal micro-politics—in other words, the refocusing needs to be done in both directions. It is this double focus that I believe can explain the failure of the leaderships of the two communities to solve the conflict up to now.

Following successive failures to reach a commonly agreed solution to the problem (high-level agreements having been signed in 1977 and 1979), the Turkish-Cypriot authorities in northern Cyprus declared the region the ‘Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus’ (TRNC) in 1983. This unilateral declaration of independence has failed to achieve international recognition and as a result the TRNC has been economically dependent on Turkey (which has also kept a military force of about 40000 troops there). The Greek-Cypriot authorities of the Republic of Cyprus (in control of the southern part of the island) have refused to recognise this as a state and have been referring to it as the part of Cyprus ‘occupied by the Turkish military’, claiming that the Republic (since 1974 staffed almost exclusively by Greek-Cypriots) legally represents the whole of the island. It can in this sense be said that at this point the
conflict on the official level was at once one of both issue and identity since the recognition of the statehood of the TRNC was the overriding concern of both sides (Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot).

Thus, the Greek- and Turkish-Cypriot leaderships have been engaged in bi-communal negotiations aiming to break the deadlock since the 1960s, primarily under the auspices of the United Nations, but have failed to reach a comprehensive agreement thus far. In recent years, two comprehensive plans for solution to the problem have been proposed by the UN, one in 1992, which was termed the ‘Gali set of Ideas’ after the then Secretary General Butros Butros Gali, and one in 2002, which has come to be known as ‘the Annan Plan’ after the current Secretary General Kofi Annan. This is still the main reference document used in the negotiations, with the latest fourth version having been chosen as the proposal to be put to separate and simultaneous referenda, which are to be carried out in the north and south of Cyprus on 24th April 2004. It is in this period, i.e. since the 1990s, that the EU can be said to have become an ‘actor’ in the conflict, in the sense that the political rhetoric on the two sides of the island has often used the EU factor as an explanation of its political practice and decisions. The next section will look at the historical background of the relations between Cyprus and the EU. An overview of its presentation in the literature will then be undertaken, before the impact of the EU on the conflict can be assessed in terms of the theoretical framework of the project.

Cyprus –EU relations

The relations between Europe and Cyprus date since the early 1970s. An Association Agreement between the government of the Republic of Cyprus and the EEC was concluded in 1972 (at the same time as Britain was preparing for its own membership [Ayres, 1996 :39]) and entered into force on 1st July 1973. The agreement dealt almost exclusively with issues of trade and was complemented by a protocol concluded in 1987, providing the framework for EU-Cyprus relations [Gaudissart, 1996: 11-12]. Customs Union was also agreed and due for completion in 1977, but was then extended first to 1987 and with the commencement of accession negotiations became part of the accession process. This first phase of Cyprus –EU relations can safely be said to have had no substantive impact on the conflict, apart from perhaps the fact that they established a channel of communication between Europe and the Republic of Cyprus, which effectively meant the Greek-Cypriot leadership (thus an indirect impact, on the governmental level, but yet not enabling).
In fact, when the accession of Cyprus to the European Union began being widely discussed on the island, the prospect at first enabled the articulation of two oppositional discourses by the leaderships on the two sides. On the Greek-Cypriot side, it was seen as a ‘catalyst’ for the solution of the conflict, that would ensure that the new status of Cyprus as EU member would override the ethnic split. For the Turkish-Cypriot leadership, the accession application was simply ‘illegal’ because it overwrites the Cypriot constitution of 1960 that requires both communities on the island to agree before the state can join any other state. In this second view, though, union with Europe (of what is seen as ‘the southern Greek-Cypriot part of Cyprus’) would again mean a ‘solution’ because it would prompt the union of the north / TRNC with Turkey, after which point there would be no ‘Cypriot’ problem to solve. This would suggest that this initial impact of the EU on the conflict was if anything disabling because it provided an idiom through which ‘old scripts’ could be articulated, aggravating the conflict.

Whatever the supporting or discrediting arguments relating to these two conceptual positions, practice has shown that the de facto division of Cyprus and the de jure unity of it can be compatible with EU membership. The Republic of Cyprus argued that since the EU is not a state there is no issue of contravening the 1960 constitution. It thus applied for EEC membership in 1990 and in the same year the office of the European Delegation in Nicosia was opened. Since 1991, a Joint Parliamentary Committee of parliamentarians (MEPs) and Cypriot parliamentarians has been meeting twice a year. Discussions regarding Cyprus’ suitability for membership began in 1993, after the Commission decided to accept the Republic’s application as one made on behalf of the island. This suitability for membership (now of the EU) was decided in 1995 and negotiations began in 1998. They were concluded in December 2002 and the Accession Treaty signed in April 2003, with the Accession formally coming into effect as of May 2004. This period is the most crucial in Cyprus-EU relations and for this reason will be analysed further in the next sections of the paper –suffice it to say here that the strengthening of ties between the various EU and related institutions and the Republic of Cyprus in effect made the EU’s impact on the conflict on the governmental level more direct as the possible effects began to be articulated more and more clearly both in Cyprus and in the EU.

Most recently, it is worth noting that the parliamentary elections that took place on 14th December 2003 in northern Cyprus were in fact fought on the basis of EU accession, with the pro-EU and pro-solution alliance securing just over 50% OF THE total votes. Following these elections, since all of the parties involved (i.e. the
Republic of Cyprus government, the new ‘TRNC’ premier, the governments of Greece and Turkey, and various EU officials) have indicated their willingness to work towards reaching a solution to the conflict before Cyprus’ accession in May (despite the fact that international actors viewed these elections as ‘illegal’, they all considered them important, and thus there was wide coverage of them by both Greek-Cypriot and international media). In February 2004, the leaderships of the two sides agreed to a new decisive round of negotiations, which would deliver a final version of the solution plan to be put to referenda on April 24th. The choice of this date is all but accidental, since it is Cyprus’ date of EU accession, May 1st 2004, which has for a long time now been seen as the most crucial deadline for solving the conflict (in a discourse that maintains ‘there are always other deadlines’ but that this is the most important). It can thus be seen that by now the solution of the conflict is not simply related to EU impact, but indeed hinges on it. This is why the pathways of EU involvement in the conflict have by now come to involve all four possibilities, to be both direct and indirect, and in the direction of both leadership and civil society. The next section will discuss the ways in which this impact is viewed in the literature on the conflict, before particular examples are discussed.

**Overview of the literature**

The vast majority of social scientific works on Cyprus centre on the island’s political problem. Studies of the EU and its impact on the Cyprus conflict are significantly less than studies of the conflict per se. Yet interest in this topic has been steadily rising over the last 15 years. It is indeed a correct assessment that the EU has played a minor role in the search for a solution to the Cyprus conflict in comparison with the UN and Britain, and even the US [Pace, 2004: 11]. Given that the crucial turning points in the conflict thus far (1955, 1960, 1963-4, 1967-8, 1974) took place when the EEC / EC has not yet constituted itself as a political actor on the international stage aspiring to affect political processes in third countries, this is not surprising. Yet the impact of the ‘EU’ on the Cyprus conflict was evident as soon as Cyprus’ prospects of membership began to materialise in 1990.

Yet there are studies of involvement of other actors such as the UN in the conflict that provide material for reflection on the EU’s possible impact on it [James, 2002; Mirbagheri, 1998]. These studies evidence on the one hand the fact that the major brokers of negotiations are already well-established and trusted by the conservative leaderships of both sides considerably more than the EU. On the other hand, they provide convincing analyses of such policies, which could be taken as indicative of
more lucrative paths of influence available to the EU. The same would hold for US policies, as analysed by Nicolet [2001]. In this respect, Richmond noted that “while the EU may not be a catalyst for a solution in an immediate sense, its presence in the region is now indispensable” [2001]. This observation seems to still hold, and combined with his proposal of steps to be taken towards a solution, provides valuable insights for the attempt to determine future EU policies on Cyprus [Richmond, 1999].

In fact, Richmond’s analysis above also represents part of what might perhaps be the most sustained theorisation of the EU’s impact on the conflict. This was undertaken by the various contributions to the journal “Cyprus Review” through the articles published there between 1990 and the present. These articles trace the major analytical trends on the issue in the literature on Cyprus. The most important of these trends is the relative emphasis in analyses of the economic and political impacts. It is thus of great significance that until the late 1990s, it was the economic effects of membership that were mostly discussed, with impact on the political problem being theorised via the economic analysis, and in some cases not at all. After 1998, which was also the year of the beginning of the accession negotiations, the economics of accession retreated to the background of analyses, and the politics was fore grounded.

In an article written in 1990, Nicolaides has argued that Cyprus’ membership of the (then) EC, entails benefits as well as disadvantages, in both the economic and the political spheres [1990]. Yet, he concludes that while the major disadvantage of such membership “is the danger of being marginalised by a loss of economic resources and policy autonomy”, it is “ironically … the loss of discretion in policy-making that makes membership politically attractive because it will eliminate a major source of tension between the Greek and Turkish communities” [ibid: 59]. This, because delegating policy decisions to the EC would diminish the suspicions that would possibly accompany one community’s consideration of policy suggestions of the other. Revisiting his economic argument in 1999, Nicolaides argues that in view of the EU’s enlargement plans at that point, analytical emphasis should in fact be placed on the ways in which the EU itself would need to reform its economic policies in the process of its enlargement. “The challenge of the enlargement”, he thus concludes, “is not just how to accommodate new members; rather, it is how to improve the policy efficiency and financial effectiveness of a Union that will soon become European in a geographic sense.” [1999: 107].

In 1996, Ayres made a similar point when noting that “the economic argument is not the core element in the decision by the government of Cyprus to seek full membership of the EU. The motivation is mainly political, that is, it relates to the Cyprus problem.
Nevertheless, the economic arguments remain important and cannot be ignored and it is also clear that they link to the political.” [1996: 57]. He thus argues that in economic terms, membership will mean that Cyprus will need to re-focus its external trade towards the EU, that certain sectors would benefit from trade liberalisation, that tourism, the most lucrative sector in Cyprus, might in fact lose out in the competition with other European regions, that the offshore and related sectors of the economy will undergo radical changes, and that foreign investment into Cyprus would increase [ibid: 59-60]. Yet, he maintains that a prospective solution to the Cyprus problem will prove the most beneficial result of EU membership, even though this will mean that re-structuring of the northern Cypriot economy will have to be undertaken before this is achieved [ibid: 60].

By comparison, in 1994, Papanoeophytou’s major concern seems to be the effects of accession to the EU on the solution of the political problem by way of the economic effects that this accession would have [1994]. Therefore, he sees in the European Court of Justice’s decision of the same year to prohibit imports from the northern part of the island into the EU as an indicator of what a future of EU membership holds for Cyprus [ibid:90]. He therefore concludes that “an entry to the EU will strengthen the sovereignty, independence and unity of the country by diminishing motives to partition Cyprus” [ibid: 91].

Peristianis’ focus on the EU’s impact on the conflict focuses almost exclusively on the political implications of Cyprus’ membership with reference to the form of government that would pertain in a post-solution Cyprus within the EU. He argues that while “the Turkish-Cypriots” (presumably referring to the official position of the Denktaş leadership) “treasure highly the military protection afforded to them by Turkey” [1998: 39], they “do not seem to realize…that in the post Cold-War era, ‘security has acquired a broader meaning’.” [ibid: 40]. For this reason, he then argues that “the Turkish-Cypriot community will need all the assistance it can get to improve its economic position, to further democratization and build a stronger civil society” [ibid]. In short, what he sees as one of the EU’s major impact on the conflict is the strengthening of the Turkish-Cypriot civil society that will accompany the economic benefits that EU membership will entail. As for the “Greek-Cypriots”, he observes that although they “seem to be some of the strongest supporters of joining the European Union… they have pinned high hopes on joining the Union as a means of

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2 It should be noted here that the concept of ‘Turkish-Cypriots’ for many Greek-Cypriot as well as international observers, only became divorced from the concept of the ‘Turkish-Cypriot leadership’ after the massive opposition demonstrations in the north that began in 2000.
resolving the political problem... [and] seem to believe that the resolution of the
Cyprus problem will somehow be a magical outcome of accession into the European
Union” [ibid]. He then argues, using the example of Ireland, that it is “the
enhancement of [mutual understanding and tolerance], which will be one of the
greater benefits that will accrue to Cyprus, as a result of European Union accession”
[ibid]. He thus sees in Cyprus’ EU membership the possibility of cultivating a
common Cypriot European civic identity that will overcome the antagonistic ‘Greek’
and ‘Turkish’ nationalisms of current Cypriot communal identities [ibid: 41].
In the same issue, Mavratsas presents largely similar arguments, but places more
emphasis on the modernisation of state institutions that will follow EU accession. He
focuses his analysis on Greek-Cypriot society and interestingly notes that “[t]here is a
danger...that Greek-Cypriots have given up on insisting upon the reunification of
the island and are willing to ‘sell’ the northern part of the island for the price of entering
the European Union – a development which will certainly benefit them both
economically and in the narrow political sense that the EU will provide for their
security in an already divided island” [1998: 71]. He further argues that Cyprus has a
“‘European deficit’...directly related to the weakness of civil society and the
dominance of nationalist ideology” [ibid: 73]. On this basis, what he sees as the EU’s
major impact on the conflict is the strengthening of this civil society in such a way as
to overcome the ‘overpoliticisation’ of Greek-Cypriot society. He concludes that the
linking of the solution of the Cyprus problem to the EU without the necessary social
changes, cannot positively contribute to the prospects of a solution. “The situation
would be entirely different”, he goes on to argue, “if the Greek-Cypriot emphasis
upon the earliest possible entry into the EU, independently of the solution of the
Cyprus problem, was not motivated by nationalist axioms; and, perhaps more
importantly, is the stress on Europe coexisted with a sincere and systematic attempt at
building bridges of communication with the Turkish Cypriots. The latter is absolutely
essential if a viable settlement on Cyprus is ever to be achieved – and if Cyprus is to
embark on a substantial process of modernization and Europeanization.” [ibid: 73-74].
Thus in short, it is not in the role of the EU as an actor that he sees the greatest
prospects of impacting on the problem, but in the indirect effects on the Greek-
Cypriot society that EU membership will entail.
An altogether different kind of ‘indirect’ EU approach to influencing the conflict on
Cyprus was outlined by Hutchence and Georgiades in 1999. In their view, the positive
influence that the EU can provide in this matter is by maintaining friendly ties with
Turkey and encouraging its democratization. They argue that attempts “to broker a
resolution of the conflict … as part of a grand ‘political bargain’ has not been successful up to this point because of the overriding strategic considerations over Cyprus” [1999: 94]. However, they do seem to concur with Peristianis and Mavratsas that “[i]t is only under the conditions of democratic peace and stability that the problem of Cyprus could be resolved” [ibid: 95] and that the EU can provide this conditions. The difference between the two approaches seems to be the emphasis on Turkey rather than the Greek-Cypriot side, as the party that most needs to conform to these conditions.

Therefore, in terms of the theoretical framework, the literature seems to suggest that the following pathways of EU involvement in the Cyprus conflict can be observed in the following ways:

**Direct Impact – Political leadership direction (compulsory impact)**

The EU’s impact on the conflict has been perceived as mostly being direct. Most analyses have concentrated on the EU’s approach to Turkey’s application for membership as examples of a ‘carrot and stick’ approach towards the Turkish leadership, whereby the consideration of this application was viewed as directly connected to Turkey’s altitude towards Cyprus [Ayres, 1996; Hutchence and Georgiades, 1999; Richmond, 1999]. The same approach was held to be pursued regarding the EU’s approach towards the Turkish-Cypriot political leadership [Papanoeytou, 1994; Mendelson, 2001; Stephen 1997]. Assessments on this approach differed, some arguing for a positive effect on the prospects of solution [Papanoeytou, 1994; Theophanous, 2000], others seeing it as a negative one [Mendelson, 2001; Stephen, 1997], while other still made predictions about both possibilities [Richmond, 1999].

**Direct Impact – Societal direction (connective impact)**

Although this pathway has not yet been fully analysed in the literature, there are suggestions that the EU has and should pursue this approach in the future [Nicolaides, 19990; Mavratsas, 1998]. The analysis of this pathway in the case of other actors, however, have highlighted some of the possible pitfalls of such an approach [Constantinou and Papadakis, 2001].

**Indirect Impact – Political leadership direction (enabling impact)**

Considering that this approach describes the process by which the EU would be able to enable leaderships to legitimate the change in their traditional policies with respect to the conflict in question, it is expected that in situation such as Cyprus, where radical revisions policies have not yet been undertaken by the political leaderships and the slight changes that have so far been undertaken have not been theorised, this
impact would form part of analyses that take critical stands on the policies in place at the time of writing. In the case of Cyprus, such criticism has mostly been focussed on Turkish policies, with arguments resting on the idea that the possibility of EU membership would enable the leadership in Turkish to legitimate its consent to an agreement on Cyprus that would otherwise be seen as ‘selling Cyprus’ [Hutchence and Georgiades, 1999]. Alternatives to this approach focus on the Turkish-Cypriot leadership, arguing that EU membership of a re-united Cyprus would enable it to legitimate its partial abandoning of the policy that places emphasis on the guarantee of security that the Turkish army currently provides [Theophanous, 1995]. Critical stances of Greek-Cypriot policies have been more difficult to come by – in such analyses, the impact has tended to be located more widely at the societal level, as outlined below.

*Indirect Impact – Societal direction (constructive impact)*

In this respect, it has been argued that the most substantial way in which the EU will impact on the conflict will be through fostering (by the simple fact of Cyprus being a member) a more pluralistic, democratic, and tolerant society. This will entail, the argument goes, the broadening of civil society, which in itself will be conducive to bringing about the solution of the Cyprus problem [Peristianis, 1998]. The disengagement of Greek-Cypriot politics from traditional party clientalistic structures has also been identified as one of the ways in which this process can occur [Mavratsas, 1998]. Other analyses have pointed to the possibility that the expansion of civil society will also enable the formation of interest groups that will be able to form trans-cultural links on the island and trans-national ones outside it, within the context of the European Union and beyond [Agathangelou, 1997]. Yet other analysts, drawing on the effects of prospective membership thus far on Cypriot society, have argued that some hierarchical structures and the oppression that attends them within supranational states can increase with the change in economic and immigration patterns that closer ties with the EU entail [Vassiliadou, 2002].

*Field observations*

One of the most visible peculiarities of the Cyprus case in its relation to the EU is the apparent widespread acceptance of EU accession by the Cypriot ‘public opinion’. Since there has not been a referendum to actually test this in any concrete way thus far, the major indications of this are

a) public opinion polls carried out from time to time (especially in the south), which have never indicated any significant percentages of ‘Euro-scepticism’; this is
also the case in the north where indicators of support for EU accession are close to
90% (çomar)

b) the absence of any campaigning against accession from any organised
group in Cyprus, apart from the authorities and closely related ‘N’GOs in the northern
part of the island –even in that case, the main line of argument is not that Cyprus
should not accede to the EU, but that it should do so as two separate states and/or
when Turkey joins also.

It had to be noted here that while the Republic of Cyprus constitution does not require
a referendum to approve Cyprus’ accession to the EU, the question that people in
Cyprus will be asked to answer in the re-unification referendum on 24th April 2004
does include EU accession as part of the new state of affairs that will ensue after the
acceptance of the solution plan. The linking of EU membership to the solution of the
Cyprus problem in the referendum has been discussed for a few months now, and
some Greek-Cypriot journalists have pointed out the paradox that ‘whereas until now
we have been seeking accession because it would bring about a solution, we are now
asked to accept any kind of solution for the sake of accession’. This discourse has not
yet become widely articulated, but it does, I think, point to possible arguments against
the EU that could surface in the coming weeks.

It is interesting to compare this to the unflinching support for EU membership in the
northern part of the island, where accession after a solution was not only never part of
the leadership discourse, but was the major issue in the articulation of an alternative
political discourse, which has been gaining force in the last couple of years,
culminating in the anti-establishment demonstrations of 2003. The background of this
is, I think, important to examine.

As mentioned above, the increasing proximity of the Republic of Cyprus to the EU
following its application for accession, has been viewed by the leadership in the north
with increasing suspicion. Up to 2003, the official rhetoric in north was that ‘the
closer the south gets to Europe the closer the TRNC will get to Turkey’. In fact, the
Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus has signed a series of agreements with the
Turkish government mostly focussed on economic cooperation. As a result, the
economy of northern Cyprus became ever more dependent on Turkey, which meant
that the crises that hit the Turkish economy had devastating effects in the north. One
of these crises caused the closure of a number of banks in 2000 and led many people
who had lost their life savings overnight to storm the Turkish Cypriot parliament in
July of that year. As the economic conditions grew worse, so did dissatisfaction with
the local regime’s and Turkey’s policies. The migration of Turkish-Cypriots out of the
island in search of employment opportunities was highlighted as a major issue of concern and the repressive measures of the government against the opposition led credence to accusations that it is an oppressive regime, which remains in power through manipulation of votes, and which does not represent Turkish-Cypriot interests or the Turkish-Cypriot people.

At this point, the European Union became even more important as a possible way out of the Turkish Cypriot economic and political predicament. Yet it was a solution the benefits of which could only be reaped by alliance to Greek-Cypriot positions—as the leadership refused this on a high political level, state politics entered the personal sphere. Turkish-Cypriot applications for Republic of Cyprus passports began to rise, some Turkish-Cypriots crossed the border in search of work in the south, and many more left northern Cyprus for the UK, the US, and Australia. More economic crises followed, and opposition rhetoric called for EU membership with the south even more frequently.

The culmination of this, were the demonstrations held in the north of the island between December 2002 and February 2003 calling primarily for çözüm ve AB (solution and EU). The high-level talks to achieve the first failed in late February and the Republic of Cyprus signed an Accession Treaty in April that suspended application of the Acquis in the areas ‘not controlled by the government of the Republic’. The TRNC cabinet of ministers decided to allow free movement (albeit with restrictions) north and south of the dividing line one week later—according to ‘popular belief’ after Turkish government insistence to do so and fearing the repercussions of disappointing the 70000 demonstrators (about half the area’s population).

This development in the Cyprus problem, the most significant I think since the war of 1974, has had little visible repercussions on high-level politics. But it has meant that the citizenship of Turkish-Cypriots of the Republic of Cyprus is being taken much more seriously by governments and politicians on both sides of the island. Hardly a political statement is now made in the south that does not mention, in one way or another, Turkish-Cypriots—their ‘otherness’ confirmed in its very recognition.

So in this sense, the EU has indeed had a catalytic effect on the Cyprus conflict. But I do want to argue that this was due mainly to the way in which the ‘EU’ was perceived and the actions that those perceptions sparked (in this particular case the demonstrations) rather than any concerted effort by European institutions. Furthermore, I want to argue that if one is to take the impact of the concept of the
‘EU’ on the conflict seriously, then a series of other concepts need to be examined alongside this as well.

A good example of this is the very word ‘border’. In Cyprus the dividing line that runs east to west of the island is called the Green Line (mythology has it after a British general’s green pen and associations with the Israeli/Palestinian case are rarely made). Its most official status is a ceasefire line in a country officially still at war. It is at places marked at each boundary with walls, at others with barbed wire, and points not at all. Some of the fields lying in it are being cultivated under UN supervision, some are mine-filled. The markings of the line have at different points carried different messages –in 1996 following the killings of two Greek Cypriot protestors against the ‘occupation’ of ‘their’ land by Turkish nationalists their portraits and death scenes were plastered on the Greek-Cypriot checkpoint of the most frequently used crossing way between north and south (in fact, in terms of governmental support, crossing the Green Line has always been an ambiguous act). Atatürk’s sayings about blood-soaked lands have adorned walls in the north for many years. More recently, the highway that links the two sides of Nicosia (currently the only crossing point open to cars in the capital) seems to have been aesthetically prepared especially for the crossing Greek-Cypriots before it opened. The reminder of ‘how happy it is to say I am a Turk’ welcomes them to the north, whereas on the other side, Turkish-Cypriots crossing to the south leave their ‘country’ with the reminder that ‘peace at home (is) peace in the world’.

For the TC police, the dividing line is a state border between the TRNC and the GKRK (Greek part of south Cyprus). For this reason, they ask to see passports, which to them are ‘Greek Cypriot passports’, but which they do not stamp. To the GC police men and women on the other side, the line is not officially a border –but it is a ‘gate’ to the ‘occupied part’ on which Republic of Cyprus authorities have no control and as such, enforcement of the law starts with them. Their mandate is to check for illegal actions, which includes drug trafficking and illegal immigration (defined as the entry of non-Cypriots into Cyprus from ‘illegal ports’ in the north). Smuggling is checked for by customs officers and is understood to be the importation of goods such as tobacco and alcohol from ‘illegal ports’. What has effectively occurred after April then is that the ‘opening of the gates’ has undermined the border as a communication barrier (physical and tele-) but has heightened its status as a border (by which I mean here a closely surveilled separation zone).
‘Europe’ is another concept of differential meanings in Cyprus. The association with modernity, progress and westernisation is prominent on both parts of the island and the uncertainty about the extent to which a stereotypical ‘Cypriot-ness’ would fit this concept of ‘Europe’ is well entrenched in a range of discourses –from the ironical names of media enterprises in the north (Avrupa turned Afrika) and Greek-Cypriot comedy series in the south to celebratory statements about Cyprus becoming part of ‘the large European family’ and well-attended seminars on various aspects of ‘Cyprus and the EU’ that focus on what Cyprus ‘needs to do’ to achieve ‘European standards’ (in NGO infrastructure, human resource management, and of course, conflict regulation).

Yet despite some major changes in legislation in order to comply with the Acquis (in terms of human rights for example, laws relating to homosexuality and Turkish-Cypriots) integration with ‘Europe’ has not meant any major changes in daily life so far. EU membership has never been advertised as a possible source of ‘progress’ in the south, apart from the domain of high culture. Instead, what was always hoped the EU could ‘bring’ was a solution to the Cyprus problem. The EU was thus seen in the south primarily in symbolic terms –a new-found family that Cyprus has always really, had affinities with.

Discourses in the north tend to be rather more pragmatic focussing on the ills that EU accession will remedy: bettering the economy, combating unemployment and stopping emigration. In this discourse, these will be enabled by ‘opening the country to the world’. Europe is thus seen as a way out of the isolation that Greek-Cypriots, Turkey and their own leadership have in turn led Turkish-Cypriots into. For example, the phrase ‘Avrupa var şimdi’ (there is Europe now) is used to criticise the lack of justice and democracy that Turkish-Cypriots experience both north and south of the dividing line –with the coming of Europe old practices of discrimination and marginalisation will cease, in fact are already ceasing. The presence of Europe can in this sense be conceptualised as an answer to both Greek-Cypriot and Turkish domination.

The question of how ‘Europe’ is thus conceptualised is also related to how the ‘solution’, ‘conflict’ and ‘peace’ are thought about by various groups in Cyprus.

In other words, what I have so far tried to show is that the discursive construction of the Cyprus conflict varies considerably across time and between different actors, that it can de-stabilise what one means by ‘border’ and by ‘Europe’ as well as how one conceptualises its management. In the next section, I will try to square these problems with the project’s theoretical framework.
**Structural characteristics of the conflict**

In terms of the systems theory employed in the project, Cyprus would most probably be intuitively classified by most observers as a power conflict – talk about the conflict dominates most of ‘societal communication’ and its securitisation can hardly be questioned given the high degree of militarisation of the island. However, in the Cyprus case, the fact that so many different actors are involved in conflict and conflict-resolution processes means that all different stages can co-exist, each one having the potential to unfold in specific instances. For example, politicians (especially in the south) have hailed of the response of Greek- and Turkish-Cypriots to crossing the border as a ‘surprising’ move that proves that the two peoples can leave together. I will leave aside the question of what motivates these crossings, to point out that even this very simplistic interpretation can be seen as confirmation of what Cypriots informants, professing to be non-politicians and to speak for the ‘average Cypriot’ have long since been telling anthropologists, social scientists, journalists and tourists: that the Cyprus problem is not a problem of the people, but one of the politicians (in exactly what way and indeed whether they mean this can be the focus of a different paper). Therefore, how exactly this conflict is a ‘social’ one as opposed to a ‘political’ one (since it is this very opposition that this discourse sets up) needs to be clarified.

This is important because ‘conflict episodes’ can be observed on a daily basis, between individuals as well as groups in bi-communal or mono-communal settings and on issues that can be directly linked to the politics of the Cyprus problem or not. The same goes for issue conflicts where based on the example of water versus the nature of political community, one could ask whether conflictual points in high-level discussions could be said to belong to different stages of conflict (e.g. land versus the political structure of a post-solution Cyprus). Identity conflicts abound in Cyprus – any statement coming from Rauf Denktash (the long-time leader of the Turkish-Cypriot community) is bound to be rejected by all Greek-Cypriot political groups and a good number of Turkish-Cypriot ones too, regardless of the content. Nationalists on both sides are prone to consider analyses by members of the ‘other’ community as determined by this membership. Yet it is interesting that for non-nationalists (of various persuasions) the ‘others’ are usually members of one’s own community. Finally, the extent to which the Cypriot is a power conflict can also be questioned since despite the heavy militarization and the ever-present threat of violence, violent
episodes have been rare over the last 29 years (and, if the last year is anything to go by, not just because the two sides have been divided).

Therefore, I would propose that interactions described as conflictual are contextually analysed and that conflict levels are not only viewed in terms of escalation but also recession. Furthermore, I would also propose that ‘conflicts’ are analysed as social conditions that foster specific kinds of conflictual interactions at different conflict levels, within and between societies. This, I believe, will broaden the possibilities of how the project relates the public to the governmental (and inter-governmental) level, policy-making to social change, psychological to social analysis, and the EU to local actors.

EU pathways

The approach the EU takes in relation to Cyprus combines most of the pathways identified in the project. The carrot and stick approach has been used most obviously towards the Turkish political leadership, as for example in different summits where the Turkish candidacy was discussed – its most spectacular example was the statement of the current Turkish foreign minister that indeed, if Cyprus enters the EU divided, Turkey will be considered an ‘invader of an EU state’. Although this statement merely reiterated a European point of view, the fact that this view was presented as a legitimate stand caused great concern in Turkish political circles – but was hailed by many Turkish-Cypriots as a recognition ‘at last’ that Turkish troops are ‘invasion troops’ (a discourse that has only recently, in fact, become acceptable in the north).

The pathway of policy legitimacy has also been used, to address a number of questions. As the theory predicts, in these cases problems are often addressed using EU-language – an example would be the argument the Greek-Cypriot leadership uses to oppose exports of products directly from northern Cyprus by saying that it is against EU regulations to do so, and were they to allow it, the EU would impose sanctions. This is, I think, actually a development of the embargo argument that claims that it is not the Greek-Cypriot side to blame for the trade embargo on northern Cyprus, but the European Court, which decided that import of products made in the TRNC is illegal.

As the theory paper mentions, the ‘New Alleys’ path has also been used through the financing of NGOs for bi-communal activities – the work and effectiveness of which has been the subject matter of many papers and could provide discussion points for many more.
It seems to me that the carrot and stick approach has not been so pronounced at the wider societal level, but has reached it via politicians’ arguments – there was an abundance of statements in the media about what would befall Cyprus should the government not be ‘seen’ to be pushing for a solution at the Copenhagen Summit in 2002. Yet in recent discussions about the referendum in the south, many politicians (among them the leader of the communist party AKEL, which is thought will play the most decisive role in the outcome of the vote) have called for politicians and civil society groups to steer the discussion away from ‘the language of threats’ – whether possible sanctions from the EU that might follow a ‘NO’ vote from Greek-Cypriots in the referendum will be used as an argument by ‘YES’ supporters is yet to be seen.

Finally, as regards the ‘change of scripts’ it could be said that EU involvement has played the least obvious role in this. Yet, the most fundamental change of scripts took place last year, where through the demonstrations in support of EU accession, Turkish-Cypriot oppositionists became visible to Greek-Cypriots and their political objectives were seen to largely coincide with much of Greek-Cypriot hegemonic political rhetoric (that Greek- and Turkish- Cypriots should live together in a re-united Cyprus), as well as through the opening of the border, which enabled the large majority of both communities to gain a greater understanding of ‘the other side’.

**Conclusion**

Overall, it seems that while the EEC / EC / EU has played no role in the conflict up to 1972, its impact on it after this date has been steadily increasing. This increase has furthermore occurred alongside the continuing involvement of other ‘external’ actors in the conflict (Greece, Turkey, Britain, US, UN). In fact, it can be argued that the relationship between these various types of involvement has at points been complimentary, at others substitutional and yet at others confrontational. It can also be said that as Cyprus’ membership in the EU became more imminent, i.e. after 1998, the involvement of these other actors has tended to be structured around the dynamics of this evolving relationship. Thus Greece’s and Britain’s involvement became more and more subsumed under their identity as EU member states, while Turkey’s involvement has been increasingly tied to its identity as a state aspiring to EU membership. The involvement of the UN and the US on the other hand, has been characterised in recent years by an increasing willingness to act in concert with EU involvement in Cyprus.

One example that is of paramount importance to consider in the EU’s impact on the conflict is the presence of EU observers in the last round of high-level negotiations.
that took place in Lucerne last month. Proper analysis of this involvement can, I think, only be undertaken once the situation becomes clearer –i.e. once political rhetoric on both sides of the island, but especially in the south, is solidified with respect to the referendum. This is expected to happen in the next few weeks. However, what can be said now is that the EU as an actor seems to be officially at least considered more important for the Greek-Cypriots than Turkish-Cypriots. This is obvious from the fact that it was the Greek-Cypriot negotiating team that insisted on the EU being present in the negotiations. As a result, Günter Verheugen, the EU Commissioner for Enlargement, was invited and attended the meeting in Lucerne, where Greek- and Turkish-Cypriot delegations, together with Turkish and Greek delegations negotiated the final version of the solution plan prepared by the UN. However, according to media reports, the Commissioner attended the meeting not because the EU considered itself as having a crucial role to play in the negotiations, but because he was allegedly ‘dragged into’ them. This example clearly shows that while the direct impact of the EU on the conflict through the local political leadership might indeed be profound, this impact may not be intended or indeed wanted by EU policy-makers. The question of whether the EU will be willing to play a more decisive role in the outcome of the referendum in the south (provided that the outcome in the north seems at the moment to be a more decisive ‘YES’) thus depends on precisely this gap between the perceptions of the EU’s impact from the parties involved in the conflict and the perceptions of this impact from Brussels.
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